DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 241 932 CS 208 135

TITLE	Ideas from the Classroom. [Columns Compiled from Three Issues of "Notes Plus," September 1983 to January 1984.]
INSTITUTION	ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills, Urbana, Ill.
PUB DATE	[84]
NOTE	17p.
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - Serials (022) -- Guides - Classroom Use - Guides (For Teachers) (052)
JOURNAL CIT	Notes Plus; v1 n1-3 Sep 1983-Jan 1984
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Class Activities; Discussion (Teaching Technique); *English Instruction; *Language Arts; Learning Activities; *Literature Appreciation; Secondary Education; *Teacher Developed Materials; Teaching Methods; *Word Recognition; *Writing Exercises
IDENTIFIERS	PF Project; *Word Games

ABSTRACT

Three installments of "Ideas from the Classroom," a regular feature of the National Council of Teachers of English publication, "Notes Plus," are presented in this compilation. "Ideas from the Classroom" offers a variety of teacher-submitted activities for English and language arts instruction. The three articles in this compilation include: (1) nine writing exercises which are appropriate for the beginning of the school year; (2) 20 activities and games that focus on words; and (3) eight activities for talking and writing about literature. (DC)

Ideas from the Classroom. [Columns Compiled from Three Issues of Notes Plus, September 1983 to January 1984.]

ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills
Urbana, Illinois

IDEAS FROM THE CLASSROOM

Right Off--Writing

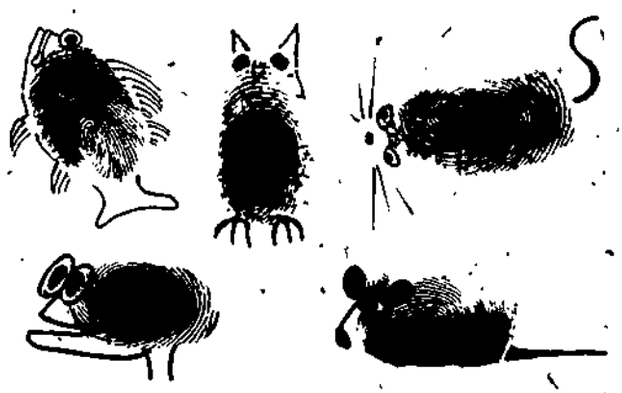
Teachers make new year's resolutions twice a year—in January and again in September when they repossess their classrooms and promise themselves that this year will be special for their students. And so they look for new approaches, more effective strategies, fresh content. Like that astute old Roman Juvenal they recognize that "it is repetition, like cabbage served at every meal, that wears out the schoolmaster's life."

In the September issue of *NOTES Plus* we are featuring ideas that should help to get the new term off to a fresh and stimulating beginning for your students—and for you. You have only yourselves to thank, for the plus in *NOTES Plus* are the ideas that teachers across the country – teachers like you – have been willing to share.

Here are nine ideas for getting pens into hands with smiles on faces. Several will help students get to know each other, one suggests a new use for old-fashioned copybooks, another should ease the transition from video arcade to classroom. All are designed to be nonthreatening—either because they are not for grades, are written with peer support, or are carefully structured to ensure success.

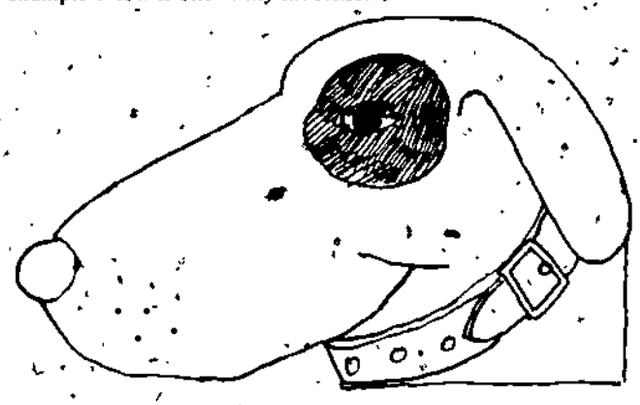
All in a Thumbprint

Fingerprints are a unique human signature and the starting point for an unusual writing assessment early in the semester. Ask each student to draw an animal or imaginary creature that incorporates his or her thumb- or fingerprint. (You'll need an ink pad for the fingerprinting.) Anything from bunnies to bumblebees, possums to extraterrestrials, can qualify.



NOTES PLUS; v1 n1 p1-5 September 1983

When the drawings are complete, ask each student to list ten specific characteristics or attributes of the creature: for example, its name, habitat, eating habits, behavioral characteristics, the reaction it generates in others. Next, the student writes a topic sentence to govern all or circled portions of the specifics list. We share lists and topic sentences. Students could go on to write a paragraph introducing their thumbprints, the exercise can then be a pretest of their ability to write an organized paragraph. The example below is one of my favorites.



List of Specifics

1. Name: Sarge
2. Sleeps under the porch steps
3. Likes to fight
4. Eats snakes and birds
5. Affectionate
6. Bossy
7. Jealous
8. Alert
9. Territorial
10. Noisy

Topic Sentence. Sarge, a dog with a complex personality, rules our neighborhood.

Nana E. Hilsenbeck, Volusia County Schools, Daytona Beach, Florida

Summer Retrospect

Here are three ideas for compositions for the beginning of school (or anytime!). They do away with "What I Did Last Summer", and other vacuous vacation writing.

1. Some American cartoonists have volunteered to draw your summer experiences. Explain which comic strip would be most appropriate for you. Garfield, Funky Winkerbean, Peanuts, Beetle Bailey, Hagar, Blondie, Dennis the Menace are among the possibilities. Consider the personalities involved in the strip, the types of events that seem to occur over and over again, the underlying philosophy of the strip. If you like, try your hand at drawing a sample.
2. Which video game best illustrates your summer? You may wish to consider such factors as the advantages you enjoy, the evil forces against you, your chances for success, the number and kinds of duties assigned to you, opportunities to make a fresh start, helpful people around you, fortunate events, and personal characteristics that help you day after day.
3. Last week you decided you would like to live in the zoo. (Perhaps your first week back at school triggered that decision.) Today you learn that you have been accepted, but you are required to write a letter to the zoo keeper to reserve your living quarters. Possible homes include the monkey house, a den of bears, the lion's grasslands, trees with the birds, glass display cases of reptiles, or your own special request. The keeper is anxious for you to fit in and be happy. After considering your physical abilities, diet preferences, personality traits, sleeping habits, and ability to adjust to new situations, make your decision. Write a letter to the zoo keeper that will reassure him that you will fit into your new environment.

Topics one and two may be adapted to "your life up to the present" instead of "your summer."

Brenda Nuara, Swift Creek Middle School, Midlothian, Virginia

Spinning a Yarn

Try this nonthreatening activity as a prewriting warm-up when the assignment is a narrative. It can also serve as a preliminary to more formal oral assignments or be adapted for retelling literature read in class.

Unwind a skein of yarn and tie knots every few feet before rewinding it into a ball. Prepare two such skeins if your class is large and you prefer to work with two groups. Ask the class to sit in a circle. Begin to tell a story, unwinding the ball of yarn as you talk. When you come to a knot, pass the ball to the student on your right, who continues the story until he or she comes to a knot and passes the yarn on. And so the tale continues. Students near the end of the circle may conclude the story, or the story can continue around the group again. If there's time for a new story, pass the yarn in the opposite direction, this time winding it back up into a ball.

Juanita Harris and Joan Bereswill, Franklin Sherman School, McLean, Virginia

Silence Exchange

Most get-acquainted activities encourage conversation within the classroom—and rightly so—but here's one based on an entire period of creative, productive *silence!* If students in your classroom are seated in rows, as mine by necessity are, follow the plan given below. If not, assign students to groups of five or six.

Ask students what our primary form of communication is and they will probably say talking. Then explain that for this class period their only mode of communication will be writing. From the moment they receive the instruction sheet you are about to distribute, no words are to be spoken until you signal that the period is about to end. If, after reading the assignment sheet carefully, someone has a question, he or she should write it on a piece of paper and hand it to you. You will answer—in writing. Then hand out the following instructions.

