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ABSTRACT
                 Contributed by English teachers across the United
States, the activities contained in this booklet are intended to
promote the effective teaching of English and the language arts.
Teaching strategies offered in the first section of the booklet are
designed to stimulate language exploration with such activities as
designing and carrying out independent research, using reading logs
as motivators, passing along good news to parents, preparing oral
book reports on "how to" books, and using comic strips and cartoons
to teach many elements of language and literature. Activities in the
second section are designed to stimulate an appreciation and
understanding of literature. Specific activities in this section can
be used to help students understand the distinction between plot and
theme, focus their responses to a reading, link their own experiences
to those of a protagonist, write poems in the voice of a particular
character, understand and write character sketches, learn about Greek
myths and monsters, and plan and carry out classroom protests.
Activities in the third section, intended to help students improve
the conception and clarity of their prose through prewriting and
writing, include student self-evaluation and goal-setting, describing
favorite assignments in a letter to parents, writing about world
events that have touched their lives, and keeping track of multiple
plot lines as they write their own interactive books. (SR)

IDEAS plus

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IDEAS Plus

A Collection of Practical Teaching Ideas

Book Six

Contents

Foreword

IDEAS Plus and its quarterly companion NOTES Plus are the principal benefits of NCTE Plus membership. IDEAS Plus is sent out at the end of the summer so that teachers will have it in hand as they begin the school year.

Most of the ideas collected in this sixth edition of IDEAS Plus were originally submitted at an Idea Exchange session at an NCTE Annual Convention or Spring Conference. The rest of the ideas in this volume were contributed by readers of NOTES Plus and IDEAS Plus.

1 Language Exploration

Whether they realize it or not, students explore language in many different contexts outside the classroom—for example, in quizzing one another for the latest news; in finding clever nicknames for familiar people and places, in freely embellished storytelling about "what happened to me last weekend"; in exchanging puns, put-downs, and popular jokes; in poring over song lyrics; and in creating and using their own special means of communication, the current slang.

The activities presented here take a more deliberate look at language, but explore some of the same areas. One activity requires students to come up with questions they would like answered and then to do the necessary research; a strategy on comic strips can help students identify hyperbole, another activity asks students to make connections between works of literature and pieces of music; and a comparison of British and American English makes students more aware of the subtle ways in which a language develops and changes.

British English

As a rose is a rose is a rose, so many students assume that English is English no matter where it's spoken. This activity points out just a few of the differences between American English and British English. It makes students take a little closer look at a language they are used to taking for granted, and gives them a few things to watch for the next time they read a British novel or see a British film.

The teacher will need a copy of Norman W. Schur's *British Self-Taught. With Comments in American* (Macmillan, 1973) or another source that describes in simple terms the differences between British and American varieties of English. Schur's book includes thousands of British words, phrases, and idioms, as well as their American equivalents. Further, it includes etymologies of many of the words that Schur has defined.

Using an overhead projector, a chalkboard, or a handout sheet, the teacher provides students with a list of Briticisms, such as the follow-

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ing: *boot, convenience, lift, spanner, solicitor, somerset, buttered eggs, biscuit, May Week, mean,* and *dear.*

Once students have examined this list, they may work in small groups or as a class to determine the meaning of each term. The teacher should also encourage students to think about the possible origins of each term. After students have made their best guesses, the teacher can share with students the actual meaning and etymology of each Briticism. The American equivalents can be listed on the chalkboard: *trunk (of an automobile), restroom, elevator, wrench, lawyer, padded saddle, scrambled eggs, cracker* or *cookie, commencement week, stingy,* and *expensive.* The discussion might also include some attention to cultural and historical events or institutions that have contributed to differences in the two varieties of English.

Duane Roen, University of Arizona, Tucson, Arizona

Inquiry and Investigation

Here is a popular strategy that involves students in independent research on areas of their own interest. Student creativity is required both in coming up with research topics and in researching their answers.

I supply these guidelines:

> Your assignment is to investigate something that interests you. Your investigation topic could be anything that you wonder about or would like to know, such as "Where can one go to learn to be a forest ranger?" "How is a Pepsi bottle made?" "What kinds of ingredients are in my favorite perfume, 'Charlie'?" First, think of three inquiries of your own and list them below.
>
> 1. _____
> 2 _____
> 3. _____
>
> Now choose one of the inquiries you listed. (Save the others for another time.) Think about how you might find information. You will probably want to start at the library, where you can use the card catalog to find books on your subject. The reference librarian may be able to suggest additional resources. Also consider the *Reader's Guide,* magazines, almanacs, atlases, and encyclopedias.

Depending on your topic, you might find information by talking to family and friends, by interviewing teachers or local business people in related fields, by looking in the yellow pages of the phone book and calling, writing, or visiting businesses or factories, or by contacting public officials.

When you have gathered enough information, write up the results of your investigation, including these four sections:

1. Introduction: What did you decide to investigate, and why?
2. Procedures: How did you go about your search for information?
   What proved to be your most useful resources?
3. Findings: What did you learn about your topic? (You may use any appropriate method to present your information—an outline, graphs, tables, posters, etc.)
4. Conclusion: How will you use what you learned? Describe how the results of your investigation will affect you.

After writing up your findings, present them orally to the class. Be prepared to answer questions about your investigation and what you learned.

Iris Tiedt, Northern Kentucky University, Highland Heights, Kentucky

Teaching Imagery through Induction

The concept of imagery can be a difficult one for students to grasp. In *A Handbook to Literature* (4th ed., Bobbs-Merrill, 1980), C. Hugh Holman defines an image as "a literal and concrete representation of a sensory experience or of an object that can be known by one or more of the senses." The following classroom exercise not only helps students arrive at an understanding of imagery but also helps them understand how individual images can combine to create a complex pattern.

The first step in the exercise is to place on the chalkboard the partially filled chart below. Don't yet define *imagery* for your students. Ask students to read through the chart and to identify what the three items in the first row across have in common. It shouldn't take too long for students to figure out that *crickets*, the *murmur of voices*, and the *snap of sails* are all *things you can hear* Write *hearing* as the fourth entry in that row. Continue in the same way with the items in the other four rows, until students have determined that the

five rows can be related, respectively, to *hearing, seeing, smelling, tasting,* and *feeling* or *touching.* Fill in the fourth column with these terms as each is discussed.

cricket's cry	murmur of voices	snap of sails	
fireflies	candlelight	whitecaps	
fragrance of newmown hay	incense	stale fish	
lemonade	dry bread	salty air	
dewy grass	cold stone	splintery deck	

At this point, ask students to suggest possible definitions for *imagery.* Then read aloud Holman's definition of imagery and let students comment on it. Point out that each of the sensory details from the chart creates a simple image and that several details can be combined to create a more complex picture and mood.

In the second part of the exercise, students talk about the overall picture created by the combination of images in each column. Students may need to be reminded that all the details must be consistent with the overall picture. For example, the items in the second column might suggest a dungeon to some students; the one item that does not support this conclusion is *incense.* Considering *all* the sensory details given, some possible answers would be *a ritual, a religious ceremony,* or *a "high" church.*

Students can also be challenged to be as specific as possible in describing the overall picture. If a student suggests "being outside in the country" as the image created in the first column, you might ask,

Which words make you think of being outside?

Why do you think the image portrays the country and not the city?

Are there words that clue you in to the time of day?

How about the time of year?

Can you infer what the weather is like?

One assignment students could use after this introduction to the concept of imagery would be to list five images, each appealing to a different sense, which combine to create a single picture. These lists could be put on the chalkboard and the class could be challenged to determine the overall picture. After using this exercise, I teach several poems whose meanings depend heavily on imagery. Among my favorites are John Masefield's "Cargoes," Gwendolyn Brooks's "kitchenette building," and Amy Lowell's "Patterns."

Vicki Wheeler, Trenton Junior College, Trenton, Missouri

Words of Wisdom

Like most teachers of English, I have a vast collection of quotes that I treasure. Sometimes I share these with students as part of a writing assignment; at other times I'll put one on the chalkboard just before class begins and ask for oral reactions. However, there's one way to share memorable quotations that ensures they're not easily forgotten.

Using stencils, I trace on the back of a sheet of adhesive-backed paper, in reverse, the letters needed to spell out a selected quotation. After cutting the letters out, I choose the location to display the quote. I usually put shorter quotations above maps and near the clock, and longer quotations in an area between two windows. One of my favorites—the single word *ARETE*, which is Greek for *excellence*—goes in a prominent spot near the doorway.

When I want to change a quotation, I simply peel the letters carefully from the wall and place them on wax paper. The wax paper can then be rolled up and stored indefinitely. It's a good idea to write the saying on a $3'' \times 5''$ card and store the card with the letters for that saying. I once stored a quotation without doing this and, upon unwrapping the roll a year or two later, couldn't remember what the jumbled letters were supposed to spell out.

How do I know this method captures students' attention? A few years ago a former student returned to visit my classroom. One of the first things she commented on was that I had changed the saying over the front chalkboard. "It used to say, 'You are special. Be the best you can be,'" she said. "I sat in my seat and looked at that saying every day and said to myself, 'I *am* special and I am going to do my best!'" Hearing how she had been inspired by that quotation, I felt glad that I still had it rolled up in the storage room!

Mary Sue Gardetto, Ankeney Junior High School, Beavercreek, Ohio

Leapin' Asteroids, Earthling!

My eighth graders are all science fiction lovers. Together we have
read, discussed, and written science fiction. While we were studying
grammar recently, I thought of an assignment that would give stu-
dents a chance to write imaginatively in their favorite genre while at
the same time they practiced the objective of the week—interjections.

This exercise best follows the study and discussion of interjections.
I divide the class into four to six small groups and then distribute the
following written instructions

Yo   ve just encountered a friendly being from the planet
Zyoid. This Zyoidan requests a tour of _____ (fill in your city's
name). As you lead _____ (fill in the Zyoidan's name) around
your city, he or she is amazed at the progress of the Earthlings.
Write the dialogue that takes place between you and _____ (fill
in the Zyoidan's name) at one particular spot in your city. De-
scribe your surroundings, the significance of the place, and the
Zyoidan's reactions to this place. Remember to use interjections
in your dialogue. What are the Zyoidon's exclamations and par-
ticular (or peculiar) expressions? What does he or she say upon
encountering a beautiful sunset? When angry or disappoi .ed?
Upon first eating a Big Mac? How does the Zyoidan react to our
movies? Our video games? Our sports and recreatior Our rock
music? Be creative:

After you have edited and perfected your dialogue, get to-
gether with the members of your group and take turns reading
each other's papers. Pick the best dialogue and choose people to
play the parts of the various characters. Present your dialogue
to the class.

The completed dialogues can be posted on the chalkboard, or per-
haps published in a special edition of the class newspaper. P.T.A.
meetings are always good places to let students show off their skills
with pen, paper, and imagination!

Cristy Edwards, Sequoyah High School, De Kalb County, Georgia

Reading Logs

This idea is an adaptation of an article on "home reading contracts"
in the *Great Paperback Contest Book* (Scholastic Book Services,

1986). Reading logs have been a very successful reading motivator for seventh-graders in our school. Students choose reading material that is of interest to them and at their own level, and, by reading daily, develop a habit of reading for pleasure and for information. Both student and parent response to this program has been rewarding.

Students use copies of the log sheet s'   below to record the material and the amount of time they spend reading outside the classroom each day. (Time spent reading textbooks is not included.) A parent or guardian reads and signs each record to verify that it is accurate. Students receive credit for turning in a reading log each day (or, if the teacher prefers, for turning in a seven-day readin   at the beginning of each week).

My Daily Reading Log

Date _____

Name _____

Book title and author _____ _____

_____

Number of pages read _____ _____

Name of magazine and title(s) of article(s):

_____

_____

Name of newspaper and title(s) of article(s): _____

_____

_____

Other reading material:

_____

_____

Time spent reading. _____

I verify that this is accurate.

