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ABSTRACT

This paper presents four introductory activities designed to help students with their reading problems, motivate them to read, and help them turn their interpretations of literature into effective compositions. The paper presents samples for each of the four activities ("Opinionnaires," Scenarios, Simulations, and Role Playing), discussions concerning implementation of the activity, and follow-up writing activities. The paper concludes that introductory activities can enliven literary study, help students learn how to interpret and write about literature, and help them become more independent learners. A 35-item bibliography and workshop activity sheets are attached. (RS)

Fostering "Fruitful" Responses to Literature with Introductory Activities

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NCTE Spring Institute:

Writing about Literature

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In *Literature as Exploration*, Louise Rosenblatt criticizes the way literature is usually taught in the schools. She says that many teachers feel that telling or lecturing to students about the author, about historical and/or philisophical background, or about the work of literature before they begin reading will help students with reading problems and motivate them to read. However, Rosenblatt argues that this approach often puts the students' focus on "much that is irrelevant and distracting" (1968, 27). In fact, in a recent analysis of this approach as used in most secondary literature anthologies, Michael Smith (1991) describes it as "very reductive" and argues that it does little to prepare students to cope with the complexities involved in understanding literary texts" (10). In addition to focusing on a great deal that is "irrelevant and distracting" and not really helping students learn how to comprehend and interpret literature, John Goodlad (1984) argues that rather than motivating students to read, this approach may actually have a

dulling effect on adolescent minds, destroying their spirit for learning and making school a lifeless experience.

In contrast to this approach, Rosenblatt talks about the need to foster what she calls "fruitful . . . transactions between individual readers and individual literary works" (1968, 26-27). The question is, how do we accomplish this? If having students read the textbook and/or having them listen to lectures about the author, the historical and philisophical background, and/or the literary and linguistic conventions of the work itself do not help students with reading problems and do not motivate them to read, then what can we do?

Theoretical Framework:

If you would turn to the first page of your handout (Appendix, p. 49), I'll try to illustrate one important starting point for helping students with their reading problems and motivating them to read, as well as providing a starting point for helping them to translate their interpretations of literature into effective compositions. If you would please take a minute or two and silently read the passage and then as the directions indicate, rate how comprehensible you found the passage--from "understood not at all" to "understood very well."

Is everyone done? How many of you rated the passage as very understandable--a 7, would you raise you hands please? (Count number who rated it a 7.) How many gave it a 6? (Count.) How many rated it as 5? (Count.) How many put it in the middle, a 4? (Count.) How many rated it a 3, a little below the middle? (Count.) How many rated it at 2? (Count.) How many of you rated it as not understandable at all, a 1? (Count)

I see that most of you found the passage very difficult to comprehend. Someone who found the passage difficult to comprehend, could you explain why? Someone else, could you tell us why you found it difficult? Does anyone else have something to add to what has already been said? Did anyone have a problem with any of the words in the passage? Huh? You mean, you understand every word in the passage but have no idea what it is about? Did any of you have trouble with the sentence structure or form? You mean, you understand the sentences and form but still have no idea what it is about? What if I told you the title to the passage is "Doing the Laundry"? Would knowing the title change how well you understood the passage? Why? Could you explain.

The reason why I had you do this activity is to dramatically demonstrate the importance of **context in reading, prior knowledge, schema,** and setting a **purpose for reading.**

This passage is from a study done in 1973 by Bransford and Johnson. In their study they had subjects do just what I had you do. Subjects in their study found the passage difficult to comprehend. The readers were then told that the title of the passage is "Doing the Laundry." After learning the context, it was easy to return to the text and interpret all the details. The difficulty in comprehending the text was not a problem in identifying the words and knowing their meanings. The sentence structure and form of the passage were not unfamiliar to the readers. Knowing the **context** allowed the readers to activate **prior knowledge** and bring that knowledge to bear on the interpretation of new information. Reading and comprehending text, then, involves not only recognizing the printed material but also comparing what one already knows to the message suggested by the text in order to form the meaning. Knowing the context brought the message immediately

into focus and the readers were able to interpret vague and general descriptions.

Prior knowledge is important in another way here as well. Readers activate what are called *schemata* to process information and store it in memory. (*Schemata* are cognitive structures or patterns which organize bits of information in memory.) For example, one might have in mind a *buy* schema. A *buy* schema would suggest the requirements or conventions which must be present to represent the concept of *buying*: for example, there is an exchange of items; one person is the buyer and one is the seller; money is usually involved, but not always. As the reader encounters information in a text prior knowledge is activated, the reader fits specific information [instantiates] into the abstract model [schema] stored in memory.) Once you knew the passage dealt with doing the laundry, you activated your *schema*, or abstract knowledge of doing the laundry, and compared your knowledge of what is involved in doing the laundry to the information contained in the passage. This enabled you to process the information in the passage, or to understand it, and store it in your memory. Bransford and Johnson, as well as other researchers, have shown that through schemata, readers appear to organize and interpret incoming linquistic data.

Finally, having a **purpose for reading** is also important here. Reading researchers have found that how a teacher prepares the reader and sets the purpose for reading can have a powerful effect on how the student comprehends a text. If I had asked you to read the passage and compare it to your understanding of how to do the laundry, even without the title, you would have easily been able to interpret the passage. In this case, you would have brought to the reading not only your prior knowledge but also

your knowledge of text structure, or features of text that deal with "how to," in order to interpret the text. Without giving you any kind of preparation or setting a purpose for the reading that would help you comprehend and interpret the text, most of you had difficulty understanding the passage.