The art of silence is as great as that of speech.
—German proverb

Everything you do from this point on will be in writing. No one is allowed to speak until I give a signal five minutes before the end of the class period. Read the following instructions carefully. If you don't understand something, write your question on a piece of paper and hand it to me. I will respond in writing.

Object of the Assignment

To write a paper in which you describe the students seated in your row. Their similarities and differences will be the primary focus of this paper.

Method

1. Take a sheet of paper for each student in your row, excluding yourself. List four or five questions on each sheet to be

answered by the person receiving that sheet. Don't ask questions that can be answered with yes or no. Instead, ask questions that will help you to describe that person—hobbies or special interests, size of family, temperament (easy-going or explosive). Don't ask the very same questions on each sheet, but do ask everyone two or three of the same questions. Provide a blank for the respondent to write his or her first and last name. Write your name at the bottom of the sheet so students will know to whom to return the questionnaire.

2. When you have completed the questionnaires, give one to each person in your row.
3. When your questionnaires are returned, read the answers to your questions thoughtfully. Look for similarities and differences among the students in your row.
4. Begin by drafting an original and interesting introductory paragraph about the people in your row in general.
5. Now describe each person in a separate paragraph. Do not begin the paragraph with "Susie Smith is . . . " or "Susie Smith likes . . . "; instead, begin with the name of Susie's hobby or favorite subject in school or a phrase describing her personality.
6. After you have described each person, close with a paragraph that summarizes what you have learned about the people in your row.
7. Think of an appropriate title, and proofread your paper if you have time.

Due date. Your rough draft with questionnaire sheets attached is due at the beginning of the period tomorrow.

Cynthia Seifert, Lincoln Junior High School, Mount Prospect, Illinois

Captain Video and the Composition Class

Ease the transition from summer in the video arcade to September in the classroom with these ideas recommended for seventh- through ninth-graders. All of the following suggestions make use of a home video game unit attached to a television set or assume knowledge of and experience with the commercial video games found in arcades.

In-class Experience with an Atari or Similar Video Game

1. The class writes instructions for hooking up the video game unit to the television. Students take notes as you demonstrate the process. Give no verbal directions but identify each part by name as you work. After students have written the directions, ask volunteers to follow student-written directions as they are read aloud. Help students to analyze why some directions are easy to follow and others lead us astray.
2. Following the same format, direct the playing of the game using student-written directions.
3. Students pretend they are describing a video game and its function to a foreign visitor who has no knowledge of such games.
4. Several students take turns playing the game as the rest of the class observes. Students then describe the actions, reactions, and emotions of video-game players.
5. Following the same format, students observe and describe the battle or search or competition of the game. This might be written as a short story or fantasy.

Out-of-class Assignment

Students visit an arcade and observe the players. Later, they write a paper based on these observations. We define this assignment more precisely, depending upon the writing types or organizational schemes we are currently emphasizing in class.

Teresa E. Stoops and Judith Gilbert, Yuma, Colorado

Autobiographical Poster

The autobiographical poster is a friendly September assignment. Students get to know one another, and parents enjoy looking at these posters at our fall open house. I use the contract shown below as a convenient way of making this assignment—and completing it.

Introducing _____ : 1983
(Please insert your name)

The objective of this contract is to create an autobiographical poster. Write a definition of autobiography below. Please use your own words.
Autobiography:
Date due: Wednesday, September 28
Requirements: Activities 1-7
Optional: Activities 8-14

Required Activities

1. Date completed _____
   Ask someone to take your picture. Use a camera with self-developing film so you can get the picture fast. If you do not have access to such a camera, one will be available in class on Friday.
2. Date completed _____
   List your vital statistics. You may include birthdate, height, weight, hair and eye color. This information will go beneath your picture.
3. Date completed _____
   List at least ten of your favorite things.
4. Date completed _____
   Write one or more paragraphs describing yourself. You may tell about family, hobbies, talents and special interests, habits, a recent experience—whatever makes you special!
5. Date completed _____
   Plan a perfect day. Arrange this material to look like a schedule. Indicate just what you would like to do every minute during one day.
6. Date completed _____
   Obtain a piece of poster board. If you are unable to buy this, use a neatly trimmed part of a cardboard box or some other type of heavy paper. Tape or glue the materials from activities 1-5 directly on this cardboard base. You may also write on the poster itself.
7. Date completed _____
   Decorate your poster with objects that are important to you. You may use drawings, cutouts, or real objects attached to the poster. Use your imagination! Make your poster an expression of your individuality. Be bold! Be beautiful! Add a title and the date on the poster. You may call it, "Me in '83." You may be able to come up with something better. Be sure that your name appears somewhere on the front of the poster.

Optional Activities

When you have finished the seven required activities, you may have time to complete some of the optional activities. Remember, you must finish the required activities first. Please circle the number in front of any optional activity that you complete.

8. Design a crest or coat of arms for yourself. Check an encyclopedia if you aren't sure what a crest looks like.
9. Describe the animal that you think is most like you (or the animal that you most admire). Explain why. Try to include a picture of the animal.
10. Formulate your personal code. What do you believe in and live by?
11. Find a photo of yourself as a baby to mount on your poster. Beneath it write your vital statistics at that time, just as you did with the current photo of yourself.

12. Finish this thought by writing a paragraph: "If I could change one thing about myself . . . ." Tell why.
13. The story of your life provides as many interesting episodes as any book. Choose one of the following topics for a paragraph based on a true experience: "The time I was most frightened (embarrassed, surprised, proud, lucky, helpful, confused, tired, happy, careless, giggly, angry, cautious, successful, destructive, frustrated, determined)."
14. Your life is full of memories. Write about a special one: a favorite animal or toy, a special holiday celebration or present, the nicest day spent with your father (mother, sister, brother), a pleasant day with a good friend, a special adult other than a family member, a day at school to remember, a special place in your neighborhood.

Nancy P. Logghe, Allendale Columbia School, Rochester, New York

Cliff-Hanger in the Classroom

When students are out of the room, tape a trail of large, three-toed footprints on the floor, over tables, up the wall, across the ceiling—be imaginative. End the trail at an open window. Then leave a few clues—an empty milk carton, candy bar wrappers, orange peelings—or clues of your own sinister devising. When students return, ask them to be detectives and observe the footprints and other clues. Then they write stories using as many clues as they can find. Encourage them to describe the intruder, to tell why it was in the classroom, to decide where it went. This assignment seems to produce stories that everyone enjoys sharing.

Douglas E. Knight, Dike-Newell School, Bath, Maine

Round Robin Writing

This writing assignment encourages students to evaluate the appropriateness of language and plot to a given audience and purpose. Because the writing task is shared, it's a good way to get off to a good start with narrative assignments and peer evaluations.

Divide the class into groups of four or five students. Explain that all groups will be writing stories geared to a specific audience and purpose: the audience is elementary school children and the purpose is an entertaining story that illustrates a familiar moral. Each student in each group is then asked to write a moral across the top of a sheet of paper. Offer suggestions ("If at first you don't succeed, try, try again"; "Beauty is only skin deep"; "He who laughs last, laughs best"; "Good things come to those who wait"; "One good deed deserves another") but encourage variety and independent selections.

Each student then begins a tale to illustrate the moral he or she selected, keeping in mind that the story should be appropriate for youngsters in elementary school. If you wish, suggest "once upon a time" beginnings.

After two or three minutes, signal that all papers are to be passed to the next student in the group. After reading the moral assigned to the paper and the tale as begun, the student continues the story, keeping purpose and audience in mind. After several minutes, the papers are passed on again. Repeat until each member of the group has contributed to each story in the group and story originators have again received their own papers. Increase the time allowed for writing with each exchange so that students can read what has been written and reflect upon the course of action. Originators of stories then conclude their stories, reinforcing the morals.