_____

(signature of parent or guardian)

Once a month, students are asked to write a journal entry in response to something they have read. Students might choose to describe their feelings regarding a reading, to write in depth about an idea that inspired them, or to respond to a reading in some other way. Students also have the chance to tell their classmates about any reading material that they found especially interesting and would like to recommend.

Ken Helinski, Memphis Intermediate School, Memphis, Michigan

Giving Parents the Good News

One of my ongoing goals is to communicate with parents more frequently, to let them know when their kids are doing well and are showing real progress. In the past I have sent reports home at mid-quarter and have occasionally called home to give a good report. This was more haphazard process than an organized effort because there just never seemed to be enough time to do the job well.

Finally, however, I have found an efficient way of passing along good news to parents. Two years ago our school district adopted a motto reflecting the philosophy of the district: "Pride in Achievement." As part of the campaign to make the community and the students aware of how we teachers felt about education, our district printshop printed this motto on bumper stickers and postcards in our school colors (green and gold). I now use these postcards, which are available to teachers in quantity, for communication with parents.

During the first week of school, I have each student fill out a 3" × 5" index card with name, home telephone number, and semester schedule. At the same time, I have the student address a postcard to his or her parents or guardians and paperclip the two cards together. I then file these cards alphabetically in a file box. When a student has written a particularly creative short story, earned an A on a unit test, given an interesting oral book report, or simply shown improvement in neatness or accuracy, I pull out the pre-addressed postcard and write a few lines letting his or her parents know. Since the district sends the cards, all I have to do is put them in the school mailbox.

My students and their parents enjoy this system; students frequently ask me if I could send a card home when they have done something of which they feel particularly proud. During the first nine weeks of this school year, I sent out over sixty of these cards, sixty pats on the back that formerly would have been passed by.

Jeanette Greiling, West Linn High School, West Linn, Oregon

The Lonely Tape Recorder

A few years ago, while wandering through the school library, I noticed the rows of tape recorders gathering dust on high shelves. I decided to dust them off and put them to work. I have since found the tape recorder a valuable aid to learning in the six activities outlined here:

1. Students in several different classes write and produce radio commercials. They record their commercials on cassette tapes, complete with music and sound effects. Students then swap tapes between classes and evaluate the effectiveness and professionalism of commercials from other classes. This activity provides original and often humorous material that can be used in discussion of propaganda and persuasive advertising techniques.

2. Students in my advanced class create original radio plays and present them to an audience. One tape recorder is designated the "master" and is used to record and play dialogue and the background sounds that can be produced in the classroom. Several "secondary" tape recorders are used to record sounds outside the classroom. During the presentation, the student director controls the "master" recorder and cues in the appropriately sequenced sounds from "secondary" recorders.

3. To provide individualized help to students with limited language ability or English proficiency, I tape-record novels and short stories along with accompanying questions. The student records his or her answers on a separate cassette which allows me to listen and respond without the time constraints of the class period.

4. I tape-record my spelling lists for Friday spelling tests. This sharpens my students' listening skills, since the tape won't repeat a word four times as I sometimes do. It also saves me from having to read the list aloud for each class. As an added benefit, students who miss the test can come to my room and take the test without requiring my undivided attention.

5. I play classical or modern background music during certain writing assignments to create a mood or provide a relaxed atmosphere. (I have found suitable records at greatly reduced prices at discount outlets.)

6. I often prerecord class assignments to assist my substitute teacher. This maximizes concentrated listening and minimizes behavior problems. And no student can accuse the substitute of giving misinformation or confusing directions.

I encourage all teachers to dust off those recorders and come up with other uses for this sometimes forgotten and certainly undervalued machine.

Jane Combs, Dacula Middle School, Dacula, Georgia

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In Praise of "How To" Books

I recently switched to a new approach to the book report—the "how to" book report. I explain to students that "how to" books are available for practically anything they might want to learn, make, or do. I make this prediction to students: "All of you will at some time find a use for a 'how to' book, whether to save money, learn a skill, improve at a game or sport, pick up a hobby, solve a problem, or simply enjoy the satisfaction of learning something new." I point out that "how to" books also provide something else—a model for how to teach others what you know. To acquaint students with the variety of "how to" books available, I ask them to prepare oral book reports on "how to" books of their choice.
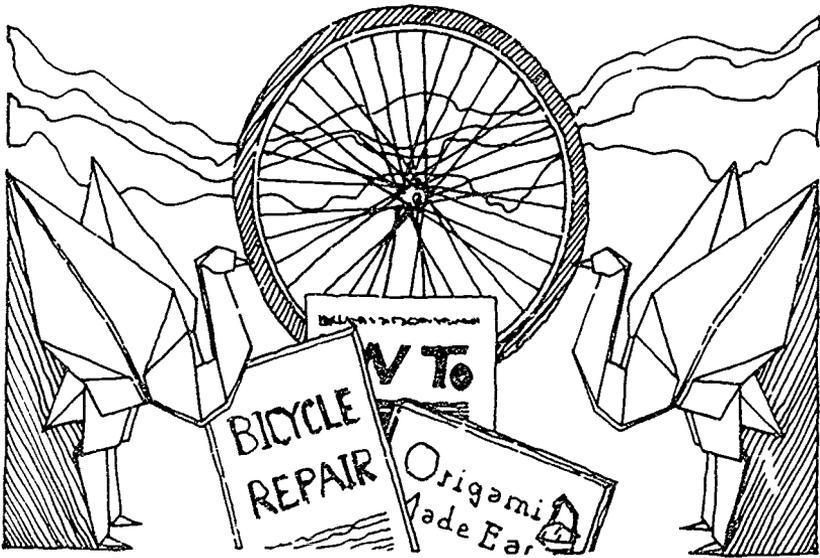
Since our school has a very limited number of books in this genre, I ask students to select their books from the local library. I approve students' book choices and provide a sign-up sheet for presentation dates. Students then have six weeks to prepare their reports.

As part of his or her report, each student is to provide a three- to five-minute demonstration of something explained in the book. For instance, a student might show the class how to mend a hole in a bicycle tire, fold an origami bird, pronounce several phrases in a foreign language, tie a sheepshank knot, or perform a card trick. Students are responsible for gathering or making any materials,

ingredients, or audiovisual aids necessary for their demonstrations. Students should time their presentations. For practice, they may present their reports to family or friends and make changes based on the reviews they get.

The reports that resulted from using this assignment in my classroom have been varied and fascinating. Topics have included everything from cooking (we ate the results), to grooming a cat, to embalming a body (using a student volunteer, of course!). Because of the emphasis on teaching something to the class, students seemed less intimidated than usual at speaking in front of a group. I scheduled five three- to five-minute reports each day. After each report, all students wrote the speaker a brief note, mentioning something that was especially good about the presentation and something that could have been improved.

Ann Marie Williams, Hardin County High School, Savannah, Tennessee

Short Story Read-Aloud

I am convinced that reading and hearing quality compositions contributes to good writing. For the past several years, I have used the following activity with my ninth graders with great success. At the end of a short story unit, during which all students try their hand at writing short stories, I set aside a class period for the reading aloud of the best writings. My secret to fitting not three, or four, but ten stories into one class period is to use more than one classroom! Here's how I do it:

1. With students' help, I select the ten best short stories from those written by students during our short story unit. The authors of these stories will be the readers and will be asked to read their stories for two different audiences on reading day. Readers are free to become listeners during the time when they are not scheduled to read. (Each short story used in this activity should be able to be read aloud in eight minutes or less.)

2. I arrange for the use of five neighboring classrooms for our reading session. It happens that, so far, I have always had access to five empty classrooms for this activity, but most teachers will probably need the cooperation of several colleagues in adjacent classrooms. The activity can be implemented in the same way using occupied classrooms, with students in neighboring classrooms forming part of the audience for the ten student authors.

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It also would work to adapt the activity for use with two or three classrooms rather than five.

3. Several days ahead of time, I prepare a handout sheet that contains a brief summary of each of the ten selected stories. I distribute these handouts to my students and review procedures for reading day.

I explain that our forty-five-minute class period will be divided into four eight-minute time blocks, with one to two minutes in between stories for moving from room to room and settling down again (and a few extra minutes to keep students from being late to their next class.) I include a chart like the following on the handout sheet.

Classroom	Time Block	Author Story
A	1st: 2nd: 3rd: 4th:	Lori R., "My Dreams" Lori R., "My Dreams" Rachel L., "Family Life" Rachel L., "Family Life"
B	1st: 2nd: 3rd: 4th:	Peter B., "Space Flight" Peter B., "Space Flight" Barry N., "Miracle Dog" Barry N., "Miracle Dog"
C	1st: 2nd: 3rd: 4th:	Heather T., "The City" Heather T., "The City" Steve R., "Why Me?" Steve R., "Why Me?"
D	1st: 2nd: 3rd: 4th:	Rona P., "My Brother, the Comedian" Rona P., "My Brother, the Comedian" Yan D., "Winning" Yan D., "Winning"
E	1st: 2nd: 3rd: 4th:	Elena R., "A Walk by the Canal" Elena R., "A Walk by the Canal" Terry A., "My Summer Job" Terry A., "My Summer Job"

Students indicate which stories they want to hear by placing checkmarks next to four different time-blocks on the diagram. Students are to use their handout sheets for reference during the reading period, so that they know where to go to hear each story. Because of the varied interests of the listeners, the distribution of listeners is usually fairly equal.

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4. At the beginning of the class period on the appointed day, students proceed to the room indicated on their handout sheet to hear their first story. After one or two minutes of "settling time," I ring a bell signaling the five readers to begin. After eight more minutes, a second bell indicates room change and settling time. (Students are asked not to change rooms until the bell, even if their readers finish early.) A bell two minutes later means silence and reading time again. I move from room to room making sure everything goes smoothly, and taking pleasure in the sight of my students reading and listening to short stories that grew out of our own short story unit.

Beverly Haddican, Mount Airy Middle School, Mount Airy, Maryland

The Funny Papers Revisited

I often use comic strips and cartoons to help my students recognize figurative language and review vocabulary.

Here are several assignments that are popular with my students:

1. I distribute a cartoon that uses simile, metaphor, or hyperbole and ask students to identify what figurative language technique is being used. For example, to illustrate hyperbole, I have used a *Crankshaft* comic strip (Batiuk and Sayers) in which a bus driver is described as having a reputation for backing up cars behind him: "He used to get lines so long that cars went out of style while they waited."

2. I give students a comic strip with a word whited out and ask them to read the comic strip and supply the missing word. Comic strips aren't necessarily limited to simplistic language; vocabulary words I have taught through comic strips include *atrophy*, *cliché*, *flagellate*, and *anachronism*.

3. After students read and discuss comic strips, I ask them to create their own. Each original comic strip is to include a vocabulary word studied in class, allude to a literary work, treat a current events topic, or use simile, metaphor, or hyperbole.

Comic strips can also be an effective means of provoking thought and comment on social issues. First I talk with my students about typical subject matter for cartoons and comic strips, such as family interactions, relationships between friends (including those between people and animals), romance, frustrating situations in daily life, important news events, and social issues. Then I present a collection

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of comic strips that touch on various social issues, and let students pick three or four each on which to write. This activity always provokes lively discussion as students present their comic strips and commentary. Here are examples of students' comments:

> On a *Bloom County* (Berke Breathed) comic strip about the arrest of a father for drug use:
>
>> I think that Breathed is trying to point out the hypocrisy that is rampant in America. For example, don't do any hard drugs, but it's OK to have a couple of beers.
>>
>> What distinguishes "social" drugs from "hard" drugs is the tremendous amount of capital generated for the United States economy. . . . Breathed is satirizing this favoritism.
>
> On a *What a Guy!* (Hoest) comic strip about sports scholarships:
>
>> This writer is trying to convey . . . the idea that kids should work harder and persist more in academics. . . . Once kids are in college, it will be academics, not sports, that carries them through.
>
> On a *What a Guy!* (Hoest) comic strip in which a young boy looking at Rodin's sculpture "The Thinker" says, "I bet he's thinking about that book report":
>
>> Each person has a different interpretation of not only art, but life itself. This cartoon shows that what the child was feeling at that period of time contributed to the way he viewed the piece of art.