What I am trying to get you to see here is that reading or interpreting literature is an interactive model that emphasizes comprehension and an active search for meaning which involves the text, the reader, and the work when the reader makes meaning from a text. The instructional activities, or introductory activities as they are called in the literature on the subject, that I am going to show you are based on this model. In addition, I am going to show you how these activities not only help students interpret literature but also help them to turn their interpretations into effective compositions.

What Are Introductory Activities?

Unlike traditional instruction that focuses on what Smith (1991) calls the "'elements' of Literature," introductory activities attempt to bridge the gap between the world of literature and students' life experiences; they attempt to connect students' prior knowledge to themes and issues important in particular literary works; they attempt to provide a context, a place to start, for understanding and interpreting literature; they activiate a students' schemata, or prepare them for what they will encouter in a work they are about to read; they provide a clear purpose for reading which enables students to use schema and prior knowledge when they read; they attempt to motivate students to read by engaging them in issues, problems, and ideas they will encounter in their reading; and, finally, the ones I am going to show you today, are are also designed to connect literature with

writing (Johannessen, Kahn, and Walter [1984], Kahn, Walter, and Johannessen [1984], Smagorinsky, McCann, and Kern [1986], and Smagorinsky [1989]).

I am going to show you four types of introductory activities: opinionnaire, scenarios, simulation, and role playing. In addition, I am going to illustrate some variations of these types for particular instructional purposes, discuss what they all have in common, or the key features of the activities that enable them to work, and show you how to use them to connect literature with writing. Along the way I will also suggest different literary works that the model activities I present might be used with, and I will try to make some recommendations for introductory activity types that work well with some commonly taught works.

Opinionnaires

Probably the easiest type of introductory activity to create and use in the classroom is the opinionnaire. The opinionnaire is based on a simple idea. Students have opinions about various subjects, and it uses those opinions to create interest in a work and helps with problems students will encounter in trying to interpret a work or works. A successful opinionnaire typically contains ten to twenty statements, depending upon the length and difficulty of the literature, the focus of instruction, and the age and ability level of students. The statements are keyed to specific interpretive problems and ask students to make a response of either agreement or disagreement (or true or false) for each statement. A teacher needs to understand two important factors prior to designing an effective opinionnaire: the concepts in the literature, and the concerns and

experiences of the students. With these two things in mind, the teacher then designs controversial statements that will spark a lively discussion related to the problems students will encounter in the literature. In addition, it is important that the planned discussion will enable students to practice orally the skills they will use in writing.

"Technology and Family Life Opinionnaire"

If you will look at the next page of your handout (Appendix, p. 48), you will see the first opinionnaire I would like to show you. As you might have already guessed, the "Technology and Family Life Opinionnaire" is designed as an introduction to the short story that follows the opinionnaire, Ray Bradbury's "The Veldt." (The short story is not included with this paper.)

As the directions state, students are to read each statement and decide whether or not they agree or disagree with the statement. I have students fill out the opinionnaire and then I compile the results on the board. Then, beginning with the statements for which there is the most disagreement, I lead a class discussion that focuses on students' responses to each statement. I encourage students to explain the reasoning behind their responses and to debate differing opinions. Since the statements on the opinionnaire require students to take a stand, a lively discussion invariably ensues. And, most important, my role in the discussion is to moderate the discussion, rather than to express a personal opinion or tell students the "correct" answer.

One purpose of the opinionnaire and follow-up discussion is to create interest in the characters and issues in the story students are about to read. Items #3, "Parents should exercise more control over what their children watch on TV," and #4, "Parents too often use TV as a kind of baby-sitter for

their children," for example, relate to one aspect of the problem faced by the parents in the story. The Hadley's own a "Happylife Home" equipped with all of the latest electronic machinery. The parents, however, have become concerned about the playroom, or nursery, where whatever thoughts or fantasies their ten-year-old children have are instantly reproduced in three dimensions, including the physical sensations one would associate with the fantasies. The Hadley children have been spending a lot of time creating a frightening fantasy about the African Veldt. Their fantasy is destructive and deadly: Lions kill and eat what seems to the parents to be an animal, and vultures feast on the remains. The Hadleys have exercised no control over the children's use of the playroom. They have started to feel useless and can see that they have allowed the playroom to take their place as parents. When they try to turn it off, they discover too late that it has already taken their place, and they are the meal that the lions and vultures are feeding on in their children's fantasy.

Students' responses to statements #3 and #4 on the opinionnaire usually indicate that many of them believe that children should have more control over what they watch on television, and they either dismiss the idea that parents use television as a babysitter or claim that it does no harm. Bradbury suggests that parents should exercise considerable control over what children are permitted to watch on television, particularly when it comes to violence. He also indicates that parents who use television as a babysitter run the risk of destroying the family. Through the class discussion of the opinionnaire, students begin to question some of their initial responses, particularly when they are challenged by their peers, and they are motivated to find out how characters will deal with these issues in the story.

Another purpose of the opinionnaire is to provide a framework or context that will help students overcome their initial difficulty with the seemingly alien world they are confronted with when they start reading the story. However, through discussion of the items on the opinionnaire, students realize that the story's supermechanized house, playroom, and "odorophonics" are simply extensions of the kinds of electronic gadgetry available today.

The framework that the opinionnaire provides also helps students understand what the author of the story wants readers to understand about the potential dangers of technology. Many students have an oversimplified view of technology. They readily accept the notion, as stated in statement #1, that technological advances make life better for everyone. In discussion of the opinionnaire, students are often surprised to discover that some of their classmates do not share their optimism regarding technology. Some students point to pollution or to problems with nuclear power plants or to other technology-related disasters as examples of the potential drawbacks of technological advances.

In addition, in discussing statements #1 and #14, for example, students are encouraged to consider a wide range of possible ideas related to technology. As we discuss the various ideas that students bring up, they begin to consider the ways that technology has had an impact on their lives. These statements and others on the opinionnaire help students construct a framework or what researchers call a "cognitive map" that will better enable them to understand the story they are about to read.