When the tales are finished, ask each group to read through its stories and choose one to be read aloud to the class. The choice should be based on the story's appropriateness to its audience and its success in conveying the moral.

As the chosen stories are shared aloud, guide the class in a critique of each one. You can judge the class's understanding of the roles of purpose and audience by the appropriateness of the story each group chose to read and by the subsequent evaluation of the class.

Linda Frisbie, Owego Free Academy, Owego, New York

Copybook Composition

Students in remedial or basic composition courses need to write frequently, and they require individual encouragement and correction. Such students should do at least part of their writing in class so that the instructor can work with process and so that students do not have inappropriate help. In a class of more than twenty students, however, it is impossible to glance over each student's work in fifty minutes and make significant comments. Even with a smaller class, oral comments are soon forgotten. Old-fashioned copybooks (or the larger size bluebooks), about eight inches square, with about forty pages, can solve some of these problems. Their use is perfectly suited to classes in which students write paragraphs, not fully developed essays.

The first time the copybooks are used, I ask the entire class to write on the same topic for about twenty minutes. Students are instructed to write on the left side of a double page-opening, filling no more than one side. I use the right-hand page for corrections, comments, general encouragement, and the student's next individual writing assignment. Because there is plenty of room, corrections can include words to look up, grammar points to review in the textbook, even brief exercises made up on the spot to teach a troublesome point. Most important, the next paragraph assignment is made according to the student's interests, abilities, and needs: an expansion or continuation of the previous topic if the student seems interested; a question pursuing a new topic or a point raised in class; an encouragement to a shy student or a reprimand to an unruly one. The generous space allows the instructor to write corrections exactly where they apply and still leaves plenty of room for other comments and the next assignment.

After students write in class, I finish corrections in two or three days but do not return the copybooks until the next time the class writes in them. The books are not taken home until the end of the semester; otherwise students forget them on the day they are needed or compose assignments at home and merely copy them in class. Students are asked not to tear pages out of the copybooks (the corresponding back page falls out of the sewn or stapled binding); they are encouraged to correct mistakes neatly but are not allowed to recopy merely to produce a clean manuscript.

There are some disadvantages to the use of copybooks. A stack of them is difficult to carry unless students use the same size and style; this can be achieved by ordering them through school supply or a bookstore. Two dozen copybooks do add considerable weight to a bookbag or briefcase; although the advantages really do "outweigh" the disadvantages, the phrase does not immediately recommend itself!

A major advantage of copybook composition is that a student's accumulated work, with corrections, is written in the same book. Unlike file folders of student papers, copybooks do not take up office file space or require that folders and files be prepared. As students write in class, you can turn back and remind them of corrections made on previous paragraphs. Comments and corrections are not limited to what can be written in the margins, and the page of comments frequently assumes aspects of a dialogue between teacher and student, becoming much more meaningful than circles in red ink or cryptic references to a handbook. Some copybooks evolve into journals. Probably the greatest advantage of this method is that every assignment is individually planned for each student. The student who needs to correct and rewrite an assignment can work beside the student who is progressing rapidly with a challenging topic. Neither is hampered by the other, and neither must wait to speak with the instructor.

Kaaren M. Holum, University of the District of Columbia, Washington, D.C.

IDEAS FROM THE CLASSROOM

Words at Work—and Play

We can't be sure if Wallace Stevens would put English teachers among those "for whom the word is the making of the world," yet it is our affection and respect for words—powerful, elusive, illusionary—that in large measure, for better or for worse, has made us English teachers.

In the November issue of *NOTES Plus* we bring together twenty activities that focus on words. There are word games to spark interest in unfamiliar words and to encourage us to see new potential in old ones, sentences that ask us to consider the variety of work orders that can exist for many sets of words, and writing assignments that grow out of the fascinating possibilities inherent in a single word—from a strange name in the phone book to an exploration of Emerson's dictum that "every word was once a poem." And finally, there are the words that grow out of silence—word lists compiled while viewing non-narrated films and the eloquence of words "spoken" in sign language.

Word Charade

This word game, which follows some of the principles of an old parlor favorite, provides a lively and effective method of reviewing and developing vocabulary. Begin by writing the following on the chalkboard.

Illegal words and actions:

No proper nouns (capitalized words)
No foreign words
No hyphenated words
No inflections (voice clues)
No gestures (facial or hand clues)

Divide the class into two teams, the Doors and the Windows. Select one student from each team and seat those two at the front of the room. Write the same word on two 3" × 5" cards. Give one card to student X and the other to student Y.

The object of the game is for X to get his or her teammates to say the word that is written on the card before Y gets a response from his or her team. X and Y attempt to achieve this goal by giving one-word clues without using the illegal words or actions listed on the board.

X and Y alternate; X gives a one-word clue to the student seated in the first seat and row on the Door side of the room. If this student guesses the word, the Door team receives ten points. If the student does not guess the word, Y gives a one-word clue to the student seated in the first seat and row on the Window side of the room. If this student identifies the word, the Windows receive nine points. If this student fails to guess the word, X gives a clue to the teammate seated in the second seat of the first row. If this student guesses the word, the Doors earn eight points.

Play continues in this manner until the word is identified or until its point value is nil. A second word is given, and play proceeds. The first team to accumulate twenty-five points is awarded a bonus point. If the team scores a shutout (25-0), it receives two bonus points. When one team has accumulated twenty-five points, X and Y are replaced by teammates.

Remember, only one team member gives clues and only one teammate at a time responds to each clue. Team members are not permitted to consult with one another. A running total of one hundred points decides the winning team.

Edward S. Dermon, Herricks High School, New Hyde Park, New York

Spellbinder

I offer this word game for your collections. It can be put on the board in a moment and will challenge the class for several more. Here are the directions.

Students score ten points for using all the letters in the word *debaters* to form two other words; *rate* and *beds*, for example, or *rest* and *bead*. They then score two points for each word of four letters or more that they can find among the letters. I encourage them to try to score at least fifty points.

Shirley Newsom, Dartmouth Junior High School, San Jose, California

A Word to the Wise Is Worth Two in the Bush

This set of mismatched proverbs can be used in a variety of ways—as a challenging individual or small-group activity when the best laid plans have gone awry; but especially as a springboard to the discussion of folk expressions, clichés, and popular metaphors. Students will enjoy unscrambling them, and a post-mortem discussion will turn up interesting variations on these proverbs as well as additions for the list.

1. Don't bite after the horse has been stolen.
2. Where there's smoke, the mice will play.
3. He that giveth and eat it too
4. All that glitters spoils the barrel.
5. Two heads spoil the broth.
6. If you play with fire, flock together.
7. No use crying, can't change his spots.
8. You can't tell a book before they're hatched.
9. The early bird laughs best.
10. If the shoe fits, now lie in it.
11. The grass is always greener 'twixt the cup and the lip.
12. While the cat's away, dogs lie.
13. Don't put all your eggs into a wound.
14. One rotten apple, what you sow.
15. Too many cooks are better than one.
16. Mighty oaks can sink a large ship.
17. It's an ill wind that is better than none.
18. A small hole gathers no moss.
19. Use honey over spilt milk
20. You can't have your cake until you come to them.

NOTES PLUS; v1 n2 p1-5,8,9-10 November 1983

21. You made your bed to skin a cat.
22. You can't teach an old dog by its cover.
23. People who live in glass houses never boils.
24. One man's meat isn't gold.
25. Don't count your chickens, you may get burned.
26. He who laughs last runs deep.
27. Birds of a feather from little acorns grow.
28. It's the last straw that shall taketh away.
29. Don't throw out the baby that lays the golden eggs.
30. It's too late to lock the barn door in one basket.
31. A watched pot catches the worm.
32. Rats desert is another man's poison.
33. Don't rub salt and I'll scratch yours.
34. Don't try to teach new tricks.
35. A stitch in time is in the eating.
36. The proof of the pudding into the fire.
37. You scratch my back on the other side of the fence.
38. Out of the frying pan there's fire.
39. You reap off more than you can chew.
40. Let sleeping fishes to swim.
41. Don't cross your bridges with the bath water.
42. The leopard shouldn't throw stones.
43. The squeaky wheel blows no one good
44. Still water is worth two in the bush.
45. Don't kill the goose, wear it.
46. A rolling stone, a sinking ship.
47. There's many a slip breaks the camel's back.
48. A bird in the hand gets the grease.
49. Half a loaf saves nine.
50. There's more than one way to catch flies.