Elfie Israel, Nova High School, Pembroke Pines, Florida

"Introduce Yourself" Booklets

In this project, students produce booklets that help introduce them to their classmates, and, in the process, they do some thinking about their goals, accomplishments, and future plans. This assignment is a natural accompaniment to a unit on self-esteem and self-awareness.

I give students the following list of items to be included in their booklets:

Required

> booklet cover: construction paper with a "doodle card" taped to the front. To make a doodle card, write your name on a $5'' \times 8''$

card and doodle around your name with colored pencils, crayons, or markers to personalize the card. Then cover your card with clear tape to protect it.

"The Questioning Me". questions about life that are important to you; your dreams, hopes, worries. Also, things you want to find out about.

"My Accomplishments": a description of a project you completed at some point in your life, along with an explanation of how you became interested in the project. Examples: sewing a dress, writing a story, building a shed, bicycling cross-country, creating a computer piogram, learning to use a photography darkroom. If possible, include something to help the reader understand your project, such as a photograph, a photocopy, a map, or a blueprint.

"My Goals": a description of several things you would like to learn or do in the near and distant future.

"My Biographer and Me": a one- or two-page biography of you, written by someone who has known you your whole life (for instance, written by a parent, an older brother or sister, a neighbor, or a family friend).

Include four of the following:

"The Future Me": your short-term and long-term plans for a job or career, leisure-time activities, travel, hobbies, and plans for a family.

"My Family and Me". describe your family members and what you like about each one; include pictures if you wish.

"The Relaxing Me:" write about your favorite forms of entertainment.

"People I Admire:" tell who your role models are, and why.

"What Makes Me Laugh?". describe your sense of humor; give examples of jokes, cartoons, and television shows, movies. or books that have made you laugh.

"Me Back When:" anecdotes and recollections from your past.

"Nature and Me." describe how you relate to the natural world and what you enjoy seeing or doing out of doors.

"Sports/Art/Music and Me": describe your love affair with sports, art, or music.

2.

"The Changing Me:" discuss things about yourself and your life that you think are changing or that you would like to change if you could.

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

What Exactly *Is* in a Name?

The following assignment was designed for college freshmen, but it is also an effective way to teach beginning research skills to high school students. It can increase vocabulary, develop biographical research skills, enhance students' appreciation of history, and encourage analytical thinking.

This assignment will work best if students have had an introduction to potential sources for biographical research, to the format for writing definitions, and to the format for documenting sources. When the assignment is completed, students' compositions provide interesting material for in-class reading and discussion. The guidelines for students are as follows:

Define one of the following terms in a composition of 600 to 800 words, using sources appropriate for biographical study. Support your definition by discussing the etymology of the word. In addition to identifying the man or woman from whose name the term is derived, include in your composition an example of at least one other historical or contemporary personality who could be described using the given term. Some possible examples are listed in the right-hand column below.

Terms	Suggested historical or contemporary personalities
martinet	George C. Patton
machiavellian	Fidel Castro
quisling	Jean Louis Darlan
maverick	Robert LaFollette
chauvinist	Adolf Hitler
sadist	Theodore Bundy

In addition to these six terms, the teacher might add to the list some other words derived from proper names, such as *simoniac*, *dunce*, and *masochist* Additional names could also be added to the list of suggested personalities; the names *Joe Kapp* and *Ted Turner*

might be added for the term *maverick*. In discussion before and after writing, students enjoy exchanging ideas about political figures and show business personalities currently in the public eye and deciding which ones best illustrate particular terms.

The assignment can be easily modified to allow students to introduce less famous examples of the terms as well. Most students are convinced they have had at least one martinet as a teacher. . . .

Sue H. Pine, Florida Community College, Jacksonville, Florida

Thought-Provoking Quizzes

I transform a routine checkup quiz into something a bit more stimulating by asking students to write the quiz questions. My students develop their thinking skills, and I gain a little extra time to spend where it's needed.

I give each of my students a slip of paper on which to write one quiz question. (For a longer quiz, or simply for more question-writing practice, students could be asked to write two or three questions each.) Questions may be true/false, multiple choice, or fill-in-the-blank. The correct answer is to be written on the other side of the slip of paper. To help students write better questions, I read aloud several sample questions and ask students to note those that are too specific, too vague, or too simple. We briefly discuss ways that these questions could be improved before students write their own questions.

As students finish writing, I look over their questions. I sometimes ask a student to word a question more clearly, to ask a more difficult question, or to ask a less specific question. The completed questions are collected and placed in a small box on my desk.

To conduct the quiz, I ask a volunteer to draw one question from the box. I ask students to listen carefully as I read that question aloud twice to the class. Students record their answers, and then I ask another volunteer to draw out a question. I continue to ask for volunteers and to read questions until the material has been sufficiently covered or until all the questions have been asked. Then students exchange their quizzes for correcting purposes.

Not only does this method of quizzing save me time, but after several different classes prepare quizzes, I possess a wealth of questions for a unit review, an exam, or quizzing future classes. And more importantly, students' questions give me an idea of what material they have mastered and what areas may need additional emphasis.

Carla J. Traun, Altoona High School, Eau Claire, Wisconsin

2 x

Comic Strips in the Classroom

Comic strips can be a useful tool in the classroom; they can help teach tone, symbolism, hyperbole, characterization, and other elements of language and literature. The activity list below is one I give to my students after we have assembled a number of comic strips and editorial cartoons from daily newspapers.

These ideas are not my own. Several have probably been around as long as teachers and comic strips have; some were suggested by colleagues of mine; and others were suggested by representatives of the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* during an open house on using newspapers in education (NIE). Most of these ideas have been tried in the classroom in conjunction with Jeffrey Schrank's *Understanding Mass Media* (National Textbook Company).

1. Comic strips tend to use a great many symbols. Look through a variety of comic strips and find as many symbols as you can. Draw each symbol and describe the way it is used.

2. To practice the art of inference, pretend that you are from another planet and that you and a friend are in a spaceship landing on Earth. On leaving your spaceship, all you find is the comic page from a newspaper. Consider what you might infer from examining the page of comic strips, including:

   > what people look like
   > the way people talk
   > the differences between people and animals
   > the types of conflicts people experience
   > what people do with their leisure time
   > the roles of men and women
   > what kind of humor people enjoy

3. Select a comic strip you like and determine the central character of the strip. Choose one adjective that best describes that character. Then find five things the character says or does that support your choice of adjective. You may also back up your choice by pointing out the visual details used to depict a character: for example: a "shy" character might have a bowed head and closed eyes; a "bullying" character might have a puffed-out chest and huge fists.

4. Draw a series of original comic strips based on a short story, play, or novel you have read in class. Before you begin drawing your strip and writing the dialogue, think about each character's main characteristics and how you will portray them in the comic

strip. For example, to portray a character as loud and angry, you might give him or her a large mouth and write his or her dialogue in thick, dark lines.

5. Rewrite a comic strip in the form of a narrative, using transition words to indicate the order of events. Be sure to include a description of setting, facial expression, action, and any other details illustrated in the strip that are important to the enjoyment of the story. Be especially careful in your use of quotation marks.

6. Select a comic strip character with a problem. Pretend you are this character and write a letter to one of the advice columnists, describing your problem in detail and asking how you can solve it.

7. Cartoonists often use stereotypes to make a point. List all the comic-strip stereotypes you can find and explain the ways in which each stereotype is one-sided.

8. Examine a comic strip whose last frame has been removed. Draw the concluding frame and add the dialogue.

9. Rewrite a comic strip as a short news article. Remember that news stories contain a lead paragraph followed by supporting details. Include the main ingredients of the story, the five w's (who, what, when, where, and why), and write an appropriate headline.

10. Choose two or three of your favorite comic strips and explain them to someone who has not read them.

11. Clip out at least seven editorial-page cartoons Read the editorial that accompanies each cartoon, as well as any news stories on the subject, and try to understand what each artist was trying to say. Then write a paragraph explaining the meaning of each cartoon; identify the people represented and any symbols used. Finally, put the cartoons and your paragraphs together in a folder to be shared with your classmates.

12. Find examples in comic strips that match the following devices found in film: frame, scene, low angle, high angle, camera movement, subjective camera, color used to influence feeling or mood, lighting used to influence feeling or mood. Make a scrapbook of your examples. Label the examples and write a paragraph for each, explaining why the technique in use at that point is appropriate.

Marilyn Rasel, Peters Township High School, McMurray, Pennsylvania

2 Literature

The study of literature is often a means to a deeper understanding of self, others, and the surrounding world. Toward that understanding and the other rich benefits of exploring literature, we have collected the following teaching strategies. Among them are an activity based on the writings of Confucius; an activity that draws parallels among songs, poems, and stories; an examination of literary characters' thoughts; a close look at detail in a passage from Steinbeck's *The Pearl*; and a companion exercise to Thomas Jefferson's "On the Rights of Man" that involves students in planning in-class protests about causes important to them.

Illuminating *Plot* and *Theme*

In discussing literature with middle school students, I have found that no concept seems more elusive for them than the distinction between plot and theme. After trying many approaches to help them understand, I discovered an exercise that seems to work.

I begin by compiling a list of words that, given a context, could have thematic significance. Examples might include *family, loyalty, trust, hopelessness, despair, ignorance* and *prejudice*. I select as many words as I have students, and I print each word on a strip of paper. Each student chooses one of these "key words," as I initially call them, with the instruction that he or she to find and cut out from a magazine or newspaper a picture that accurately depicts the chosen word. Students are further asked to tape or glue their pictures to pieces of construction paper and to attach the "key words" to the pictures as well.

The following day, students bring in their pictures, describe them to the class, and explain why they think their pictures fit their "key words." At this point, I prompt students to provide as many specific details about their pictures as possible. Since students tend to speak and write using vague generalities, this step is important if the final point of the exercise is to be made.

After each student has presented a picture, I st. ' a discussion of a recently read short story. (Any short story will do.) I help students see the parallels between the picture details, which are akin to the story's plot details, and the ' key words,'' which I compare to the st 5 theme(s). Examples of details from students' pictures and fro ue short story are useful in illustrating the relationship between the specific story details and its more generalized theme(s). Students come to understand how plot details lead the reader to the theme of a piece, just as certain details in students' pictures led students to think that those pictures were titting choices for their ''key words,'' which we now call, more aptly, ''thematic words.''

Robert A. King, Grand Island Middle School, Grand Island, New York

Freewritings for *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*

The following writing prompts are designed for use as focused freewritings before students read chapters from Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Students gain a deeper understanding of the text by linking their own experiences to those of the protagonist, Stephen Daedalus. (I adapted this idea in part from material by Jane Schaffer of Sanatee High School in San Diego.)

Chapter One

1. You are two years old. You are with your family when you see a field of cows. As a two year old, tell your parents what you see and think.
2. Something warm, something cold
3. You are six years old and being bullied on the playground. Describe your feelings.
4. You're at boarding school because your parents want you there. You would rather be at home. How do you feel?
5. Eagles
6. Your picture of hell

Chapter Two

1. Describe your memories of a relative you remember well.
2. Your family's finances have suddenly and unexpectedly decreased, and you are forced to move to a cheaper place. How do you feel?

3. You are troubled by what you see as the insincere behavior of some people you thought were your friends. They seem friendly, but you question how genuine they are. Describe your thoughts.

4. Describe your reactions as you listen to your mother and father recount tales of their youth.

5. You have been at boarding school for the school year. You're now home for the summer. What do you like about being home? What do you dislike about being home?

Chapter Three

1. Describe your view of heaven.

2. Write a sermon to the group of fourteen- to sixteen-year-old boys. Your objective is to make them feel guilty for all the real and imagined things they might have done or thought.

3. Define beauty.

4. You are sent to the Assistant Principal's office for something you did wrong. You are waiting to see him or her. How do you feel?