Once we have discussed most or all of the statements on the opinionnaire, I ask students to read the story. Then I divide the class into small groups and ask them to determine from evidence in the story how

Bradbury would probably respond to the fifteen statements on the opinionnaire. In addition, I ask students to respond to the following question: Lydia Hadley says that the playroom is supposed to help their children work off their neuroses in a healthful way, but if this is true, how do you explain what happens in the end? In other words, what is Bradbury saying about technology?

After working out responses to these questions, the class reassembles to discuss and debate their findings. As the groups report their answers, students begin to formulate important conclusions. They realize, for example, that instead of helping the children, the playroom "becomes," as the psychologist in the story says, "a channel toward--destructive thoughts." Students also realize that it is the parents who are responsible. The Hadleys spoil their children and place all of their faith in technology. They allow the playroom to replace them as parents; ironically, the technology that replaces them as parents finally kills them. In addition, students realize that Bradbury echoes the comment Albert Einstein made about technology in 1931: "Why does this magnificent applied science which saves work and makes life easier bring us so little happiness? The simple answer runs: Because we have not yet learned to make sensible use of it." And, in case you are wondering, yes, I paraphrased his comment and turned it into statement #11.

Discussing the fifteen statements on the opinionnaire in terms of what Bradbury would probably say about them is an important element in helping students interpret the irony and formulate conclusions about the story. For example, it is through this discussion that many students come to see that while George and Lydia Hadley might agree that "Technological advances

make life better for everyone," Bradbury would probably not agree. In fact, Bradbury is suggesting exactly the opposite.

I want you to note something here--the students are interpreting the irony in the story. I did not lecture to them on irony, nor did I have them read and memorize and then quiz and test them on the definition of irony out of their textbook. I did not tell them about the author, his life and works. They are doing it themselves, and they are doing it because the introductory activity provided a framework to help them deal with the ironies in the story.

This discussion also helps guide students toward a reevaluation of their own views about technology. In considering what Bradbury would say about the statements on the opinionnaire, students inevitably end up comparing their responses to the statements before they read the story against their observations about the story. Often opinions have changed. In the middle of explaining how Bradbury would have responded to statement #5, one student suddenly blurted out, "You know, yesterday I was all for giving even little kids more freedom in deciding for themselves what and when to watch TV. But now, I think parents should set strict limits." Students begin to see the impact that the story has had on them.

Follow-up Writing Activities

When I first began using introductory activities about ten years ago, I immediately saw how they helped to engage students in literature and to interpret it. However, what I did not realize then and am only now beginning to understand is the powerful effect these kinds of activities also have on helping students to write about, from, and in response to literature.

If you will look at the next page of your handout, "Technology and Family Life Writing Assignments (Appendix, p. 51)," I'll describe some of the assignments I have used with this introductory activity and why I think students are able to write effectively when instruction involves these kinds of activities.

It will help to keep in mind what has taken place in the instruction so far. First, students discussed the statements on the opinionnaire; then, after reading the story, they discussed how Bradbury would have answered the statements; and, finally, they discussed their own responses to the statements in light of their study of the story. This sequence seems to provide a bridge to writing about, from, and in response to the story. In other words, students practice orally what they need to do to translate their interpretations of the story into writing. You might say, that this sequence is a series of prewriting activities that provides a cognitive map for writing about, from, and in response to the story.

In discussing which statements on the opinionnaire Bradbury would probably agree or disagree with and why, there is usually disagreement about how Bradbury would respond to some of the statements. This disagreement provides a natural follow-up writing situation. This leads to assignment #1. "Write a letter to someone in the class who disagrees with you about Brabury's stand on one or two of the statements on the opinionnaire. Try to convince this person that he or she is wrong and that your interpretation is correct. Make sure that you use evidence from 'The Veldt' to support your viewpoint that Bradbury would agree or disagree with a particular statement on the opinionnaire."

Another reason why this assignment is effective is that it follows directly out of what we have done in the class discussions. Disagreements

from the class discussion are turned into a *real* writing situation to a *real* audience of classmates. And, also note, students are writing *literary analysis* and they are doing it without having to make an outline or having to learn or even try to force it into a five paragraph essay. It is natural.

Another possible follow-up writing activity is to have students read on their own another story that involves technological advances and their possible effects. This is assignment #2. Then I have students write an interpretation of the story. Here are two possible stories you might use: Gordon R. Dickson's "Computers Don't Argue," from *Fou and Science Fiction* (National Textbook Company, 1979) and Isaac Asimov's "The Fun They Had," from *Impact: Fifty Short Short Stories* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986). Typically students do pretty well on this literary analysis assignment. Why? Besides the reasons I outlined above, I think that they gain confidence from their participation in the sequence of discussion activities I went over. You rarely see this kind of assignment in most textbook approaches, and the reason is very simple--textbooks don't teach students how to analyze and write about literature. These activities do.

Like assignment #1, Assignment #3 follows directly from the class discussion of how students' opinions have or have not changed as a result of reading the story. (Read assignment.) Notice that this assignment is both a personal response and involves some literary analysis. Also, one reason why student papers tend to be so good is that because they have thought about and discussed their opinions before reading the story, they are able to articulate how their opinions have changed as a result of reading the story. Without the opinionnaire activity before reading the story that requires them to articulate and defend their opinions, their written responses would

tend to be filled with the vague generalizations we very often get when students write about or in response to literature.