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

Word Rummage

This activity, adapted from Herbert Kohl's *Reading, How To* (Bantam Books, 1973), can be used as a group introduction to individually created "found" poems, but it's also useful in units on sentence construction and variety and when grammar components are under discussion.

Ask students to cut words and phrases from newspapers and magazines and paste them on index cards: *back for more, next year, today's, a threat of, is, attack, America's largest.* Divide the class into several groups and deal out the cards. Be sure each group receives several verbs. The first student in a group lays down one card, the next adds a card from his or her hand before, after, above, or below the first word, and so on around the circle until all cards, or as many as possible, are laid out. Everyone works together to make a collective statement—logical or ridiculous, sometimes poetic and haunting. This is a noncompetitive game with no winners.

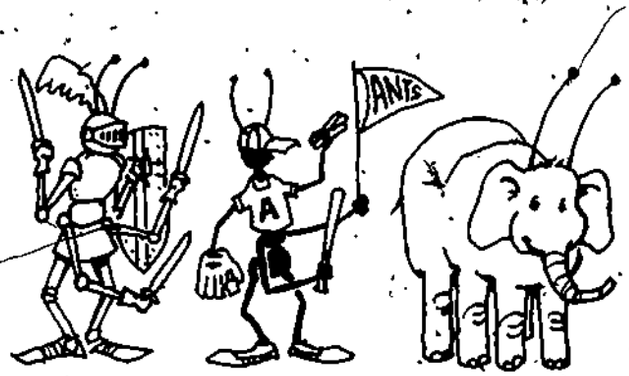
In subsequent rounds students can look for a poem hidden among their word deck and paste the final version on a large sheet of paper.

The words don't need to come from magazines—although type variations are sometimes "inspirational." Instead, pass out several blank cards to each player and ask students to put any word they choose on each card. Collect, shuffle, and deal out the cards. Groups can exchange all or parts of their word decks in subsequent rounds. The variations are almost endless!

Barbara Paterson, George H. Moody Middle School, Richmond, Virginia

Picto-words

Ask students to illustrate a word that ends in *-ant: gallant, pedant, pennant, distant, miscreant, elephant.* The ant colony of words that results makes a delightful display. (The basic idea for this activity comes from *Antics* by Patricia Robbins and Tom Fenton, Simon and Schuster, Fireside, 1969.)



Follow up with word pictures—pictorial representations achieved through the arrangement of the letters, as in *cup* and *swan* below, or an arrangement of letters that conveys the meaning of the word as in *continuous.*

Chris Davies, Monticello Middle School, Longview, Washington

Gizmos—When Words Fail

Creating gizmos, it seems, also encourages creative thinking, about writing. I divide the class into several small groups and give each group the following materials: several six-inch squares of cardboard, four toothpicks, two rubber bands, one large paper clip, scissors, glue, and tape. Students have fifteen or twenty minutes to create something, their gizmos, out of these materials. Marks may be made on gizmos with a pen or pencil.

Gizmos have generated a number of writing projects in my classes; among them are these.

1. Advertisements. Students develop an advertising campaign to introduce their gizmo on the market. Such an assignment might include writing a television ad or assembling a magazine or direct mail ad.
2. Dialogue. Students compose a dialogue between the inventor of the gizmo and a newscaster or the host of a television talk show.
3. Letters. Students write to the development division of a manufacturing company, hoping to convince them to manufacture the gizmo. They also compose the reply.
4. Fiction. Students compose a short story in which their gizmo plays a major role.
5. Poetry. Gizmos provide an excellent opportunity to introduce students to simple types of poetry such as cinquain, haiku, and diamanté.

Hildegard Fuchs, Whitney Young Junior High School, Cleveland, Ohio

Creative Compounds

Here is a word game my students enjoy. Copies can be distributed for individual or small group solution, or the class can tackle the task together if you write the words on the chalkboard.

Directions. Write in the blank space a word that can be combined with each of the following three words to create a new word. For example, in the first item the word *bath* can be used to form *bathrobe, steambath,* and *birdbath*

1.	bath	robe	steam	bird
2.	_____	book	post	tour
3	_____	fly	shoe	radish
4	_____	dew	bee	comb
5.	_____	bag	coffee	stalk
6.	_____	key	wall	cold
7.	_____	leaf	berry	window
8	_____	up	hot	life
9.	_____	down	stone	golden
10.	_____	cake	blue	cottage
11.	_____	hut	skirt	roots
12.	_____	table	court	elbow
13.	_____	line	light	dress
14.	_____	end	shelf	marker
15.	_____	hole	brake	servant
16.	_____	hop	pool	cable
17.	_____	line	busy	spelling
18.	_____	fore	bowl	painting
19.	_____	day	house	weight
20.	_____	made	cuff	left

And should a compound confound, here are the answers

1. bath	11. grass
2. guide	12. tennis
3. horse	13. head (up)
4. honey	14. book
5. bean	15. hand (man)
6. stone	16. car
7. bay	17. bee
8. line	18. finger
9. touch	19. light
10. cheese	20. hand

Janet Woodward, Bellevue and Seattle School Districts, Seattle, Washington

Vocabulary of the People, by the People, and for the People

Here's a mini vocabulary unit by students and for students—from compilation of the word list to evaluation of its mastery. Sit back and enjoy it. I think you'll be pleased with the quality of the list; it may even be superior to one of your own devising. I know you'll be delighted with the test scores. I prepare a handout similar to the one outlined below, due dates are inserted, and from then on it's their show.

People Words

The purpose of this assignment is to enlarge and improve the vocabulary we use in talking and writing about people.

Step one. List four words that you use frequently when you talk about people. Two should be positive in nature, two negative. (I often hear you use words like *nice, cool, creep.*)

Step two. Using a dictionary and thesaurus, find three synonyms for each of these four words. Write each word along with its definition and etymology on a sheet of paper. You needn't limit yourself to precise synonyms, but the words you list should be words that describe people and their personalities. The words you choose should be ones that you've seen before but are not yet a part of your spontaneous vocabulary.

Step three. As soon as you have found these twelve words, choose your favorite two and print them neatly, along with their definitions and etymologies, in the section I have reserved on the chalkboard.

Step four. As the list on the chalkboard grows, copy it on a sheet of notebook paper. Number the entries and include word, definition, and etymology.

Step five. Study this list of words with another student. Working as partners, devise a way to pantomime one of the words you contributed to this list. This means you will take part in two pantomimes—one for the word you chose and one for the word of your partner's choice.

Step six The test for these words will be made up by you. Write a question for each of the two words you contributed to the class list—questions that can fit a matching, multiple choice, or fill-in-the-blank format. Later a ditto divided into these three question categories will be circulated and you'll print your questions in the appropriate section.

Liz Mathewson, Tahoma Junior High School, Maple Valley, Washington

What's in a Name?

These two exercises help students think about characterization and setting and are useful as prewriting activities prior to writing stories or as an introductory activity in a short story unit. You'll need an old phone book and several road maps.

Characterization. Give each student a page or two from an old phone book, preferably one from out of town. As students scan the columns, they should try to picture the people to whom the names belong. Sometimes the name of the street also triggers associations. When they run across a name that appeals to them, they write a short description of that person. Encourage students to make the character come alive by giving specific details about physical appearance, job, hobbies, friends, dreams and ambitions.

Setting. Cut up several old road maps into pieces approximately 3" × 5". Avoid sections that include names of familiar cities. Students then choose a name on the map that seems like a good place to develop as the setting for a story, going on to list details that help to create a setting—geographical features such as mountains, rivers, lakes, and forests, scenic or cultural attractions; industrial development.