Chapter Four

1. Describe someone you respect/like/admire, someone who has had an influence on your life.

2. What do you feel remorse for?

3. The beach, including colors there

4. You've decided to join the clergy. What high and low points might you expect?

Chapter Five

1. Describe the relationship between you and your mother or father.

2. Define art.

3. You are going for a walk by yourself. Describe what you see and how you feel.

4. Describe a person whom you see as having spiritual beauty.

5. Describe an argument you've had with a friend or relative about religion.

6. Describe a time when you felt isolated from the "mainstream" of life.

Lynda McClain, La Sierra High School, Riverside, California

Focusing Responses to *1984*

George Orwell's *1984* generally evokes strong responses in readers.
After students read the book and discuss some of the more disturbing
images and issues conjured up by Orwell's prose, the following writ-
ing activities can help students focus their thoughts and responses. To
allow for individual differences and the varying levels of difficulty of
the assignments, students might be asked to choose one or two as-
signments to respond to in detail.

1. Read the following quotation from the novel.

   > Winston found that he was shouting with the others and
   > kicking his heels violently against the rung of his chair.
   > The horrible thing about the Two Minutes Hate was not
   > that one was obliged to act a part, but that it was impos-
   > sible to avoid joining in.

   Write about a time when you have been unwillingly caught up in
   the emotions of a large group.

2. Read the following quotation from the novel.

   > The paperweight was the room he was in, and the coral
   > was Julia's life and his own, fixed in a sort of eternity at
   > the heart of the crystal.

   Write a sentence that encapsulates part of your life just as this
   one encapsulates Winston's and Julia's lives.

3. Read the following quotation from the novel.

   > "The proles are human beings," Winston said aloud. "We
   > are not human." "Why not?" said Julia.

   Write a direct reply to Julia's question.

4. Emmanuel Goldstein describes the class structure of people in
   the world following the revolution. Describe the class structure
   within your world as you see it. Consider your group of friends,
   school, community, and country.

5. Read the following quotation from the novel.

   > "You asked me once," said O'Brien, "what was in room
   > 101. I told you that you knew the answer already. Every-
   > one knows it. The thing that is in room 101 is the worst
   > thing in the world."

   What would the Thought Police place in room 101 for you?
   Why?

Jeannine Hirtle, McCullough High School. The Woodlands, Texas

A Trio of Character Sketches

In our short story unit, each of my students develops a series of character sketches for an imaginary protagonist and then writes a short story based on that character. The following three activities are ones I assign *before* students begin work on their character sketches. These assignments use model passages to illustrate how character can be communicated.

1. *Physical description and dialogue* I distribute copies of the following description from Truman Capote's story "A Christmas Memory," or of another passage that suggests character traits through a description of physical appearance and one or more lines of dialogue.

   > A woman with shorn white hair is standing at the kitchen window. She is wearing tennis shoes and a shapeless gray sweater over a summery calico dress. She is small and sprightly, like a bantam hen; but due to a long youthful illness, her shoulders are pitifully hunched. Her face is remarkable—not unlike Lincoln's, craggy like that, and tinted by sun and wind; but it is delicate too, finely boned, and her eyes are sherry-colored and timid. "Oh my," she exclaims, her breath smoking the window pane," it's fruitcake weather!"

   After class discussion of what these details reveal about the woman, I ask students to write a one-paragraph character sketch suggesting one or more traits through a carefully written physical description and a line or more of dialogue.

2. *Action:* I distribute copies of the following description of Pip's sister, Mrs. Gargery, from Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations,* or of another passage that illustrates character through detailed action.

   > My sister had a trenchant way of cutting our bread-and-butter for us, that never varied. First, with her left hand she jammed the loaf hard and fast against her bib—where it sometimes got a pin into it, and sometimes a needle, which we afterwards got into our mouths. Then she took some butter (not too much) on a knife and spread it on the loaf, in an apothecary kind of way, as if she were making a plaister—using both sides of the knife with a slapping dexterity, and trimming and moulding the butter off round the crust. Then, she gave the knife a final smart wipe on the

> edge of the plaister, and then sawed a very thick round off the loaf; which she finally, before separating from the loaf, hewed into two halves, of which Joe got one, and I the other.

After class discussion of Dickens's choice of words, especially verbs (*jammed, trimming, moulding, sawed, hewed*), I ask students to write a one-paragraph character sketch suggesting one or more traits through the description of a detailed action, preferably an action taking no more than a few minutes.

3. *Metaphor:* I distribute copies of the description of Miss Murdstone from Dickens's *David Copperfield* or of another passage that illustrates character by indirectly comparing the person to an inanimate object.

> It was Miss Murdstone who was arrived, and a gloomy-looking lady she was. . . . She brought with her two uncompromising hard black boxes, with her initials on the lids in hard brass nails. When she paid the coachman she took the money from a hard steel purse, and she kept the purse in a very jail of a bag which hung upon her arm by a heavy chain, and shut up like a bite. I had never, at that time, seen such a metallic lady altogether as Miss Murdstone was.

In discussion, students point out the specific details that associate Miss Murdstone with metal and examine the significance of this metaphor. I then ask students to write a paragraph that identifies a character with an inanimate object in a way that illuminates the character's nature.

To provide even further practice in character development after the above assignments, I sometimes bring to class reproductions of portraits displayed in the National Gallery of Art. I let students each select one and then ask that they write character sketches of the people in the portraits, employing one or all of the techniques used in the first three assignments.

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

Themes in Stories and Songs

As a first-year teacher, I searched all year for interesting ways to introduce works of literature in class. I was fortunate enough to come

across the following strategy. which involves students in making connections between literature and music.

I begin by asking students if they can think of any songs whose words originated in literature. Typically cited are Iron Maiden's version of "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" and the Alan Parsons Project's album entitled "Tales of Mystery and Imagination—Edgar Allan Poe " the latter of which sets several of Poe's well-known stories to music. I then challenge each student to find a song that he or she likes and that has the same theme or idea as one of the literary works we have studied. (It's best to use this strategy during the latter part of the school year to ensure that students have a bank of literary works from which to draw.)
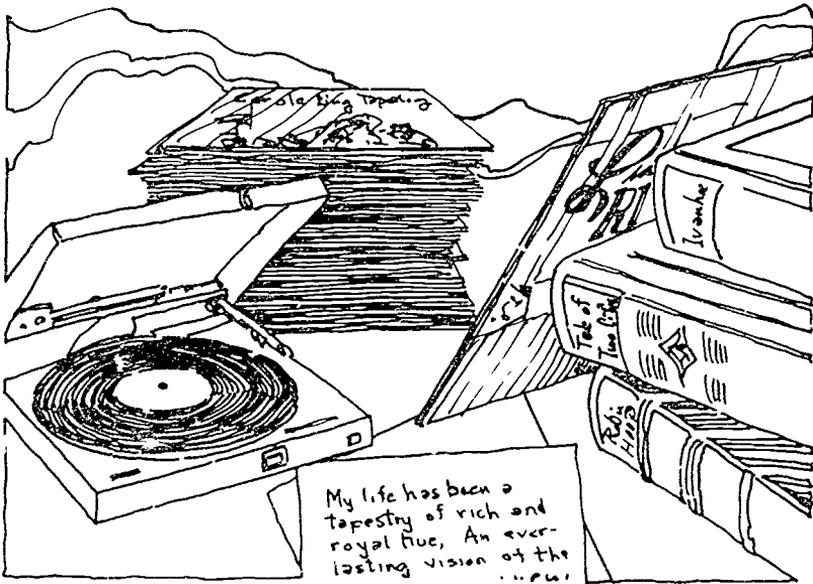
To complete the assignment. I ask each student to prepare and turn in the following items.

1. a recording of the song on a cassette tape

2. the words of the song written out in stanza form (often found on the jacket sleeves of albums)

3. preliminary and final drafts of a short paper discussing (a) the main theme or idea in the song and the theme of the literary selection and how they relate. (b) the effect of the style of music

on the theme; and (c) the reasons why the student chose the
song and the literary selection

4. answers to these questions: May I share your paper and/or idea
   with other classes? Would you rather I did or did not use your
   name?

Although reluctant at first, my students were soon listening intent-
ly to song lyrics on the radio and at home, trying to tie them in with
poems, stories, and novels they had read. One student related the
idea of premeditated murder in "Murder by Numbers" by the Police
to Poe's "Cask of Amontillado." Another discussed the use of vi-
gnettes in "The Wreck of the Edmond Fitzgerald" by Gordon Light-
foot and in Twain's "Huckleberry Finn." In writing their papers, stu-
dents found that the themes used in literature are as relevant to their
lives as are the themes and lyrics of their favorite songs. Collectively,
their work also provided me with a valuable teaching tool for intro-
ducing literary selections to future classes.

Kyle Blanscet, Westfield High School, Houston, Texas

Catcher in the Rye: "Allie" Poems

Each year when my junior English students read J. D. Salinger's
Catcher in the Rye, they are intrigued by the character of Allie, Hold-
en Caulfield's younger brother who dies of leukemia. Allie was a very
special boy who wrote poems in his baseball mitt so he would have
something to read when he was in the outfield waiting for fly balls.
Several years ago I began using the following poetry-writing activity
along with class study of *Catcher in the Rye.* It provides an effective
lesson in voice, since it requires students to try to mimic the thoughts
and language of an eleven-year-old boy.

I ask students to imagine what Allie was like, on the basis of Hold-
en's descriptions, and to write poems as if from his point of view.
Students warm up to writing by reminiscing as a group about what
they were like at age eleven, what they thought about, what their fa-
vorite activities were, and so on. Some typical student responses
might include the following: *I read a lot about airplanes and pilots, I
liked to make fun of girls (or boys), I practiced playing hockey with
my dad whenever I could, I spent all my time with my friends talking
about what boys we liked.* Then, working individually, students can
focus specifically on particular thoughts and favorite activities Allie
might have, and can turn their ideas into short poems. Following are
examples of "Allie" poems my students have written:

Dad

I used to think
my Dad was the strongest
and could beat up anybody.
But now I know he isn't the
strongest
and can't beat up anybody.
But he is still the best.

Bubble Gum

I really do like bubble gum.
It keeps my spirits high.
But I always seem to swallow
it
chasing down a fly.

John Erickson, Osseo Senior High School, Osseo, Minnesota

Reassuring Readers with Calendar Bookmarks

In the past, when I assigned the reading of a novel in English classes
and announced the due date, I saw looks of panic appear here and
there around the classroom. Being of a sympathetic nature, my first
impulse was to say to the panic-stricken students, "Okay, take as
long as you want." However, also being of sound mind, I realized the
foolhardiness of that statement and looked for another way to reas-
sure students.

Fortunately, at some point I remembered the old adage *you can eat
an elephant if you take it in small enough bites,* and was prompted to
invent the calendar bookmark shown here. It is basically a means to
lessen students' apprehension, and also helps students see that with
the right approach, they can meet a goal they thought unattainable.

The calendar bookmark is an individual reading schedule set up
and filled out by a student for a particular book. It tells the student
how many pages he or she needs to read each day in order to meet
the deadline, how long it will take to read each day's assignment, and
how he or she is progressing in meeting the schedule.

When I make a reading assignment, I tell students the deadline for
the reading and distribute blank copies of the calendar bookmark.
After students fill out the front of the bookmark with name, book
title, and book author, I demonstrate how to figure out the rest of the
information requested.

(front)   (back)

Calendar Bookmark

_____
Name

_____
Book title

_____
Author

_____
Pp to read/Days to read/Pp per day

_____
Time required per day

Reading Plan

S	M	T	W	Th	F	S

Actual Reading

S	M	T	W	Th	F	S

To Make a Calendar Bookmark

1. Divide the number of days you have to read this book into the total number of pages to be read. Example.

$$\frac{160}{\text{pages}} \div \frac{20}{\text{days}} = \frac{8}{\text{pages a day}}$$

2. Fill in the calendar by placing number of pages to be read each day in the first day's slot For the second day, add the number of pages to be read each day to the number in the first slot and place that sum in the second day's slot Continue adding in this manner until you've reached the total number of pages in the book

Example

S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
		8	16	24	32	
	40	48	56	62	70	

Example·

S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
		8	16	24	32	40
48	52	60	68	76	82	90

3. To find out how much time you need to read each day. read for five minutes Count the number of pages read Divide the number of pages you need to read each day by the number of pages you read in five minutes Then multiply by five to determine the total number of minutes Example

$$\frac{8}{\substack{\text{pages to}\\\text{be read}\\\text{each}\\\text{day}}} \div \frac{4}{\substack{\text{read}\\\text{in}\\\text{5 min}}} = (2 \times 5) = \frac{10}{\substack{\text{min}\\\text{needed}\\\text{each}\\\text{day}}}$$

Since not all books start on page 1, students need to check the page number on the first page of text before they calculate the total number of pages to be read. Then, to determine the number of pages

to be read each day, students divide the number of days available to read before the due date by the number of pages to be read. (Individual students may set up their calendars differently, some students may want to read seven days a week and others may want to read only on weel days. Of course, I point out that the fewer reading days, the more pages required per day.)