Assignment #4 asks for a creative type of writing. (Read assignment.) When I give this assignment, I make sure that in the small group and class discussion of the story, they speculate on what they think will happen next and why, given Bradbury's final scene. We sometimes also examine the dialogue in the story before they begin writing to note how the characters talk and review how to correctly punctuate dialogue. Again, I believe that it is the extended discussions of their personal opinions and the story that gives students the confidence to tackle an assignment like this.

Assignment #5 involves a more personal response to the story than assignment #3. (Read assignment.) Once again, though, it follows directly from the discussions prior to reading and after reading and discussing the story. In these discussions, student are rehersing what they are going to be asked to do in writing.

I am not suggesting here that you use all of these writing assignments. What I am trying to suggest is that each of these kinds of assignments has a place in the English curriculum. Each of them connects literature with writing; each of them gives students practice with different forms; each of them requires students to think in slightly different ways; each of them enables students to extend their understanding of literature; and each of them is a path to learning.

"Vietnam War Opinionnaire"

One of the big surprises I had when I moved from high school to college teaching a few years ago is that there is not a whole lot of difference

between high school students and college freshmen. The differences are more of degree rather than kind. Whenever I used opinionnaires, I noticed that I had a little difficulty getting some of my college freshmen to go along with the forced response of either agree or disagree. So, I had to come up with a little bit more complex format for the opinionnaire to suit the sophisticated college freshmen.

If you will turn to the next page of your handout (Appendix, p. 52), I'd like to show you how this particular opinionnaire works and show you some additional elements of how this type of introductory activity engages students in the literature they are about to read, prepares them for problems they will encounter in their reading, and helps prepare students for writing. In addition, while the previous opinionnaire was designed to go with a particular story, this opinionnaire, which is adapted from one in my book, *Illumination Rounds: Teaching the Literature of the Vietnam War* (1992), is designed to be used not just with the two stories that follow the opinionnaire in your handout but with any number of works dealing with the Vietnam War, some of which I will briefly outline for you. The point is that the opinionnaire is very versitile. Add a couple of statements and it can be used to introduce any number of short works dealing with the same theme or a longer work or a literature unit.

In recent years the Vietnam War has become a hot topic with teenagers. Hollywood, with its *Rambo* films and television shows such as *China Beach*, as well as the Persian Gulf War, has had great deal to do with sparking their interest. But, the trouble is they lack a real understanding of what the Vietnam War and war in general are really like. Too many of these youngsters seem to be caught up in what I call the China Beach Party myths and Ramboesque shoot'em-up images of Hollywood's Vietnam. Since the

Vietnam War is rarely dealt with in most secondary school curricula, their myths and images have not been challenged.

The two stories following the "Vietnam War Opinionnaire (not included in this paper), "Centurion" by Tim O'Brien (from *If I Die in a Combat Zone* [Dell, 1987]) and "We Have Met the Enemy" by Robin Moore (from *Combat Pay* [Manor Books, 1977]) speak to the media-molded myths and images of youth concerning the Vietnam War. Both stories suggest the madness of a war in which decent men must confront the inescapable brutality of war. In O'Brien's story, students discover that brutality is the inescapable outcome when a raid on a village turns up an enemy weapon but no visible enemy. In Moore's story, they see how acts of self-preservation can result in brutality. Both stories make clear that the realities of the Vietnam War are far different from Hollywood's romantized and glorified versions. They suggest to students the dangers of believing in these images and myths.

How Students See War

This opinionnaire utilizes students' ideas and opinions about the Vietnam War. It allows students varying degrees of agreement or disagreement with each statement. As with the previous opinionnaire I showed you, this one contains statements that are keyed to ideas and themes students will encounter in their reading. This time, however, there are two stories instead of one.

Before students read the stories I have them fill out the opinionnaire on their own. Then, I compile the results on the board, but to keep this step simple, I merely ask for students who agreed and strongly agreed to raise

their hands and then for students who disagreed or strongly disagreed to raise their hands for each statement. Then, beginning with the statements for which there is the most disagreement, I lead a class discussion that focuses on students' responses to each statement. I encourage students to explain the reasoning behind their responses and to debate differing opinions. Since the statements on the opinionnaire require students to take a stand, a lively discussion invariably ensues.

An interesting modification of the procedures I have described is to have students meet in small groups after completing the opinionnaire on their own and have them try to reach a consensus on their responses before the whole class discussion.

I want to talk a moment about this business of creating a climate in which there is considerable "disagreement" and "debate" among students. A couple of years ago, I talked with a teacher who told me that she had tried one of my opinionnaires--not those I am showing you here today--but that it didn't work very well with her students. I asked her to explain to me what she did with it in the classroom. She told me that she had her students fill out the opinionnaire but decided to dispense with the discussion and just had a few students tell how they responded to some of the statements and then she moved right into the literature. She made this change she told me because the discussion took too much time (often from thirty minutes to an entire class period) and because she felt uncomfortable with having students "disagree" about things.

Unfortunately, she misses the whole point of the activity. The statements are specifically designed to create controversy because it is through this climate of controversy or disagreement that students are encouraged and indeed feel the need to explain and defend their ideas. And,

it is through this process that students construct a cognitive map that helps them interpret the literature. In addition, it forces them to examine their own views and to gain insight into the views of others. Finally, this oral discussion in which students support generalizations with reasoning and evidence and refute opposing views serves as a rehersal or practice of what students are going to be asked to do when they write about literature.

More important, the controversy that is created in the classroom is a key factor in interesting or engaging students in the literature. At the end of the discussion of the opinionnaire, the teacher might use the disagreement with a statement like, "I see that we have considerable disagreement over statements #3 and #9 (read statements). Let's read these two stories and find out which viewpoint is correct." Students are motivated to read because they want to find out if their view of Rambo as a representative of the American soldier who fought in Vietnam is correct.