Donna Weibel, Cascade Middle School, Longview, Washington

Fictionary

This popular word game from the 70s has been used very successfully in composition classes where students, many of whom are linguistically insecure, study concrete and abstract words, the use and abuse of language, and word origins. In spite of its popularity, few teachers have a written set of rules for the game. Here is a handout that can be given to your students, who can then enjoy themselves for the next hour as they gain some security over that "fixed" language of theirs. Of course, these rules can be modified to fit your needs.

1. Divide the class into groups of five or six students. Each group needs a dictionary and index cards.
2. One student in each group is given the dictionary and selects a word. It may be common or obscure but not a proper noun. That student then records on an index card one of the definitions found in the dictionary for that word.
3. The dictionary holder now tells the others in the group what the chosen word is but does not reveal its definition. Each of the other players makes up a definition for the word, trying to second-guess the dictionary definition (this is why the game is called *Fictionary*), and writes that definition on an index card.
4. The dictionary holder collects the index cards, shuffles them together with the dictionary definition card, and numbers them. The dictionary holder then reads aloud each definition in turn—twice. If he or she laughs while reading the definitions, a foul may be called and the round of play voided.
5. Each of the other players, without discussion, chooses the most likely definition to be found in a dictionary and records the card number of that definition.
6. The round is now completed except for scoring. Each player who chooses the definition written in the dictionary earns ten points. A player whose fictionary definition is chosen earns fifteen points. The dictionary holder earns twenty-five points if no one chooses the dictionary definition. The first player to accumulate one hundred points wins the game.
7. Players take turns holding the dictionary, and the process described above is repeated.

John D. Beard, Lansing Community College, Lansing, Michigan

Word Detection

Divide the class into teams of four or five students. Prepare packets for each team containing letter cards that, when arranged correctly, spell words from assigned reading or from appropriate vocabulary or spelling lists. Assign point values to each letter, as in *Scrabble*, and write the point value on each letter card.

After I distribute the packets for the first word, I explain that each set of letters can be unscrambled to spell a word that uses all the letters. I allow four minutes for students to discover that word. I then grant one additional minute for them to spell another word from that set of letters, a word with the highest point total they can manage. Since I assign the same word to each group, I ask students to shield their cards as they spell out words. I also stipulate English words only and no proper nouns. Plurals and all verb forms are acceptable, but words must be spelled correctly to receive credit. As we progress through the word packets, students earn points for unscrambling each word in turn and for recombining its letters to make another word. The group with the highest final score is declared the winner.

Susan K. Brown, Knappa High School, Astoria, Oregon

Variations on a Theme Called Vocabulary

Below are two activities I'd like to share for introducing new vocabulary words and reviewing old ones.

Word research. Write the words you wish to present on slips of paper and place them in a hat. Ask each student to pick one. Students then "research" the words, including meaning(s), part of speech, related forms, examples of phrases in which the word is used. I encourage them to use an unabridged dictionary. All of this information is recorded on one side of a 9" × 12" sheet of construction paper. On the other side of this sheet, the student pastes a magazine picture that illustrates a sentence using the word. The sentence is written beneath the picture. These picture sheets are an excellent way for students to review vocabulary as a class or by themselves; and they make attractive bulletin board displays.

Spelling squares. Cut small squares (approximately 3" × 3") from construction paper in two colors. Print the letters of the alphabet on each set, for example, twenty-six yellow squares and twenty-six blue ones. Divide the class into two teams and distribute the yellow squares to one team and the blue ones to the other (the larger the team, the fewer squares per student). Students holding only one square should be given a vowel if possible.

Begin by giving the yellow team clues for a word you have in mind - clues such as definition, a synonym, a context clue. Members of the yellow team *think*; no talking allowed - of a word that matches these clues. After several clues, call "Go!" Students on the yellow team now attempt to spell out the word they think you have in mind, each student being responsible for calling out the letter or letters he or she holds at the appropriate time. No prompting is allowed.

Students are motivated to listen carefully because they don't want to let their team down by not being ready to call out the letter for which they are responsible. If the word spelled out is the correct response to your clues and if it has been spelled correctly without long delays between letters, the team earns a point. The blue team now has its turn. I think you'll be surprised by the concentration engendered by this game.

Marilyn Lee, Haddonfield Memorial High School, Haddonfield, New Jersey

Close Encounters of the Word Kind

Emphasis on words as the advertiser's tool is a point of discussion in sophomore journalism. We began the week by asking each student to think of one word with which he or she would like to work. Among those chosen were *black, joy, bear, team,* and *teacher.* Volunteers placed their words on the board, and students were asked to tell what the words meant to them. It soon became evident that we have reaction patterns to various words, and the question of why we react to words as we do soon came up. This led to further discussion about the importance of word choice in writing news and in newscasting.

S. I. Hayakawa's article "How Words Change Our Lives" was then distributed. Hayakawa discusses fixed reactions to certain words and symbols, and why people react as they do. His observations reinforced and extended our previous discussion. (I didn't assign the article first because I wanted students to discover and formulate their own ideas independently.)

Students were then asked to look for newspaper and magazine advertisements that show how advertisers use various words and symbols to convey meaning. They also went on to make up their own advertisements.

One of the most significant results of the week's activities was that students were beginning to ask important questions. Do products really give the consumer what they propose? How does the advertiser use words? How gullible is the consumer?

Elaine Markapoulos, Toledo Public Schools, Toledo, Ohio

Scrambled Sentences

I use scrambled sentences to show the variety of word orders that exist for many sets of words and to provide practice in sentence recognition.

Write a scrambled sentence on the chalkboard: sometimes I write one each day for several consecutive weeks, sometimes I write each word on a separate card and tack the cards in random order on the bulletin board. Ask students to unscramble the sentence and write it on a sheet of scrap paper. Sometimes I ask them to write it in the top margin of their homework. In addition to unscrambling the sentence in an acceptable way, words must be copied correctly and the sentence must be correctly capitalized and punctuated.

From time to time I make other stipulations: arrange the words in at least two meaningful word orders; rewrite the sentence as a question or a command; label the parts of speech or the parts of the sentence; write a sentence that might logically follow (precede) the unscrambled sentence. The sentences you choose can be simple or complex, depending upon the task or combination of tasks you assign.

Peggy L. Papritan, Watkins Middle School, Pataskala, Ohio

101 Things to Do with a Dead Sentence

The cartoons in Simon Bond's *101 Uses for a Dead Cat* (Crown Publishers, 1981) sell this assignment to teenagers, but other cartoon collections on a general theme could also be used.

Begin by tearing out the pages of the book, distributing the sheets to the class, one or two per student, until you run out. The assignment is to write a one-sentence description of what is being done with the dead cat in each cartoon. Students exchange cartoon sheets as they finish. The catch: No sentence about any one cartoon may begin with the same word. By the time students get to the tenth sentence, they are stretching their minds for new ways to begin. At this point the assignment becomes most effective. Variations in sentence structure become the only way to complete the twenty-sentence minimum that I place on each cartoon. Spirits in the class run high because of the "subject matter," and even my most reluctant writers produce more creative sentence patterns than I've had from them thus far in the course.

Mary Kim Triefenbach, Francis Howell High School, Weldon Spring, Missouri

Word Spotlight

As I searched for ways to incorporate the teaching of vocabulary into my curriculum without handing out periodic lists of twenty words, I hit upon the idea of focusing student attention on just one word at a time. Each day I select a word, one that I think students will come across again either in reading or in watching television. I write the word on the board, and we take about five minutes of class time to discuss the word—definitions, origins, root, part of speech—whatever seems especially interesting and useful. The next day I provide slips of paper (to make sure the work is done in class), and students spell the word, write its definition, and provide an original sentence. I check these sentences for grammatical and mechanical accuracy as well as fluency. If you like, offer a bonus for students who spot one of these words elsewhere at any time during the semester and bring it to the class's attention—in newspapers, newscasts, textbooks, even cereal-box prose.