In each square of the "Reading Plan" calendar, students fill in the number of total pages that will have been read by that day. For instance, if a student writes down "8 pages" for the first day, he or she will write down "16" for the second day, "24" for the third, and so on.

I next ask students to calculate how much time they must spend reading each day to meet the deadline. To figure this out, each student reads for five minutes at his or her normal speed. (The material used for the timed test should be from the same reading assignment or of comparable difficulty.) At the end of five minutes, students count the number of pages they have read. They divide the number of pages to be read each day by the num' er of pages they read in five minutes, and multiply the result by five. This gives the number of minutes to be spent reading each day, which students copy onto the 'Time required per day" line.

The calendar labeled "Actual Reading" at the bottom of the bookmark is where students keep track of the actual number of pages completed each day. This lets students know how they are progressing in regard to the deadline. so that they can spend more time reading. if necessary, or take it easy for a few days.

My students have found this tactic reassuring and easy to use. The instructions on the reverse side of the bookmark remind students how to fill out the bookmark if they want to use the same technique again. That prospect is not as implausible as it sounds—after completing my class, several students have returned for bookmarks to use with books they are reading for other classes.

Rita Janescl‹k, Northview High School, Grand Rapids, Michigan

Reading the Minds of Literary Characters

After students have read an assigned literature selection or a story or novel of their choice, get them to examine the characters further with the following "mind reading" activity. Each student chooses a character and writes at least five thoughts that the chosen character could have had at some point during the story or novel Encourage students

to be creative, speculative, and specific. The character's thoughts may be written in the third person (from the point of view of the author or narrator) or in the first person (from the point of view of the character). The only stipulation is that the student be able to justify each thought using the text and his or her understanding of the character.

Each student reads his or her character's thoughts aloud to the class, first without identifying the character, so that members of the class have a chance to guess the character from his or her thoughts. Class discussion focuses on whether the "secret thoughts" seem to be in character and on which most vividly evoke the characters.

This activity could be adapted for use as a book report assignment or as an assignment to write detailed character analyses. Another idea would be to create a bulletin board display of characters' "secret thoughts"—either an entire display devoted to one story or book, or a display representing all the works read so far in the school year.

Anna Hilsenbeck, Volusia County Schools, Daytona Beach, Florida

Looking at Details in Depth

This lesson helps students see the importance of details in a piece of descriptive writing, understand how authors create characters, tone, and atmosphere, learn to visualize as they read, and learn to "show" and not just "tell" in their own writing.

The first requirement is a fine character description from a story or novel; I like to use the following passage from *The Pearl* by John Steinbeck:

> In his chamber the doctor sat up in his high bed. He had on his dressing gown of red watered silk that had come from Paris, a little tight over the chest now if it was buttoned. On his lap was a silver tray with a silver chocolate pot and a tiny cup of eggshell china, so delicate that it looked silly when he lifted it with his big hand, lifted it with the tips of thumb and forefinger and spread the other three fingers wide to get them out of the way. His eyes rested in puffy little hammocks of flesh and his mouth drooped with discontent. He was growing very stout, and his voice was hoarse with the fat that pressed on his throat. Beside him on a table was a small Oriental gong and a bowl of cigarettes. The furnishings of the room were heavy and dark and gloomy.

First, I distribute photocopies of the passage. I ask students to read it and write on the back of the sheet one or two sentences explaining what they thought of the doctor. I give students no hint as to what their reactic "should be," and I try to present the passage before students know anything about the story. Next, we go around the room and read the reactions out loud. Typically, most students react negatively. Sometimes students are hesitant to express their negative impressions because they think a doctor *should* be "a good guy," but perceptive students usually comment that the doctor appears to be lazy, self-indulgent, and materialistic.

After we discuss students' reactions, I ask students to list all the descriptive details they can find in the passage. I write these on the chalkboard, and we talk about how the details so carefully selected by the author have made us react in a certain way, how particular details in the character's surroundings lead us to view the character as lazy or materialistic.

My next request to students is that they create a doctor to whom they would react *positively*. I ask them to draw, if possible, on their own positive experiences with doctors they have known. Students suggest details at random, and I make a list: *he's working in his study, he's reading a medical journal, he's wearing old house slippers, he's drinking coffee from a mug that says "Grandpa,"* and so on. At this point, we discuss the arrangement of details. I ask, "Where might you begin your 'picture' of the doctor? Where might you end?" Finally, students write their own descriptions of a likeable doctor.

I go through much the same procedure in exploring atmosphere with students. I ask students to suggest details that create a spooky, eerie feeling, and I write the suggested words and phrases on the chalkboard. To help students brainstorm, I suggest they think of places they have been, animals that scare them, extreme weather conditions, and any other details from their experience that might contribute to an eerie atmosphere. Typical suggestions include *somewhere lonely, long stairways, old houses, attics, cemeteries, fog, strong winds, storms, cats, spiders, wolves, bats, leafless trees, creaking furniture.* I ask students to copy the list for future reference.

Next, I read selected passages from Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher" and "The Cask of Amontillado," and from Hawthorne's description of Dr. Heidigger's study. We note all the objects and words that contribute to the feeling of the story. Finally, using the list and these passages, students write a one-page setting that creates a vivid atmosphere.

These exercises enhance students' appreciation of a writer's selection of details; students learn firsthand that a specific detail can be more powerful than a general statement. To bring this point home, I like to ask my students, "Suppose Poe had just said 'The House of Usher was scary'?"

Wanda S. Moore, Hoover High School, Fresno, California

Easing into the Victorian Age

This strategy can serve as a gentle introduction to study of the Victorian Age. I have my seniors compare Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*, which we read in paperback, and Frances Hodgson Burnett's *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, which I show in the classroom on videotape.

Both works were written during the Victorian era—Dickens's story in 1843 and Burnett's 1886; both focus on an old man undergoing a dramatic change in attitude. And as we discuss the two works, many parallels become apparent. Our discussion of common elements usually includes the following:

1. hard-heartedness toward the poor (Scrooge/the Earl)

2. alienation from family (Scrooge/the Earl)

3. threat of loss (Scrooge sees the future/the Earl may lose Ceddie)

4. handicapped child (Tiny Tim/son of the Earl's tenant)

5. young boy with a kind, loving heart (Tiny Tim/Ceddie)

6. amazing changes in character (Scrooge/the Earl)

7. reconciliation (Scrooge with nephew/the Earl with sister and with Ceddie's mother)

8. philanthropy (Scrooge helps the Cratchits/the Earl helps tenants)

After we talk about these points and record supporting details from the story and the film, we move into a broader examination of what we can learn about Victorian life from each author's portrayal. Familiarity with the two works is helpful to students as they research Victorian social conditions and customs in order to compare and contrast Victorian times with the present day.

Mitzi Laxton, Pearland High School, Pearland, Texas

Olympian Zoo

Creating an "Olympian Zoo" can be an enjoyable way to motivate junior high students to learn more about Greek myths and monsters.

I begin by putting construction-paper bars up in the hallway outside my classroom, designating a large area for each of my five classes. During the next several class periods, students fill this "zoo" by researching and drawing creatures from their reading.

In each of my classes, I distribute the following list:

Creatures for the Olympian Zoo

> Calydonian Boar
> centaur
> Cerberus
> Charybdis
> chimera
> Cyclopes
> Erinyes
> Erymanthian Boar
> Furies (see Erinyes)
> Gorgons (Medusa)
> harpy
> Hecate
> Hydra
> Ladon
> Minotaur
> Nemean Lion
> Pegasus
> python
> Satyr
> Siren
> Scylla
> Sphinx

Each student chooses a creature to research and then follows the steps below.

1. Research your creature and take notes; record what it looks like, its role in Greek mythology, and its eventual fate, if known. Possible resources include books on Greek mythology and the encyclopedia.

2. Draw your creature, using colored pencils or colored felt-tip pens. As long as you include the characteristics that are detailed

in the myth, you are free to use your imagination in supplying additional det..ils.

3. On one side of a 3" × 5" card, print the information about your creature. Place your creature's picture in the Olympian Zoo and place your information card below the picture.

When the Olympian Zoo is filled, students visit it and take notes on the creatures using the creature list I distributed earlier. Students are always entertained by the different ways in which the same creatures were interpreted by other students.

Jane Semonian, Sandwich Junior High School, Sandwich, Massachusetts

Classic Journalism

Here's an oldie but goodie—a newspaper project with its roots in the class novel being studied. This project works particularly well when the novel's setting is somewhat removed from the familiar, and it can provide a break when the reading gets tough, as in the midst of a long classic. For example, I often introduce this assignment during our reading of *Great Expectations,* at the point when Pip departs for London. It helps establish a sense of setting for the rest of the reading.

Students select the type of article or newspaper section for which they wish to be responsible. The list of possibilities can be shortened or expanded on the basis of interest, the number of students, and the constraints of a particular novel. I generally ask my students to create a front page with major news stories (for example, "Local Boy Receives Fortune" for *Great Expectations);* an editorial page; an editorial cartoon; letters to the editor; interviews; sports columns; an "Ann Landers" column (or, in our case, "Dear Biddy"); articles and reviews on food, fashion, and entertainment; horoscopes; advertisements; classified ads; and comic strips.

Writing is done either in small groups or by individuals, inside or outside of class, depending on the time available and the conscientiousness of the students. Students vote on a name for the newspaper from among a list of suggestions brainstormed in class. Volunteers serve as editor- a position that requires selecting from the finished articles (usually only in the case of duplication of subject matter), ironing out inconsistencies among the articles, proofreading and editing, and arranging the layout. Fortunately for my classes, a colleague of mine who is a typing teacher encourages some of her advanced stu-

dents to undertake the final layo· . and typing as a project, but I've al-
ways found my own students willing to help out too.

This project has many benefits in my classroom: students are moti-
vated to undertake independent research on the novel's historical pe-
riod so as to make their writing more authentic; students willingly re-
vise and edit their work because they know it will be published and
distributed (to peers, parents, and administrators); students gain a
sense of shared accomplishment; and we all return to reading the
novel with renewed vigor and closer emotional ties to the characters.

Ellen Janis, Chino High School, Chino, California

Staging Classroom Protests

As the last step in a thematic unit that begins with Thomas Jefferson's
"On the Rights of Man" and ends with literature dealing with the dis-
satisfaction of the 1960s and early 1970s, I assign small groups to plan
and carry out protests on issues of interest to them. Students may
plan their protests on a large scale, but will have to settle for smaller-
scale versions when they actually present them in the classroom.
Classroom presentations may include speeches, posters, banners,
pamphlets, arm bands, and any other appropriate accompaniments;
class discussion follows each protest and helps students evaluate the
effectiveness of their message.

These are the instructions and questions that I give student groups:

Choose an issue that you feel needs attention and correction.
This issue may be local, statewide, or nationwide in focus. You
and your group will plan and carry out a protest to address this
issue. (Although in actuality you will be presenting your protest
in the classroom, plan and describe it as if you were carrying it
out in public or in whatever location you would choose.)