I'd like to show you another way that this opinionnaire and follow-up discussion create interest in the characters and issues in the two stories. Items #12 and #13 (read statements), for example, relate to one aspect of the problem faced by the narrator of "Centurion." The officers in his unit randomly pull three old men out of a hut, tie them up, gag them, and then tie them to saplings in the center of the unit's perimeter, using the logic that the enemy guerrillas will not attack that night because they have taken their fathers prisoner. The narrator feels compassion for the old men. He thinks they may be innocent and knows that in the morning they will be tortured for information about the enemy. Yet, he does almost nothing to help them. He seems to be unable to do anything significant about the brutality of the incident, accepting it as the price of survival in a crazy war.

Student responses to the items on the opinionnaire usually indicate that many of them believe that a person can do the right thing, not harm innocent civilians, and still survive in war. O'Brien suggests that in the Vietnam War, morality and compassion for innocent civilians may have to take a back seat when survival is at stake. Through the discussion, not just deciding if they agree or disagree with these statements on the opinionnaire, students begin to question some of their initial responses and are motivated to find out how characters will deal with these issues in the stories.

One way that the activity helps students construct a framework for understanding what the authors of the stories want them to understand about the Vietnam War is related to the sterotyped views students have about war. Many students have an oversimplified good-guys-against-the-bad-guys image of the war. In the discussion of the opinionnaire, students are often surprised to discover that some of their peers do not find the Rambo image accurate or desirable. In addition, in discussing statement #10, "The Soldier above all other people, prays for peace, for he must suffer and bear the deepest wounds and scars of war," some student inevitably wonders, "This is in quotes, who said it?" If no one in the class knows, I reveal that the statement was made by General Douglas MacArthur, one of America's greatest generals. Students are very surprised by this, and as we discuss why MacArthur might have made such a statement, students begin to wonder if war is as romantic as the images and myths of Hollywood's version of the Vietnam War. These statements, and others on the opinionnaire, help students construct a framework that will better enable them to understand the stories they are about to read.

One other interesting aspect of how the opinionnaire works, how it gets students to think and begin to question some of their initial responses,

involves the way some of the statements are set up. In marking their answers, students, without realizing it, often contradict themselves. For example, it is not uncommon for a student to agree with statements #13 and #7 (read statements). As the discussion develops, however, students often realize (on their own or as a result of their peers pointing it out) that they have a contradiction in thought. It is not uncommon for one students to tell another, "How can you say it is never right to kill another person when you just got through saying that when your own survival is at stake, you can't worry about harming or killing innocent civilians." These statements encourage disagreement or discussion and get students thinking about the issues and themes in the stories.

After discussing most or all of the statements on the opinionnaire, have students read the two stories. Then divide the class into small, mixed groups and ask them to determine from evidence in the stories how the narrator and Bates would have reacted had they been in the situation Hucks and Leland were confronted with in "We Have Met the Enemy" and how Hucks and Leland would have reacted had they been in the situation narrator and Bates faced in "Centurion."

Dealing with Irony

Once students have come up with their conclusions, evidence, and explanations, I have the class reassemble to discuss their findings. As the groups begin reporting their answers, students are surprised to discover that it would not have made any difference. Most agree that Moore's characters, like O'Brien's, would have done little to help the old men, and that O'Brien's characters probably would have killed the shadowy figure that ran into a

cave behind their position and turned out to be a young Vietname girl. Once students understand that these different characters probably would have reacted the same in either situation, they are prepared to deal with the irony and what the authors are telling us about the Vietnam War.

As we discuss their responses, students begin to formulate important conclusions about the stories. They realize, for example, that O'Brien is not criticizing the narrator of his story for doing very little to help the old men who are tortured. They see the irony of his situation--had the patrol not taken the three old men prisoner, they probably would have been attacked by the enemy. Students recognize the lack of choices in such a situation; the patrol takes the old men prisoner and tortures them because, as Bates tells the narrator, "This is war, my friend. You don't find a weapon and just walk away." Students perceive that O'Brien is really telling us that, even for those with a strong sense of right and wrong, cruely and brutality are inevitable outcomes of war. In addition, they realize that O'Brien echoes the comment Philip Caputo makes in one of the major works on the war, *A Rumor of War*, when he leaves Vietnam: "We had done nothing more than endure," he writes. "We had survived, and that was our only victory."

Following this discussion, I often ask students to refer back to the opinionnaire and to circle the responses to the statements as they think O'Brien and Moore would circle them and to compare their responses in light of their observations about the stories. Then I hold a whole class discussion. Usually, for example, there is nearly unanimous agreement that O'Brien and Moore would find the Rambo image undesirable. Even though there is considerable agreement as to how O'Brien and Moore would respond to many of the statements, there is usually some disagreement about a few of them. For example, some students argue that certainly O'Brien and perhaps Moore

as well would strongly disagree with statement #3, "For soldiers who served in Vietnam, the difference between death and survival often meant not worrying about potential harm to innocent civilians or doing the right or moral thing." They note, however, that even though the narrator in O'Brien's story does what he has to do to survive, he still "worries" about doing the right or moral thing and tries to do something. This shows, they argue, that O'Brien wants us to understand that soldiers can't simply abandon morality in war. They have to take it into account. Pretty insightful.

Very often student opinions have undergone a transformation as a result of their study of the stories. One young man made this comment: "In this one movie Vietnam looked like it would be fun and exciting, but in these stories it's awful!" Students begin to see the impact that the literature has had on them.

Follow-up Writing

If you will look at the next page of your handout, "Vietnam War Writing Assignments (Appendix, p. 53)," I'll describe some of the assignments I have used with this introductory activity and these short stories and how it and the other activities that followed it encourage effective writing.