Anna Laribe, Hot Springs High School, Hot Springs, Arkansas

The Words in Silent Films

I use short films without narration or dialogue to enliven the study of vocabulary and grammar. While viewing, students compile word lists of various sorts: action verbs, descriptive words and phrases, even "-ing" words for gerund and participle exercises. Brief film-based writing assignments can follow.

I have used films on hang gliding, skiing, mountain climbing, and surfing. These films provide rich color and textures as well as action and unusual camera effects. The word lists are useful in follow-up discussions and exercises, and both students and teacher have been informed about unusual and interesting subject matter.

Ed Van Tuckle, Indian Valley North High School, Midvale, Ohio

Buddy, Have You Got a LUMO 12000?

This assignment can be recast to fit various areas of language arts, but it is most appropriate in a unit on the language and techniques of advertising. At any time it seems to produce surprising and entertaining results. Ask students to take a common object such as a paper clip, a fingernail file, a rubber band, and make it sound like the greatest invention since the wheel. I ask students to give the object a fancy name but never to state exactly what it is. Later, the class will guess. Here is an example.

> Drop everything and grab the phone. Here's a hot deal you can't match anywhere. For a mere $19.95, you can own the colorfully tipped LUMO 12000, which incorporates sturdy Rocky Mountain pine in a versatile, compact, lightweight form, which can easily be carried around in your pocket or purse. No moveable parts and single-unit construction make for virtually one-step starting in even the coldest of weather. With a mere flick of the finger, the biodegradable LUMO 12000 should start instantly every time. Its uses are unlimited—use it to sterilize operating instruments, have one on hand in case of a power shortage, use it as the key ingredient for a romantic evening in front of the fireplace. If you are an outdoorsperson, the LUMO 12000 could be your key to survival.
>
> WARNING: Not recommended for children!
>
> Don't delay folks! Phone toll-free to 1-800-999-3474 to order yours today.

Keith Ainscough and Jock MacKenzie, Eastview Community School, Red Deer, Alberta, Canada

Ferreting Out the Weasel Words

Developing students' critical thinking skills is one of the essentials of English, and a unit on doublespeak can help bring about this development. After you have presented the concept and forms of doublespeak, give students a chance to apply what they have learned. I ask students to select one piece of junk mail that comes to their homes (Reader's Digest Sweepstakes provides an excellent example) and to analyze the techniques of persuasion used by the advertisers. The following areas of analysis serve as a guide.

1. The envelope. Are there pictures on the envelope? What are they? What are they designed to do? Any slogans? Other words?
2. Choice of words. What words are used to describe the product? Point out examples of words used to make the item seem as attractive as possible.

3 Doublespeak techniques Look for weasel words, unfinished comparisons, vague words Also look for places where the promoter compliments the consumer, says or implies that we're different and unique

4 Cost Look at the order blank How much *exactly* will you have to pay to get this item? What *exactly* are you signing yourself up for if you decide to say yes

5 Pictures Do the pictures represent doublespeak? Is the item shown actual size? How do the pictures make the product look appealing and attractive?

6 Evaluation In a separate section, give your own opinion about how good a job the advertisers did in trying to sell the product Even if *you* are not persuaded to buy the product, do you think that many other people might be?

These junk mail analyses may be presented in a booklet or as a bulletin-board display. The result of this project has been a greater awareness of advertisers' techniques of distortion and deception and a willingness to read more critically

Jeff Golub, Shelton High School, Shelton, Washington

The Music—And the Words

My students enjoy the following writing assignment, and I have generally been pleased with both the content and the organization of their papers The assignment sheet I use goes something like this

Music is the product of a culture and, therefore, like any art form, is a comment on that culture Choose three current pieces of popular music and in an essay of at least five paragraphs explain the comment the lyrics make on contemporary American society. Your paper must include the titles of the songs. If possible, use the names of the lyricists and performers; especially if the latter seem to be important in making the cultural comment

The controlling generalization you devise will determine the success or the frustration you experience with this paper. Be sure that idea is stated early in the paper and can be convincingly illustrated by the three songs you select. Copies of the lyrics will be helpful in building your case.

Kerry Crisp, Sedro Woolley High School, Sedro Woolley, Washington

Every Poem Was Once a Word

For me this activity is a playful reversal of Emerson's dictum. "Every word was once a poem. Every new relation is a new word."

Assign students to look through magazines and newspapers for at least two nouns that catch their fancy. Each noun is cut out and pasted at the top of a lined sheet of paper. If you prefer, bring in a collection of papers and magazines and give students ten minutes of class time for the clipping and pasting. Students should initial each sheet they prepare

When the noun sheets are ready, distribute one to each student, but not one prepared by that student. Each student then lists at least ten words that describe the noun at the top or that are associated in the student's mind with that noun. For example, here is the list generated by the noun *daisy*.

fresh	innocent
pert	little girls
white	petals
wilted	pollen
summer	field
faded	daisy chain
old-fashioned	wind-blown

At a signal from you, students exchange papers again. This time the recipient uses the noun and at least four of the words from the list in a sentence. For example. The pert white daisy clutched in the little girl's hand will soon be wilted.

Finally, the sheets are returned to their originators, who are asked to write a paragraph or verse about the noun using any of the previously written material that seems useful. At this step I encourage students to look up their nouns in the dictionary and thesaurus Here are two end products of the noun *daisy*

A paragraph

At High Noon, in midsummer, we sat in my uncle's field making daisy chains. White, yellow, and green. White, yellow, and green. White, yellow, and green. And so on. Pretty soon there was nothing but buzzing, sizzling, and sweating And wilting

And a poem

A field of summer snow—
White daisies bending, swaying, saying
That all things fade and go.

Anonymous Contributor

It Goes without Saying

I've come to believe that one of the best activities I do with my English classes is to teach the Manual Alphabet of the Deaf (available in many books, for example, Lottie L. Riekehof's *The Joy of Signing*, Gospel Publishing House, 1445 Boonville Avenue, Springfield, MO 65802). The concentration of students is complete (except for the occasional "Wait!" or "Show us again!"), and ninety-nine percent of my students love to practice it over and over

I use the alphabet as part of a unit on disability awareness. Students must prove they can read as well as "speak" to others using the manual alphabet along with words and phrases we learn in sign (American Sign Language) as part of the final exam. They experience "deafness" and other disabilities and write about their experiences The sign alphabet, however, is easily incorporated into other areas of the English curriculum. Here are a few ideas for launching the project.

Spelling. Finger spelling in combination with oral and written practice works wonders. We practice total communication (TC) by saying the letters as we spell, at first. When students become more proficient, they spell the entire word and say it only when they have finished spelling it.

Learning names. Go around the room, asking each student in turn to spell out his or her name. Call on Student A to finger spell the name of Student B without taking eyes off that student and without speaking. B may help A if A hits a stumbling block.

Opening and closing class. Instead of standing quietly staring or flicking the lights off and on or shouting over the arrival din, finger spell the day's topic in front of everyone. (It helps to learn/teach signs for *good morning, today, we,* and so on.) The class will settle down and focus on your hands almost immediately. Nobody wants to miss out on being the first to translate, and it centers attention where you want it to be.

A similar procedure works for concluding a class. As those last few "itchy" minutes arrive and students begin packing and fidgeting, try running through the alphabet with everyone. The silence and concentration that are required draw their attention from the door and the clock—and help to relax you for your next class.

This is only a starter sheet. There are many other ways to incorporate sign into the English classroom. You'll have no problem coming up with ideas once you and your classes have the basics in your hands. Fun intended

Nancy J. Limbacher, Eastern Junior High School, Riverside, Connecticut

And a Word from Emily Dickinson

A Word dropped careless on a Page
May stimulate an eye
When folded in perpetual seam
The Wrinkled Maker lie

From 1261, *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson,* edited by Thomas H. Johnson (Little, Brown and Co., 1960).