1. What groups and individuals are affected by this particular
   injustice?

2. What steps toward a solution to the problem have already
   been taken?

3. What will be your group's method of protest?

4. Why did you choose this method?

5. Where and when will the protest action take place? Why did
   you choose this time and place?

6. What is the desired result of this protest in the short term? in the long term?

7. Toward what authorities is this protest action to be directed?

8. What kind of coverage do you expect from the media?

9. Do you expect your protest to attract the attention of any local, state, or national political figures? If so, what type of response do you expect to receive?

10. Will your participation in this protest action have any long-term effects on your life?

11. How do you expect this protest action to affect the spectators? your family and friends? your peer group?

Suzanne Switzer, Brookville High School. Brookville, Indiana

A Response to *Dragonwings:* Researching Confucius

In Lawrence Yep's book *Dragonwings* (Harper & Row Junior Books, 1977), "the wise man Confucius" is introduced in conjunction with Uncle Bright Star's fondness for '' phrase "the superior man." I assign research on the life of Confucius to help students learn about Chinese culture and to enrich class study of *Dragonwings*.

I ask students to spend an evening or two at the library finding out as much as they can about Confucius's early life and objectives, his life as a teacher and scholar, his religion and philosophy, and his final years and influence. Students are also to look for and list well-known quotations by Confucius.

In class, students discuss their findings and read aloud favorite sayings, such as "Men's natures are alike; it is their habits that carry them far apart"; "Study the past, if you would divine the future"; and "Everything has its beauty, but not everyone sees it." I also give students a chance to write some wise sayings of their own, using quotations by Confucius as models.

If a volunteer can be found to make a batch of fortune cookies the night before (most Chinese cookbooks have a recipe), our discussion is enhanced by the enjoyment of fortune cookies and Chinese tea

Constance S. Kaiser, East Central High School, St Leon, Indiana

3 Prewriting and Writing

Prewriting and writing exercises can act as catalysts for many different kinds of learning. They can be used to deepen understanding of literature and drama, to provide an expression for students' creativity, to teach clear thinking, to introduce research skills, and to augment learning in many other ways.

The strategies collected in this section attest to the variety of roles writing can take on in the classroom. In one activity, students use writing to evaluate their work and set goals for the future; in another, students interview classmates and write their biographies; in a somewhat longer project, students keep track of multiple plot lines as they write their own interactive books; and in other activities, students receive a list of 101 writing topics, describe their favorite assignments in letters to parents or guardians, and write about world events that have touched their lives.

"School Today? It Was Fantastic!"

It would be nice to believe that our students give glowing accounts of their time at school to anyone who is interested. But most of us realize that a typical teenager, when asked "How was your school day?" is likely to answer without much thought, "Boring. We didn't do anything."

Suspecting that my students' parents or guardians might lack an accurate picture of a typical English class period, I assigned the following letter-writing project. Students wrote and sent their parents or guardians letters describing their accomplishments during the last grading period.

First, students recal I activities and assignments from previous weeks. As suggestions were brought up, I asked students to talk about what they enjoyed most about particular activities and what they thought they had learned. Eight volunteer "secretaries" listed suggestions, filling four chalkboards in no time. We examined the entries on the completed list and agreed that every entry could be categorized as *writing, literature, grammar,* or *speech.*

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I asked students to include in their letters one paragraph describing each of the four categories. From the list on the chalkboard students individually selected favorite assignments or activities to describe in detail, choosing four to six for each of the categories we had identified. Students wrote the topic sentences for these four paragraphs as homework for the next class period.

The day students brought in their topic sentences, they prepared introductory sentences explaining the letter-writing assignment and began on their first drafts. I assigned 500 words as the minimum length, students were to include detailed descriptions of the activities they mentioned.

Using their classmates as readers and proofreaders, students revised and edited their completed letters, examining spelling, punctuation, capitalization, topic sentences, transitions, and sentence variety. Then it was my turn to read the letters. I graded each letter on *content, following directions, meeting the deadline,* and *mechanical errors.* I wanted parents to see the criteria and markings I used in evaluating work, but didn't want to interfere with the reading of the letters, so I made my marks on a separate sheet of paper. The letter and grading sheet were mailed with a cover letter that I wrote, in which I explained that I knew many adolescents didn't discuss their academic experiences at home and that I wanted parents to have a sense for what their children were learning.

It was amazing how many parents responded with positive comments about this assignment, either by contacting me in person or by contacting the school principal. They were delighted to hear details about what their children were doing in school and to have the chance to review writing samples from classroom assignments. I also learned that many parents had sat down with their children to look over the editing mistakes indicated on my grading sheet

Because the results were so positive, I am extending this letter-writing activity to all my English classes. Not only does it reassure parents, but it gives students a sense of what they have accomplished over the previous weeks.

Jean Woland, Tamanend Junior High School, Doylestown, Pennsylvania

Interactive Adventures

My middle school classroom has been invaded by interactive books, books in which the reader makes choices about the plot and participates in the development of the narrative. My students, especially the

or~s who like science fiction, fantasy, and the game "Dungeons and Dragons," are reading these new books voraciously.

To capitalize cn students' interest, I decided to start a club specifically intended to produce some of these books. The club met once a week, giving students time to work on their books and giving me time to investigate individual progress.

At the first club meeting, I asked students to bring copies of interactive books from home or the library. We selected and read one as a group, and then examined several more for format. After making a list of typical characteristics of interactive books, we selected the format that we thought would work best for us.

First, we agreed on and charted a plot idea. The following is a sample of the type of chart we used. (This chart was created by a student for her story.' *Situations*, or *options*, were written above the lines; *outcomes* were listed below the lines.
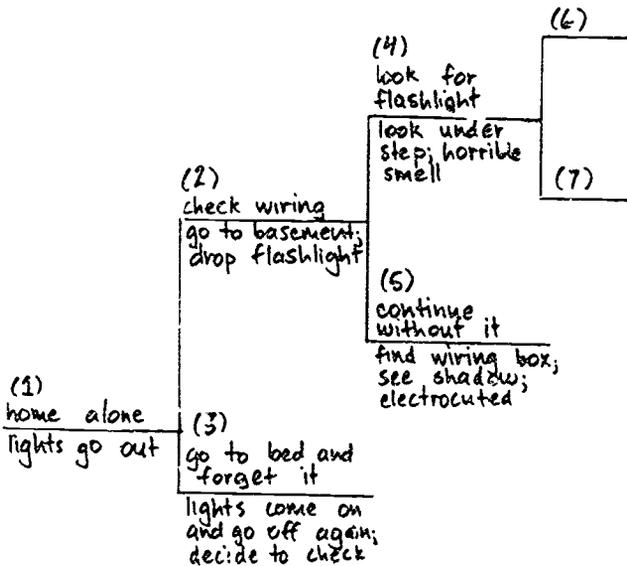
I advised students to record page numbers on their charts from the very beginning so that story lines would be easier to find in the rough drafts.

After students charted their stories, they began to write, sometimes changing a chart to fit new plot developments. We discovered, not surprisingly, that the students who kept the most accurate charts had less trouble keeping track of their own progress and avoided losing endings or leaving unfinished options in their stories.

Students decided for themselves when they needed conferences and what revisions they wished to make. Most students who requested conferences wanted advice about the options they, as authors, might offer the reader and about which options sounded best.

This activity turned out to be a thoroughly enjoyable learning experience for my students and me. Students practiced establishing opening situations, creating characters, and providing readers with different choices as to what characters would do. Writers had to continually juggle the various story lines that developed from each new situation.

I found that students enjoyed the episodic type of writing required by this new type of book. They could either follow one episode from beginning to end or work on several episodes at one time, whichever method suited them. Often when students couldn't decide which direction to take in a piece of writing, it was not because they didn't know what to write but because they had many options that sounded good to them and weren't ready to eliminate any.

The result of this activity was a collection of student-authored interactive books that we typed on the computer and printed on colored paper. Each author chose the page color for his or her book. Eighth graders (with the help of the industrial arts teacher and his printing press) printed the pages, and everyone helped punch holes and attach spiral binders. At the final club meeting, we read our stories, venturing into the worlds we had created and leaving our classroom behind.

Katie J. Brown, Cedar Crest High School, Lebanon, Pennsylvania

Character Glimpses

The development of characters can be a main source of interest and enjoyment in writing. When my students and I discuss character development and the use of detail, we talk about ways to reveal character through the following means·

physical description

actions and behavior

reactions of others to the character

quotations by and about the character

habits

the character's thoughts

insights or statements of character analysis made by the author

I ask students to think of examples of each technique. If time allows, students might also find examples of these techniques in stories and novels they have read.

Then I distribute copies of the following composition assignment.

Creating a Character Glimpse

First, make up ten statements that could be used as the basis for character sketches of ten different people (real or fictitious). Some examples are listed below:

1. He acted like God's gift to women.
2. She was the most uncoordinated girl I'd ever danced with.
3. He thinks he's destined to be rock music's new phenomenon.
4. He is always ready to pick a fight.
5. She was destined from birth to be a worrywort.
6. Even when things were going great, he could find something to complain about.
7. My mother is an incurable optimist.

Now select one of the statements you wrote and develop it into a "character glimpse," a composition that reveals one dimension of a person's character.

One paragraph is sufficient, but if your composition wants to expand, let the content dictate the length. To support your original statement of character, use details that correspond to the categories discussed earlier: physical description, actions and behavior, reactions of others, and so on. Remember to use concrete and specific examples to arouse your reader's imagination. Develop each example so that the reader can picture it fully. You may want to begin an example with a "starter" such as "One time I remember she . . ." or "Every time he enters the room, he. . . ."

When you are finished writing, show your composition to someone else. Ask your reviewer whether he or she thinks your composition has:

a strong initial statement
a clear focus on one quality
thorough development
a few memorable details that arouse the imagination
sentence variety
an effective closing statement
mechanical errors

As the final step, students who would like to share their character glimpses with the class may read them aloud.

Steve Athanases, Stanford University, Stanford, California

Essay Writing: From Beginning to End

For the many students that have problems with writing essay introductions and conclusions, this simple exercise may be helpful

After my students and I have discussed paragraph writing, examined several model paragraphs, and written some practice essays, I give students the body paragraphs from a short essay, removing only the introduction and conclusion. (The remaining paragraphs should number no more than four or five.) I usually select paragraphs from a well-written essay by a student in a more advanced class. I make sure that the topic of the essay is one familiar to my students and that the style, sentence structure, and vocabulary are appropriate.

The assignment I give students is to read the body paragraphs carefully and write an introduction and a conclusion for the essay. Students' introductions and conclusions should fit in smoothly with the body paragraphs, matching the topic and main points of those paragraphs and maintaining the same tense, point of view, tone, and writing style as much as possible.

When students finish writing, they are naturally interested in comparing their paragraphs with the original introduction and conclusion I distribute copies of the original essay and ask students to form small groups. In their groups, students read aloud their introductions and conclusions, compare them with the originals and with those written by their peers, and revise their introductions and conclusions based on the suggestions they receive. Besides the writing practice students gain, they see that there are a variety of ways in which the same essay topic might be introduced, and they have the opportunity to evaluate and discuss the strengths and weaknesses of alternate versions.

Rachel Faries, Alton High School, Alton, Illinois

Combatting the Vague and Verbose

When my sophomore English students write, be it descriptive essays, poems, or stories, they tend to use either vague, general sentences

v''h no de'ails whatsoever, or rambling, wordy sentences with too many details. To combat both these problems, I developed a group exercise that helps students write effective sentences with colorful, yet concise, detail.

To begin, I divide the class into groups of five. Each group is given a sentence with no detail. One sentence I have used is ''The cat walked by the building.'' The first task the group must undertake is to add detail to the sentence, with each student in the group contributing at least one detail. This ensures that enough detail is supplied and every pupil is actively involved. The sentences that come out of this first procedure are often of the rambling, wordy variety. For example, one group response was: ''The homeless, wandering cat who knew the streets moved slowly and carefully by the old, falling building which stored forgotten merchandise.'' The detail is there, but the sentence needs to be condensed. That's where the second step comes in.

I collect the sentences from the first step and discuss them with the class. Next, I talk about how specific, concise language can be more powerful than wordy language. Using the example sentence, I give instances where one word is more effective than two or more; for example, ''crept'' rather than ''moved slowly and carefully''. The sentences then go back to the groups for editing and revising. I stress that students should try to create a clear, specific image.