Keep in mind the sequence of activities. The discussion of the statements on the opinionnaire prior to reading that establishes the context, activates prior knowledge, prepares students for the interpretive problem in the stories, and engages them in the characters and themes in the stories. Then after reading the stories students discussed how the characters in the stories would have reacted in the situations presented in the other stories. Then students discussed what the authors probably would have said about

the statements on the opinionnaire. Finally, they discussed how their own responses have or have not changed as a result of having studied the two stories.

As with the first opinionnaire activity, the disagreement over what the authors probably would have said about the statements provides a natural follow-up writing situation, assignment #1. (Read Assignment.) Students are motivated in this writing situation because it is real. They are writing to a real audience--their peers. It follows directly out of what they have done in the class discussions, so they have rehersed arguments, presented evidence and reasoning to support their interpretations, and heard refutations of their viewpoints. They are ready to write. And they have a reason to write--to convince their peers to change their conclusions. This is literary analysis as it should be.

Another possible follow-up writing activity is to have students read on their own another story that involves the Vietnam War and that uses irony to convey its meaning. This is assignment #2 and the story that follows the assignments, Charles Coe's "Young Man in Vietnam" (story is not included in this paper), is one that I have used for this assignment a number of times. I have students read the story on their own and then write an interpretation of it. Again, I have had good success with this assignment. I believe it is because the introductory activity and the follow-up discussions model for students how to interpret this literature and how to turn their interpretations into written analytical essays. They gain confidence from their participation in the sequence of discussion activities I went over.

As you have probably already figured out, these assignments parallel those I showed you for the previous opinionnaire. Assignment #3 follows directly from the class discussion of how students' opinions have or have not

changed as a result of reading the story. (Read assignment.) Again, this assignment is both a personal response and involves some literary analysis. Students have success with this assignment because they have thought about and discussed their opinions before reading and after reading the story, and they are able to explain how their opinions have changed as a result of reading the story. Without the opinionnaire activity before reading the story that requires them to articulate and defend their opinions, their written responses are not very good.

Assignment #4 is a creative assignment. (Read assignment.) Students usually have little difficulty with this assignment because in essence they have discussed this thoroughly in the follow-up discussion of the stories. In fact, in that discussion students often discuss various scenarios regarding how the characters probably would have acted. In short, they usually have plenty of ideas for writing. In addition, many often are anxious to show how they believe the characters would have acted based on their interpretations of the story.

Assignment #5 is a personal response to the story. (Read assignment.) Once again, though, it follows directly from the discussions prior to and after reading and discussing the story. In these discussions student are rehersing what they are going to be asked to do in writing.

I have used this opinionnaire to introduce a number of works dealing with the Vietnam War: Besides the short stories I have shown you here today and Philip Caputo's, *A Rumor of War,* that I mentioned earlier, I have used it with James Webb's, *Fields of Fire,* Walter Dean Myer's, *Fallen Angels,* Ron Kovic's, *Born on the Fourth of July,* Mark Baker's oral history *Nam,* Michael Herr's, *Dispatches,* Bobby Ann Mason's, *In Country,* and Tim O'Brien's, *Going after Cacciato.*

Opinionnaire Activities: Summary

Opinionnaire introductory activities are easy to make. They can be used to introduce a single work-short story, poem play, or novel--two or more works, or an entire literature unit. Also, they are easy to modify if you want to use one with additional works. Besides preparing students for reading literature, they engage them in what they are going to read. Finally, opinionnaire activities also help to prepare students for writing about the literature they read.

Scenarios

Scenarios are another method for introducing a literary work. They present problematic examples of people who find themselves in thorny situations that parallel the circumstances of the literary characters or involve a key concept in the literature. A successful set of scenarios typically contains five to ten different situations that represent a range of possibilities. In designing a set of scenarios a teacher needs to identify problematic aspects of the literature that could form the basis for a series of scenarios and the concerns and experiences of students in order to depict the problem in students' terms. There are, of course, one or two other important elements, particularly as they apply to writing, but these elements I think will be best understood if I show you a couple of examples of scenario activities. Also, I'm going to show you two scenario activities so that I can illustrate two slightly different ways to set them up.

"What Makes a Good Romantic Love Relationship?" Scenarios

If you will turn to the next two pages of your handout (Appendix, pp. 54-55), you'll see the first activity which was originally designed to go with the short story following the scenarios, "The Chaser" by John Collier (story is not included in this paper). To help you understand how this kind of activity works, we really need to have a feel for what the entire set of six scenarios are all about and what students are being asked to do in the activity that prepares them for reading the story and for writing. (Read directions and have someone in the audience read each of the scenarios.)

First, let me explain the classroom procedures for doing this activity which will help clarify what happens in the activity. I usually have students rank the scenarios on their own. Then, I put them in small mixed groups of four or five and have the groups try to reach a consensus on their answers. Then, I lead a class discussion in which I have students compare their small group decisions. You may dispense with the individual rankings prior to small group work if you have a class that works well in small groups; otherwise, I suggest starting with the individual rankings first. This seems to stimulate the small group discussions perhaps because students come to the small groups having done some thinking about the situations presented.

Obviously, trying to reach a consensus in small groups or whole class discussion is no simple matter. There is no one obviously best system of ranking. As with the opinionnaire activities, controvery or disagreement is important. As students try to convince other group members, or small groups try to convince other small groups in the whole class discussion, that they are right, they must elaborate the reasons for their choices. In addition, as they defend their choices they refute the opposing viewpoints of others. They search for evidence, explain and refine their reasoning as they defend

their rankings. In arguing why one relationship will last longer than another, students discover the characteristics they feel are necessary for a successful relationship. As part of the whole class discussion, I list what they have come up with on the board.