IDEAS FROM THE CLASSROOM

Talking and Writing about Literature

It is not fortuitous that when the Carnegie Report addressed the priorities of the high school curriculum, it listed literature first (*High School: A Report on Secondary Education in America*, The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, Ernest L. Boyer, Harper & Row, 1983, pp. 95–97). As Boyer puts it,

> Reading, writing, speaking, and listening—along with computation—are the basic tools of education. But the mastery of language means more than acquiring these essential skills. During high school all students should move toward cultural literacy. They should discover how language is a part of culture, probably the most important part. They should learn about the variety of ways civilization is sustained and enriched through a shared use of symbols.
>
> As a first step we recommend that all students, through a study of literature, discover our common literary heritage and learn about the power and beauty of the written word. . . . Literature addresses the emotional part of the human experience. It provides another perspective on historical events, telling us what matters and what has mattered to people in the past. Literature transmits from generation to generation enduring spiritual and ethical values. . . . As great literature speaks to all people, it must be available to all students.

There can be no more important activity in the curriculum than reading literature—and talking and writing about it.

From "for the Nonce" to "Like Now"

Here's an activity that can be adapted to almost any pre-twentieth-century novel or play. It documents the timelessness of character and theme and enables students to break through the unfamiliar syntax of an earlier time.

Select a scene between a male and a female character critical to the novel or play. Identify your two best readers, one boy and one girl, and divide the remaining students into two groups of boys (Groups A and C) and two groups of girls (Groups B and D). Finally, choose three pieces of music for use as soundtracks—one classical, one modern and popular, one contemporary rock.

Before explaining anything about the activity, ask the two readers to prepare for the next day's class the dialogue as it appears in the text. After they leave to rehearse their lines, send Groups A, B, C, and D into the four corners of the room. Ask Group A to examine the male character's lines and to paraphrase each line into modern standard English; ask Group B to do the same for the lines of the female character. Then ask Groups C and D to follow the same procedure, converting the dialogue into modern English slang. Instruct each group to record its paraphrasings neatly enough so that one of its members, selected by the group, can present the rewritten lines in reenactments of the scene on the following day. While students spend the remainder of the period working in their groups, nose around, exercising a bit of editorial discretion here or suggesting a better word there—but only when asked.

On the next day bring along a tape or record player and the music you have chosen for soundtracks. Students will need about ten minutes at the beginning of class to make final alterations in their paraphrasings, but to preserve the spontaneity of real conversation, do not allow the readers from Groups A and B and from Groups C and D to rehearse. If possible, arrange the desks to resemble a theatre and introduce the first pair of readers, who present the scene as it was originally written, accompanied by classical music. After the applause dies, set the stage for the next presentation—this one in modern standard English, with a popular modern melody in the background. Scattered laughter will undoubtedly make this reenactment longer than the previous one. After applause and giggles subside, introduce the last version, by far the noisiest and funniest version—modern English slang. The rock number with its driving beat adds grit to this rendition. At its conclusion, ask students what they learned not only about the literary work you are studying but also about the level of language.

Allan J. Ruter, Glenbrook South High School, Glenview, Illinois

American Authors and the Job Market

Ignoring mundane restrictions of time, space, and economics, this project presents noted American authors as potential candidates for "the job opening in the English Department at Moorestown Friends School" and asks students to combine biographical research with resume writing. Students also gain insight into the operation of a small independent school at which each faculty member wears several hats. Poe could surely serve as the advisor to the literary magazine; Twain might be an ideal director for the eighth-grade camping trip; and Hawthorne's enjoyment of ice-skating might produce a hockey coach for MFS.

Each student selects an American author to investigate in at least three sources, which may include two of the following in addition to a full-length study:

American Authors, 1600–1900
A Concise Dictionary of American Biography
Literary History of the United States
National Cyclopaedia of American Biography
Notable American Women, 1607–1950
Oxford Companion to American History
Oxford Companion to American Literature
Webster's American Biography

In the meantime, the class arranges an interview with the principal for a description of the job opening, details of the search and selection process, and the role of the resume. When research is complete, each student decides the age at which his or her author is applying and assembles the data in an attrac-

tive, one-page resume to accompany the author's application for the job at MFS. We use J. L. Angel's *Complete Resume Book* (Pocket Books, 1980) as a reference.

Finally, as a member of the search committee that screened the candidates, each student writes a one-page summary of the interview, noting his or her applicant's strengths, weaknesses, and general desirability as the best person to fill the position. There are opportunities for humor—Freneau was late for his interview, detained by the British—originality, and ethical decision making—how would O. Henry present his police record?

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

Literary Window Shopping

Ask students to divide a sheet of paper into three columns. In the first column they list the most important characters in the work to be discussed. If you want, specify a ranking of characters (most important to least important, most admirable to least admirable). In the second column students jot down an appropriate intangible gift for each character (courage, patience, the ability to laugh at oneself) that would dramatically change an aspect of that character's behavior. In the third column, they record a tangible gift for each character (karate lessons, psychoanalysis, a subscription to *Mad* magazine) that would help that character achieve the behavior or quality listed in column two.

I have students work independently, assuring them that I am interested in their ideas and that there are no right or wrong answers. Later, we share answers, justifying them by referring to specifics in the work under discussion. This lighthearted activity, a modification of strategy 68 in *Values Clarification. A Handbook of Practical Strategies for Teachers and Students* by Sidney B. Simon, Leland W. Howe, and Howard Kirschenbaum (Hart Publishing, 1972), is an excellent springboard for further discussion and for writing assignments as well.

Joyce J. Swindell, Norfolk Public Schools, Norfolk, Virginia

SPTC

I find the following four projects successful ways to deal with the concepts of setting, plot, theme, and characterization in short fiction. These projects follow my presentation and discussion of a particular short story, and so I feel that students are fairly ready to work with these concepts on their own.

I begin by dividing the class into groups of four. Each group chooses a short story of interest to its group and one that lends itself to the concepts under consideration. I enjoy this opener because it requires students to peruse and discuss a variety of stories.

Project one: setting. Each group creates a mural to represent the setting of the story it selected. Prior to working on the mural, the group submits a planning diagram and a one-page explanation of how setting influenced the outcome (or another aspect) of the story.

Project two: plot. Each group reviews its short story and converts the plot into a workable dialogue for a skit or puppet show. Each group then presents its dramatic version of the short story to the class, complete with costumes, props, sound effects, and other theatrical trappings.

Project three: theme. Each group prepares—with justifications—a thematic statement for its story. Members of the group then select a poem with a similar theme and present both story and poem to the class, explaining and justifying their thematic interpretation of both. Other students are expected to ask questions in preparation for a quiz on the material covered in this unit.

IDEAS FROM THE CLASSROOM

continued from page 5

Colonists in the Classroom

Here are two assignments my American literature classes enjoy when we are studying the colonial period.

After we have read and discussed Paine's *The Crisis*, I distribute the following broadsheet and announce: "Less than one hour ago, Dr. Richard Sagor (substitute the name of your principal, with his or her consent, of course) issued this statement to be given to the entire student body."