The final sentences read much better: the example above became ''The street-wise alley cat crept by the deserted, dilapidated warehouse.'' It still may not be excellent writing, but the process has been covered, and students see they are capable of writing better sentences.

Terri Huff, Greeneville High School, Greeneville, Tennessee

Developing an Eye for Editing

The current emphasis on peer editing is valid, but for peer editing to be a truly effective tool, students need to be trained to develop a ''critical eye.'' I prepared a handout sheet of tips to help my students recognize strengths and weaknesses in the writings they evaluate and to help students incorporate valid editorial comments in their writing. At the beginning of the school year I distribute copies of this handout sheet (shown below) and ask students to keep the copies in their notebooks as reference tools for their peer editing sessions.

Editing Tips

Concentrate on the positive. Look for *specific* things you like about the piece of writing, such as:

> a well-chosen word, sentence, beginning, or ending
>
> an effective description or vivid image
>
> clear, concise thinking; a well-stated point

Make specific suggestions. Again, be positive. Does the opening make you want to read on? Do you understand what the writer is trying to say? Do you care? If the answer to these questions is a loud "no," then ask yourself exactly what the writer could do to help you get interested in and understand the topic.

After reading the piece of writing, are you snoring loudly? If so, whose fault is that? If the fault lies in the piece of writing and not in the fact that you were up too late last night, the question becomes: What can the writer do to make this piece better?

What do you need to know more about? What didn't the writer state? Should any parts be taken out? Which ones? Should anything be added or developed further? If so, what? What are specific changes you would like to see in this piece of writing?

How to Revise Your Writing
After Your Editor Has Torn It to Shreds

Reread the written piece. Then read the editorial comments. Keep in mind the following considerations:

> How can you incorporate the editor's suggestions in your writing?
>
> What did the editor want to know?
>
> Cross out words that are unnecessary; add those that are.
>
> Are there words that you have used again and again? Change some of them to synonyms.
>
> Are some sentences too long? Shorten them.
>
> Are some sentence too short? Lengthen them.

After revising your writing, reread it and ask yourself, "Am I pleased with these changes? Is there anything else I can do to make this a better piece of writing?"

After the first essay of the year is assigned, I photocopy a student's essay (after whiting out the student's name), and our lesson

begins. I review the editing and revising guidelines with the entire class, and then we divide into groups of three or four to evaluate the sample composition. I try to leave ten minutes to pull the class together for an assessment before the bell rings.

The next day, students are ready to evaluate their classmates' writing. Dividing into small groups again, they read their essays aloud to one another. Each student keeps a record of the problems and strengths of each essay as it is read aloud. By the end of the class period, each student has editing sheets prepared by the other members of his or her group and is ready to re rite his or her essay, using classmates' suggestions and the revision guidelines. The revision can be done either during the next class period or as homework. When the final product is ready for my eyes, it is turned in with the first draft and the group's editing sheets.

Robin Grusko, White Plains High School, White Plains, New York

Scenes of Conflict

Writing short plays provides students the benefits of working in groups, exchanging peer evaluations, and presenting original dramas to the class. The one- to two-page scenes students develop may later be used as the starting points for longer plays.

I allot two to three weeks for this assignment.

Part One: Students brainstorm and record various conflicts that could provide the basis for dramatic scenes. The conflicts might be ones that students invent or ones that they themselves have experienced. Students' memories and imaginations can be stirred with the following suggestions:

an encounter with authority

a failed attempt to avoid someone

an impulsive action

an accusation

an embarrassing moment

Each student decides upon a conflict and creates two characters as protagonists for his or her scene.

Part Two: Students improvise dialogues, either singly or in groups, for the two characters in the given setting. Using ideas suggested by the improvisation, each student then writes a scene for his or her characters. Though students' scenes will be

shorter and less fully developed than most plays, students may still be encouraged to think in terms of a beginning that *introduces*, a middle that *develops*, and a conclusion that *resolves*.

Part Three: In small groups, students exchange drafts and evaluate one another's work. Students may help one another intensify the conflicts and deepen the characters in their scenes by considering such questions as the following:

Is the source of the conflict clear?

Are the characters' motivations fully explained and believable?

Do the characters seem real? Are they detailed enough?

Does the dialogue between the two characters flow smoothly?

Are there lines of dialogue that need to be made stronger?

Is the resolution a satisfying one? Does it answer questions raised earlier in the scene?

Part Four: Students study the comments made by their classmates on their writing and write revised drafts. Students are free to accept or reject the suggestions they receive.

Part Five: Students form groups to rehearse and present each other's plays. If possible, these performances are videotaped so that both actors and playwright can see and comment on the details, dialogue, character development, and impact of the play as a whole.

May Lee, Baldwin Senior High School, Baldwin, New York

Photo Folders

Students can help themselves to writing assignments using folders of photographs and matching assignments prepared ahead of time. I like to offer photo folders as a supplement to the study of literary components, such as *character, setting, mood, plot, conflict,* and *symbolism.* I keep the folders on a side table and, whenever time allows, give students a chance to choose their own writing assignments.

I first spend an hour or two with a pair of scissors and a stack of old magazines, cutting out pictures to fit the various assignments. I cut out pictures of possible story characters, of geographical scenes to be used in developing settings, of facial expressions for use in writing mood descriptions, of scenes involving two or more people for the

development of plot or conflict, and of objects for development as symbols. I cut off ad copy and product names, and avoid photographs of well-known personalities.
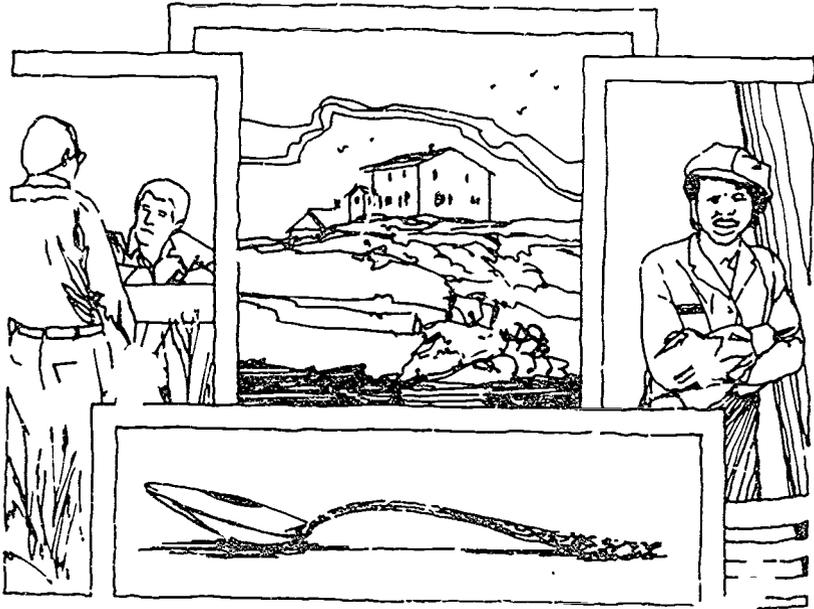
To make the pictures durable enough for repeated use, I glue them to squares of posterboard or construction paper. I then organize the pictures in categories: characters, settings, moods, plots, conflicts, and symbols. I put the pictures from each category in a folder, decorate the outside, and on the inside cover write the appropriate instructions from the following list:

> *Character* Select two or more characters from this folder and write an original short story or poem based on these characters. Choose several details from each picture to work into your story or poem, such as the character's mood, expression, or gesture, the location, the time of year, and so on.

> *Settings:* Select one picture from this folder and use it to write a descriptive opening for a story or novel. Develop your setting with as many details from the photograph as possible.

> *Moods:* Select one picture from this folder and write a description of this person's mood. Imagine that you are writing this description as part of a story or novel and that you want the reader to understand exactly how the character is feeling

Plots: Select one picture from this folder and develop a plot from it. Draw a simple plot line to indicate your planned arrangement of events.

Conflicts: Select one of the pictures in this folder and develop a conflict around the persons and actions shown.

Symbols: Select any one of the objects pictured in this folder and make it a central symbol in an original short story. Don't simply tell your reader what your symbol means, try to develop its importance subtly throughout the story.

Evelyn Alford, East Baton Rouge Parish Schools, Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Impromptu Poetry

Sometimes an apparent constraint can serve to free the imagination. In this activity, students stretch their creativity and their understanding of metaphor as they write to beat the clock. With adaptation, this approach could be used at all grade levels.

I designate each row of students as a separate team and give each team a metaphor from the list below.

Sleep is a stone	Dreams are hollow logs
Belief is a doorway	Anger · palace
Fear is cold water	People are windows
Evening is a crooked highway	Loneliness is an empty streambed
Parents are blankets	Love is a fountain
Friendship is a seesaw	Morning is a bridge
Summer is a sleepy turtle	Anger is a rope
Amazement is a mirror	Fear is a hummingbird
Jealousy is a razor	War is an old car

Working individually, students are to build and extend the metaphor by adding four additional lines. The result will be a five-line poem from each student

In round one, students each have three minutes to complete a five-line poem. The students who finish their poems in the allotted time are asked to read them aloud. I comment briefly on interesting images and effective use of language in students' poems.

If students need help starting their poems, I suggest that they begin the second line with "that" or "when"; they can then develop answers to *how, where,* and *why* in the remaining lines. If some students are still having trouble developing poems quickly, they might simply describe the concrete object mentioned in the first line. The metaphorical connection established in the first line will be carried through the brief image students compose.

In round two, each row receives a new metaphor. This time, students have two minutes to complete a five-line poem. Again the students who complete poems read them aloud.

The third and final round proceeds in the same way, except that students have only one minute to complete their five-line poems.

As the time for writing is reduced, students have less time to plan what to write; with one minute of writing time, students end up jotting down whatever images or phrases spontaneously pop into mind. This may not create great poetry, but it does have a freeing effect, and the results sometimes contain fresh and original images.

Here is an example of a poem written for this activity.

> Belief is a doorway
> Opening, Closing
> Always thinking
> You have the truth
> But not really knowing

Teams with the most completed poems for each round may be recognized in some way at the end of the activity. One appropriate way of rewarding students might be to let the winning team choose several poems by their favorite authors for the class to read and discuss.

Dick Harmston, Utah State University, Logan, Utah

Student Biographies

We English teachers often ask students to write biographies of the authors in the literature texts. Why not occasionally give students a chance to play a more active role in writing biographies than that of simply copying information out of books? In writing "student biographies," students are able to interview the subjects of their biographies, since their subjects are fellow classmates.

Each student is asked to fill out a handout sheet that asks for the following information:

Name: _____

Nickname: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Age: _____

Name of Parent(s): _____

Number of Brothers: _____

Number of Sisters: _____

Place in the birth order: _____

Schools attended: _____

Places lived: ___ _____

Favorite school subject: _____

Least favorite school subject: _____

What you like best about attending school: _____

What you like least about attending school: _____

Extra activities at school (clubs, etc.): _____

Hobbies outside school: _____

Awards or recognition won (for school-related
or outside activities): _____

Jobs held in the past and at present: _____

A little-known accomplishment or an unusual fact
about you: _____ _____

Plans for the future: _____

I collect the handout sheets and redistribute them. My usual method is to hold the handout sheets as if they were a hand of cards, facing me, and to have each student pick one. The student may return the sheet for another only if he or she picks his or her own.

Students then have time to ask additional questions of their subject and to ask for explanations of the answers on the handout sheet For instance, if the subject of a biography writes that she is the oldest of five children, the biographer might want to ask how she thinks this affected her personality. If the subject writes that his plans for the future include building a solar home, the biographer might ask how the subject became interested in solar energy. Students may include in their biographies any findings about their subjects that they thin. are particularly interesting or unusual.

Students have one week to put their information into paragraph form and to polish the final copies. After biographies are turned in to me, I read them to the class one at a time, omitting names, and students try to guess the identity of each subject. Students especially enjoy this part of the activity, and learn a lot that they otherwise would not have known about their classmates. They also tend to be more interested than usual when we tackle a standard biography-writing assignment later in the year.