The point of the small group and whole class discussions is not to come to agreement as to "The" characteristics of a good relationship, but rather to get students to think about what makes a good relationship in preparation for reading the story and to practice the skills involved in writing about literature One important note: The small group discussions are almost absolutely essential to the success of scenario activities.

With the characteristics of a good relationship in mind, I have students read the story. Then, I put students in small groups and have them determine from evidence in the story how Alan would define love, or, in other words, what Alan's characteristics for a good relationship would be. In the small group and follow-up whole discussions most students are quick to see that Alan's view of love is superficial and inadequate. Many students relate Alan's view to the various relationships depicted in the scenarios. In other words, students apply the characteristics they developed prior to reading to the relationship depicted in the story. In fact, some students even explain their interpretation in terms of where they would rank this relationship in terms of the scenarios they examined. When I ask students to explain why Alan's view of love is inadequate and what Collier is trying to tell us about romantic love relationships, students are usually quick to see that Collier is criticizing more than Alan's romanticized notion that Diana should be jealous of other women. They perceive that Collier is really telling us that love involves considering the needs of people to be free. They

recognize that if Alan's ideal were realized, it would result in an unbearable chaining of one individual to another.

Following the discussion of the story, I ask students to refer back to the set of scenarios and rank them as they think Collier would and to compare their responses with their observations about the story. Then I lead a class discussion of their findings. I really enjoy the discussion of how they think Collier would rank the scenarios. There is almost always considerable disagreement about one or two of the scenarios. Also, many students admit to a change of heart about what makes a good relationship. Some of the guys in particular now admit that scenario #6 (Roscoe and Anne) is not going to last long at all.

An important point about the discussions. The controversy or disagreement that is created means that whenever students speak up they are facing a questioning audience of peers, an audience that is going to challenge unexamined assumptions and unsupported generalizations. The activity (and this is also true of the opinionnaire activities) requires that students find evidence in the story to support their interpretations, and if they can't, then they need to modify or abandon a claim.

By examining these scenarios before they begin reading, students gain interest in a concept that is key to the story and they develop a more sophisticated understanding of love relationships which they use in analyzing the story. I have taught this story without the scenario activity, and I want you to know that getting students to understand what Collier is trying to suggest about love relationships without this introductory activity is extremely difficult. In fact, this activity is based on an earlier version of this activity that was originally developed by a student teacher I had a number of years ago. For his master's paper at the University of Chicago, my

student teacher, Steve Kern, did a study in which he used this activity and the story "The Chaser." Kern found that when students participated in introductory activities such as these they achieved higher levels of comprehension than when they do not participate in these activities before reading. Specifically, Kern found that students who participated in introductory scenario activities before reading "The Chaser" achieved significantly greater comprehension scores (and in particular in terms making complex inferences) than students who did not participate in these activities before reading the same stories. Kern's study and a number of additional studies done since Kern's suggest that these kinds of introductory activities help students interpret literature with greater precision.

I want to emphasize that this activity might be used to introduce any work (such as *Romeo and Juliet*) or group of works that involve romantic love relationships. It is not restricted to this one story.

The Writing Connection

The next page of your handout (Appendix, p. 56) contains the various writing assignments I suggest using with this scenario activity. You will note that they parallel those I have shown you for the opinionnaire activities. Rather than go over all of them with you and explain how the introductory activity helps to connect each to the literature, which I have already done with the previous activities I have shown you, I thought I would just focus on a few of the assignments to emphasize a couple of important points or point out aspects that are a little different.

Assignment #1 is very similar to those that I have shown you for the opinionnaire activities. (Read assignment.) It follows directly from the class

discussion of how students thought the author would rank the scenearios. The main difference is that some students may need to do a bit of comparison and contrast, as well as extracting of details from the scenarios and evidence from the story, to prove a particular ranking. In other words, this assignment can be a bit more difficult than the parallel assignment for the opinionnaire activities. It might also be that the class will come to agreement as to how Collier would rank the scenarios.

Assignment #2 is just like the previous examples I have shown you for the opinionnaire activities. Here is a list of a few good stories to use for this assignment: Max Shulman's "Love is a Fallacy," Jesse Stuart's "Catalogue Girl," or O. Henry's "The Exact Science of Matrimony." Many other stories would also work well.

If you'll skip down to assignment #5, I'd like to spend a moment on this assignment. (Read assignment.) Do we have any Rod Serling "Twilight Zone" fans here? I got the idea for this assignment from Serling. He turned Collier's story into a screenplay, but he added a five years later scene. He shows us the miserable relationship Alan and Diana have. Alan saves his money for five years to buy the $5,000 "life cleaner" to kill Diana. He tries to slip it in her drink, but she dotes on him so much that she causes him to spill the poison laced drink before she drinks it. The story ends with viewers realizing that Alan is stuck with this awful relationship for the rest of his life. You might want to show Serling's version to your class after they have written their new endings. This helps them see that what you are asking them to do is what real writers sometimes do.

The last assignment asks students to do some personal writing derived from a main theme in the story, the potentially devastating effects of

attempting to change another person to conform to one's own view of love. (Read assignment.) However, it attempts to broaden the theme a bit.

As with the opinionnaire activities, this activity helps to connect literature and writing. It has been my experience that the writing students produce when they have participated in activities such as this one is usually much better than when they have not. The key factors seem to be that the small group and whole class discussions of the scenarios help students construct a cognitive map that helps them to interpret the literature and turn their interpretations into effective writing.

"Courageous Action: What Is It?" Scenarios

I'm going to ask you to do the next activity pretty much as I would have students do it so that you can see the dynamics of how this type of activity works and see the kind of thinking students are doing in the activity that prepares them for reading and writing.