I, Richard Sagor, do hereby declare myself supreme ruler and emperor of West Linn High School. From this time on, the following regulations are in effect:

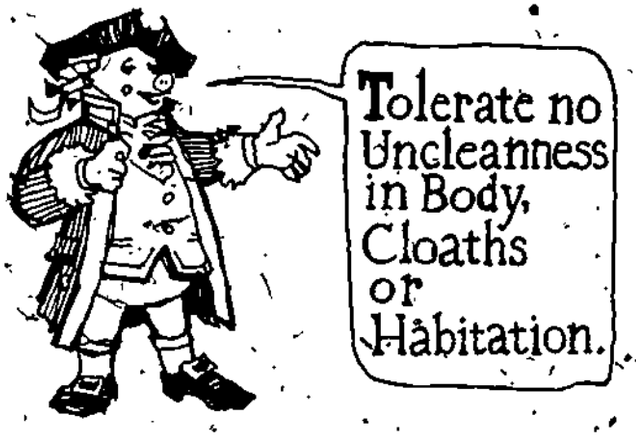
1. All students must bow to me whenever they see me.
2. Students are required to attend all classes, however, in order to be admitted to the classroom, each student must pay the teacher 50¢. Of this 50¢, the teacher will pay me 45¢.
3. All students going from the Old Building to the New Building, or from the New Building to the Old Building, must pay a toll of 65¢. Students must have exact change.
4. Guards will be posted at all exits of the school. Students must have permission from me, in writing, before they may exit the building.
5. At any time students may be searched and any of their possessions may be confiscated. To apply for the return of their possessions, students may submit to Mr. Rollins a list of confiscated articles with reasons why they should be returned. His decision will be final.
6. Students must pay 75¢ or half of their homemade lunches to the faculty guards upon entering the cafeteria. All students are required to eat lunch in the cafeteria.
7. Students wishing to use the Smoking Lounge will be escorted by faculty guards to that site. Upon arriving, students will be required to pay a usage charge of five cigarettes to that guard.
8. All students will be photographed, fingerprinted, and voiceprinted for positive identification.
9. Refusal to comply with any of the above regulations will result in monetary fines and/or imprisonment, without food, in the underground swimming pool at West Linn High School.

Have a nice day!

Signed,
Richard Sagor

After students have read the statement and order has been restored, I make this assignment: Write a speech in the manner of Tom Paine, giving your reactions to the Sagor memo and your ideas about what should (could) be done about it.

The second writing assignment in the colonial period comes after students have completed their study of Franklin. We share two or three of Aesop's fables, noting the characteristics of the fable form. The assignment: Choose one of Franklin's maxims and write a fable that illustrates it.



Robert L. Hamm, West Linn High School, West Linn, Oregon

Approaching "My Last Duchess," Pen in Hand

Browning's poem is an excellent vehicle for writing assignments, which can vary from sketches and drafts never to be reworked to polished and edited "best-work" papers. I have categorized these writing suggestions to reflect how I use them, but many, of course, fit more than one heading.

Journal Entries

1. Describe a person who reminds you of the Duke.
2. Describe a person who reminds you of the Duchess.
3. Describe the visit of the Envoy from his point of view.
4. Describe the Envoy's visit from the Duke's point of view.
5. Complete: "If the Duke lived today . . ."
6. Write a diary entry in which the Duchess describes a typical day in her life.

Activities for Individuals or Writing Partners

1. Write a scene with dialogue between the Duke and Duchess at the height of a conflict. Indicate through a symbolic object the outcome of the scene.
2. Write a dialogue between the Duke and his bride-to-be in which the subject of his last wife is discussed.
3. Write a newspaper account on the death of the Duchess.
4. Write an article for the society page about the Duke's engagement.
5. Describe the Duke as Fra Pandoff might if the artist were outraged by the Duke's treatment of his wife.
6. Describe the Duke as his father and role model might.
7. Produce a diamanté about the Duke and/or the Duchess.
8. Write a formal (scholarly) paper in which you analyze the social, historical, philosophical, psychological, or aesthetic values of "My Last Duchess."
9. Write a critical paper in which you address *what* Browning says as well as *how* he says it. Incorporate your aesthetic judgment: How well does he say it? Is it worth saying?

Group Activities

1. Compile a list of terms that describe the Duke. Discuss the connotative and denotative meanings of the terms.
2. Clarify the characterizations of the Duke, the Duchess, and the Envoy.
3. Load a description of the Duchess with emotional words as you describe her relationship with Fra Pandoff, with the servant (the "officious fool"), and with the white mule. Develop a favorable bias first and then an unfavorable one, but change no facts.
4. Refine the dialogue scenes written earlier or develop new ones for dramatization on videotape or as classroom theatre.

Ben J. Stewart, Pine Forest Senior High School, Fayetteville, North Carolina

All Hail, Macbeth

Each year when it's time to read *Macbeth*, students approach the task with reservations. They've heard from older classmates that it's fun but also that it's rough. Each year I create a classroom that reflects my enthusiasm for the task ahead and stimulates their curiosity.

Before students enter the room (preferably on Monday, to give me time over the weekend for preparation), I have used the chalkboards, bulletin boards, walls, and windows to display words and symbols relevant to the play. I recycle Halloween decorations, hanging cardboard witches and cats from the ceiling. I border the bulletin boards with black and grey paper. From tree branches I hang daggers, shields, bloody swords, and a golden crown—cutouts or other replicas. A witches' kettle with dry ice creates a wonderful effect, and of course the room is darkened. The opening scene is playing on record or tape as students enter, but ghostly music of your choice may be substituted.

I stimulate interest in the action of the play itself by writing on the board as many words as I can think of that suggest the play: Murder! Ghosts! Regicide! Insanity! War! Witches! Blood! Infanticide! Prophecy! Daggers! Somnambulism! Swords! Love! Hate! Passion! Death! Suicide! Greed! Ambition! Power! Politics! Assassins! Soliloquies! Grief! Tragedy! Students are certainly provoked into questions and comments—even if only to inquire if the teacher has finally gone off the deep end.

Using the words on the board and the objects about the room as springboards to an introductory discussion, I point out the relevancy of the play to twentieth-century audiences:

1. Political assassination and its consequences
2. Warfare and treason
3. Marital relationships
4. Power and politics
5. Ambition and greed
6. Tragic consequences of personal desire for power

Most students agree that this list has a current ring, and I try to establish that reading *Macbeth* can help us to understand our own times. Later, I will encourage students to become involved in the play itself—by presenting scenes, by viewing films, by listening to recordings, even by studying maps of Scotland. But day one has put us all in high spirits for tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow.

Patricia S. Gray, Northside Independent School District, San Antonio, Texas

Bible as Literature

When I teach the Bible as literature, I use music and film to enrich the course and to motivate students. Slides and filmstrips are readily available and easy to choose from. Films are also easy to find although I try to select ones that students would not otherwise see. D. W. Griffith's silent film *Judith of Bethulia* has become a favorite with my classes.

The music I choose ranges from classical to reggae to rock. I play it at the onset of the class period and as I take attendance or check homework. Below is a discography of some of the music I've used. It's a short list that excludes the more obvious: medieval chants, gospel music, and opera, which are found easily in the library's card catalog.

Baez, Joan. "Little Moses" in *Joan Baez*. Vanguard, RES9078.

Baez, Joan. "Put Your Hand in the Hand" in *Blessed Are . . .* Vanguard, VSD657011, 1970.

Chad Mitchell Trio. "The Virgin Mary" in *Reflecting*. Mercury, SR60891.

Collins, Judy. "King David" in *Bread and Roses*. Elektra, 7E1076, 1976.

Dowe, B., and F. McNaughton. "Rivers of Babylon" in *The Harder They Come*. Mango Records, MLPS9202, 1972.

Handel, George Frederick. *Messiah*. Columbia Masterworks, MZL263.

McLean, Don. "Babylon" in *American Pie*. United Artists, UAS5535, 1971.

Peter, Paul, and Mary. "A Man Went into Egypt" in *Moving*. Warner Bros., W51473, 1963.

Rice, Tim, and Andrew Webber. *Jesus Christ Superstar*. MCA Records, MCA2-10000, 1970.

Rice, Tim, and Andrew Webber. *Joseph and His Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*. MCA Records, MCA399, 1974.

Schwartz, Stephen. *Godspell*. Bell Records, 1102.

An interesting assignment uses Psalm 137:1-6 and the Babylon songs by Dowe and McNaughton and by McLean. The contrast between the traditional treatment and the reggae helps students explore the meaning of the psalm.

At the end of the unit, students hand in their own creative projects, including posters, paintings, sculpture, music, poetry, and even original film. Although they balk at first, they usually find the task challenging and are for the most part highly successful.

Mindy Chermak, John Dewey High School, Brooklyn, New York