Minie Coon, Greenville High School, Greenville, Alabama

The Third Drawer

To aid my students in the editing stage of their writing, I have devised a system I call "The Third Drawer." Students like it because it frees them from grammar drills and provides an individual approach to solving writing problems.

In their writing folders, which are stored in the top two drawers of the filing cabinet, students keep handout pages explaining the proofreading marks I use in coi :ting their papers. Students also have in their 1 lders copies of a handout page containing a grid with proofreading marks down the left side and spaces across the top for listing writing assignments. During the editing stage of various writing assignments throughout the yeai, students use this grid to tally the number and kinds of errors they make. The grid helps them discover which types of er. ¬rs they make consistently and provides a quic¹ way to refer to this information.

Once a student identifies an area of his or her writing that needs work, he or she opens "the third drawer." In it is a folder for each of the proofreading marks: each folder contains worksheets designed to help students practice correcting errors in that particular area. If, for instance, a student needs to work on using quotation marks, he or she pulls the "quotation marks" folder, removes and completes one worksheet, and turns in the worksheet to me for correction.

After checking students' worksheets, I return them for further corrections, if needed, and file them in students' writing folders. I give extra credit for extra work students do to correct their mistakes.

This method gives me the opportunity to discover patterns of errors and allows me to write specific notes on the worksheets as needed. I can also praise students for their efforts in working on individual weaknesses. And whenever students look through their writing

folders, they are reminded of the obstacles they have conquered on their way to better writing.

Marlene Corbett, Chariotte-Mecklenburg Schools, Charlotte, North Carolina

Written Gifts

The holiday tradition of drawing names and exchanging gifts in the classroom is generally reserved for elementary-level students. However, I recently read an appealing idea in *Daily Guideposts* for gift exchange, and wondered if it might adapt well to my students. I decided to present the idea and let students vote on whether or not they wanted to pursue it.

The gifts would involve no money, I assured students. Students would draw names, and each would write a note to the person whose name he or she had drawn. The gifts would be the notes themselves, which were required to be positive and could be decorated if students wished.

Before deciding, some of my students wanted to know, "How long would the notes have to be?" "Would they be graded?" "What if someone writes a gift and doesn't receive one?" "Do we keep the names we draw a surprise?" "What if I don't know much about the person whose name I draw?" I explained that the length of the note would be left up to the individual. The notes were *gifts* and not *assignments*—they would not receive grades. The notes would be turned in to me on one day and distributed the next, if a note was not turned in for someone (as in the case of an absence). I would write one for that person and distribute it with the rest I told students that anyone who needed to would be given an opportunity after the drawing to visit with one other student or with me to find out more about the person whose name had been drawn.

My students voted overwhelmingly to give one another written gifts, and decided as a class to keep secret the names drew. We held the drawing a day later, and I gave students several days to write their notes.

I distributed the gifts on the last day of school before our winter break. The notes, though not profound, were supportive and affirming. They included such comments as. "You have a great sense of humor. I'm glad you're in this class." "I admire you because you're such a good student." "I like your smile." and "Keep ing Mrs. S.

a hard time. It's fun." Several students wrote thank-you notes to the students who were the authors of their written gifts. Students also wrote notes to me to tell me how much they liked the idea. New students particularly appreciated learning more about their classmates and having tangible proof of their acceptance.

Jacqueline Tilley Schultz, John Jay High School, San Antonio, Texas

Class Posters

Being an amateur photographer, I've always enjoyed taking pictures of my students on their birthdays and dispaying the pictures in the classroom. Recently, I've altered this practice slightly; I have begun taking several class photographs of each of my classes at the beginning of the term and having one photograph of each class made into a poster. I then use this poster as a jumping-off point for discussions and writing activities. A class poster also seems to foster a sense of community among students.

I ask each class to plan and pose for four or five class pictures in which the dress, place, and action are interesting and original. Students may dress any way they want (as long as it won't get us in trouble with the principal) and may have the pictures taken anywhere on school grounds.

Classes have had me take their pictures in the _nior courtyard in front of a statue, in the press box of the stadium, on the football field, on the basketball court, behind the steel grate near a school entrance, at a bus stop, in the weight room, and on the jungle gym in the nursery school, just to name a few of the settings. Students have dressed as hoodlums in T-shirts, blue jeans, and leather jackets; as mafiosi in dark coats, ties, and sunglasses; as formal party-goers in suits and dresses; as Hawaiian party-goers in floral print shirts and shorts; and as everyday students. They have formed pyramids, stood on their heads, climbed fences, blown bubbles, and arranged themselves in various shapes. Students in one class had me take their picture from the vantage point of a second-tory window, and students in another class posed running away from a hall monitor

It takes two or three class periods for students to plan and pose for four or five pictures. For five classes, I use a twenty-four exposure roll of film. (I use color print film with an ISO of 100, so that the images can be enlarged to 20" x 30" without noticeable grain.) A local drugstore makes posters from photographs for a reasonable price I have also seen comparable mail-order offers for posters in amateur

photography magazines. For their own scrapbooks, students can pur-chase standard-size reprints from me at cost.

After I take the class photographs, it takes a week or two for the photos to be developed and returned to me, at which point students in each class vote to determine which picture of their class will be en-larged to poster size. This is a natural time to examine and discuss each photograph as a class. Students can be asked to talk about the mood of each photo and to identify what contributes to each mood— elements of the setting, particular props, certain students' poses and facial expressions, and so on.

When the posters are ready, I display them in the classroom. Stu-dents in each class in turn are asked to vote for the most interesting and original poster, *excluding their own* (to avoid each class's under-standable bias). Class discussion explores the reasons for students' choices, and during the next class period I award simple prizes to stu-dents in the winning class. Later during the semester, the poster may provide the basis for other activities. I may ask students to write de-scriptive paragraphs about a particular poster, to imagine and de-scribe where the people in a given poster will be in ten years and what they will be doing, or to invent creative character descriptions out loud while looking at a poster from their own or another class.

George Seidenbecker, Evanston Township High School, Evanston, Illinois

Making Connections with Current Events

When students talk and write about their personal reactions to news events, they develop a new perspective on history. Instead of viewing history as a collection of facts and dates irrelevant to their lives, stu-dents come to see history as a dynamic, ongoing stream of events in which they have a part.

I describe to students an occasion when I heard or read a news story that deeply touched me, and my reaction. Often, I describe the occasion, in 1980, of my getting off a train, buying a newspaper at a stand, and discovering that John Lennon had been shot. I explain how horrified and upset I was and how, for me, the death of a Beatle signalled the end of an important era in my life.

I then tell students, "Think of a similar occasion when you were strongly moved on reading or hearing a news story about a local or world event." I ask them to jot down responses to the following ques-tions:

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What was the event or incident that you heard or read about?

How did you learn about it?

Where were you and what were you doing when you heard the news?

What was your first reaction?

Why do you think this news affected you so strongly?

How did you feel later, when you looked back on this event?

Looking back, was your view or understanding of the event as complete as it is now? Is there anything you now know about the situation or incident that you didn't know then?

How, if at all, have your feelings or ideas about this event changed in the intervening time?

Has this event had any lasting effect on your life? Explain why or why not.
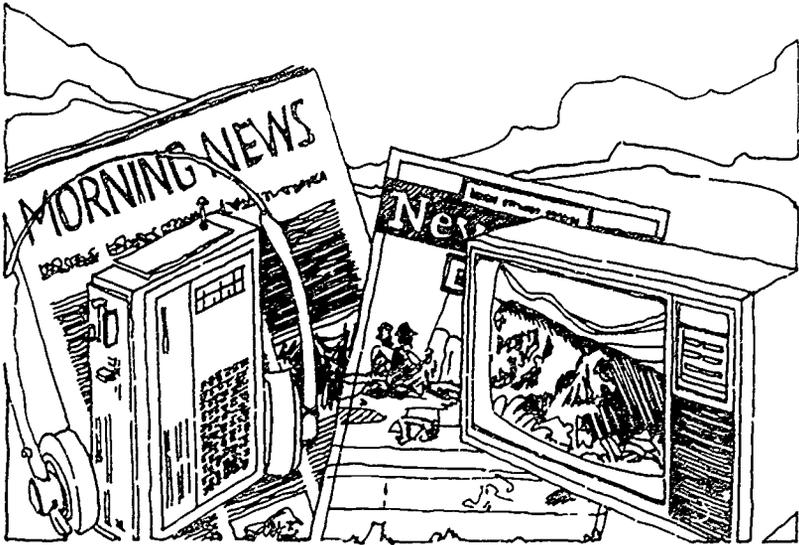
In class discussion, students take turns telling what news stories influenced them and talking about their responses to the questions. I encourage comments from the students listening and ask if they can remember their own responses to the incident under discussion. Students can compare and contrast their reactions or speculate about how they would have reacted to the same news.

As homework, I ask students to write about the incident they described, either in the form of a poem or in several paragraphs of prose. Volunteers read aloud their writings the next day in class.

I sometimes continue this activity by asking students to interview their parents or other adults about news events that strongly affected them when they were teenagers. Students share their findings the next day and talk about whether the incidents cited involve the same kinds of issues that they have to deal with as teenagers, and whether they think they would react in the same way as the adults they interviewed.

The different stages of this activity all help give students a sense for how world and local history shape their own lives.

Rose Reissman, Ditmas Junior High School. Brooklyn, New York

Goal Cards—for Your Eyes Only

Here's a teaching method that helps students evaluate their work and want to improve. Most students know their weaknesses and, under the cover of confidentiality, are willing to examine their performance honestly. This method also gives students the experience of writing not for the teacher or peers but for themselves, and of having sole control over whether or not to share their writing with anyone else.

Goal cards—blank, 3″ × 5″ index cards—can be filled in every day or every week, depending on what you think would best suit your students' needs. Students decide for themselves how much to write each time. Goal cards are personal and need not be shown to anyone else unless the student wants to.

When I first introduce goal cards to my students, I stress that since the cards are for students' own use, students shouldn't try to write goals that might sound good to an English teacher, they should write only goals that they genuinely want to attain. I suggest that the more specific students make their goals, the easier it will be for them to decide how to meet particular goals and evaluate their progress. For example, a broad, vague goal such as "to write better stories" might be more useful if written in the form of three more specific goals. "to re-read my writings when I've finished and look for overused, trite words to replace," "to think more about how I want each character to act *before* I start writing," and "to keep track of both major and minor plot lines in a story so that I don't leave loose ends."

Students store their goal cards in file folders or hinged together in booklet form, and keep these folders or booklets handy as references

At the end of the class period or the week, I set aside a few minutes for students to evaluate their performance and think about revising old goals or inventing new ones.

Goal cards could also be used for a slightly different purpose during a writing unit cr a long project. In this context, students could be asked to write goals ne:essary for the completion of their assignments or projects, and could meet in peer groups each week to discuss what they would like to accomplish that week and what particular goals or tasks were presenting problems.

Gary Gangnier, Saint Vincent School, Saint Foy, Quebec

A Day in the Life of an English Teacher

This activity may sound a bit risky, but it's actually a foolproof exercise in descriptive writing. When my students enter the classroom, they find this title on the chalkboard: *A Day in the Life of Mrs. Low* I tell students, "I want you to spend the next half hour writing, from my viewpoint, a first-person account of how you imagine I spend a typical day from sunrise to sunset."

I use this exercise about six weeks into the school year; by this time I have shared some of my writing with students, and if they've listened, they know bits and pieces of my daily routine. I tell students that they will need to use their imaginations to fill in the details, but that they shouldn't get too carried away with fantasy; the final accounts are to be more or less plausible. After writing, students put their chairs in a circle and take turns reading their accounts aloud.

Students love both the writing and the reading aloud involved in this activity, and I can't help but laugh when I discover how much students imagine I can pack in a day. They have no concept of just how much time it takes to be an English teacher'

Carol Kirker-Low, Pickerington High School, Pickerington, Ohio