The next two pages of your handout (Appendix, pp. 57-58) contains a set of eight scenarios concerning the concept of courage. This set of scenarios was originally designed for a sequence of activities to teach students how to write extended definition, and its ability to help students learn important thinking and rhetorical skills involved in writing extended definition has been well documented (see, for example, Johannessen, Kahn, and Walter [1982]). However, it is also a very effective introductory activity for literature concerned with the concept of courage or courageous action. In fact, many of the works that we typically teach are concerned with this issue: Jack London's "To Build a Fire," Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Ernest Hemingway's "A Day's Wait," *A Farewell to Arms*,

and *The Old Man and the Sea*, Richard Connell's "The Most Dangerous Game," and Steven Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage*, just to name a few. If students are going to be able to comprehend and interpret these works, then they must have some understanding of courage--they must be able to evaluate the motivations and actions of characters in these works in terms of their knowledge of courage if they are going to be able to interpret what these authors are trying to convey to readers about the concept of courage.

As you can see this scenario activity is set up a little different than the other one I showed you. (Read directions and first scenario.) There are specific questions for each scenario to be answered and you need to decide what criterion is suggested by each scenario. I'll give you about fifteen minutes to work in your groups--with students you will need to give at least twenty-five minutes and probably longer. (Assign groups.)

Now that you have all finished let's see what you came up with. Somebody tell me what you decided about incident #1? What criterion did you come up with based on this incident? Did anyone else have something different? What did you decide? Why? (Continue on in this fashion discussing each of the incidents.) With students you will want to list the criteria they come up with on the board and have them copy them in their notebooks for use when reading and writing about the literature they are going to study.

Students usually decide that none of the incidents are courageous action and they come up with a list of criteria and rationale such as the following:

Incident #1: The parents in Chicago responsible for the death of a child are not courageous. Criterion: To be courageous, an act must be for a good purpose or as Aristotle might have said, for a noble cause.
Incident #2: For an act to be courageous it cannot be selfish or self-seeking, as Nixon's act appears to be. Some students might point out that Nixon acted out of fear of exposure. A courageous act cannot be the result of some greater danger.
Incident #3: Captain Smith comes close to being courageous. To be courageous, however, the actor must consider the danger and not act rashly in disregard of it.
Incident #4: Jewkes is not courageous. If the actor is unaware of the dangers surrounding his act, the act cannot be courageous. Courage, As Aristotle points out, is concerned with fear and confidence.
Incident #5: For an act to be courageous, it must be freely chosen, not forced, not done out of fear of being ridiculed and ostracized by the Killer Bees.
Incident #6: Big Mike's act is not courageous. It is not for a good cause, but only for Big Mike's personal aggrandizement. Some students point out that the dare may offer no danger for Big Mike. There is apparently nothing for him to fear.
Incident #7: To be couragous, it must be deliberately chosen. The woman here acts in frenzy and fear, hardly a deliberate choice. Her courage is seeming courage only.
Incident #8: Same criteria as for #7. His act is not chosen after deliberation. He acts spontaneously out of rage. Just as in #7, neither actor considers the dangers and consequences. Neither is likely to act in the same way under different circumstances--or, at least, we

cannot tell if they will. Their acts do not indicate courage as a state of character.

As you may have already figured out, these incidents are based on Aristotle's definition of courage in *Nicomachean Ethics*. After students have done this activity, I like to tell them that the definition of courage that they came up with is very similar to the great Greek philosopher Aristotle.

Thinking about these situations helps prepare students for the characters, situations, and themes they will encounter in a work concerned with the concept of courage. It is important that students work through the scenarios and try to reach a consensus, but they have the option of noting that there was a majority and minority opinion. The attempt at consensus provides the vehicle for the dynamics of the discussion. As a result of the discussion, each group should have a list for defining the concept. The follow-up whole class discussion in which the teacher asks each group to report its decisions and has the groups discuss their observations and reasoning is also an important part of the vehicle for the dynamics of the discussion. Often the whole class discussions become quite heated as students attempt to explain their reasoning and refute the views of others. It is not important that each group or each student agrees on the decision. It is important that all the students articulate the criteria they used to guide their decisions.

Follow-up Writing

There are a number of possible writing activities students might do as a result of their work with the courageous action scenarios. The next page of

your handout (Appendix, p. 59) contains some the assignments that have been successful. Of course, exactly what you do may depend on the specific literature students are working with, the age and ability of your students, and the kind of writing you want to focus on.

The first assignment is based on the assumption that students have read some literature, such as the works I mentioned earlier, dealing with courageous action and have had to interpret what a work suggests about courageous action. In analyzing this literature students use as a starting point the criteria they have developed from working on the courageous action scenarios. Then, students are ready to do some independent reading and writing, or, in other words, assignment #1. (Read assignment.) Here are some possible stories you might use for this follow-up writing activity: "Leiningen Vs. the Ants" by Carl Stephenson, "The Raid" by Leo Tolstoy, "A Mother's Tale" by James Agee, "Guerrilla Mother" by Pearl Buck, or "The Cask of Amontillado" by Edgar Allan Poe.

The second assignment is a little different. (Read assignment.) After students have read a major work concerned with courage, students are asked to interpret the concept of courage as put forth in a work of literature and then compare and contrast it to the definition they came up with from working on the courageous action scenarios. The important point here is that it is their work on the courageous action scenarios prior to reading that provides the active means by which students are able to interpret and then write about courageous action in a literary work. In other words, there is a direct link between the introductory activity, interpreting the literature, and writing about the literature.

The third and fourth assignments "writing about/in response to" and writing from" are very similar to those I have shown you with the previous

introductory activities I have shown you. I have already explained how the introductory activity prepares students for these assignments.

The last assignment is slightly different. (Read assignments.) It reall offers you two options. First, after students have read and interpreted one or more works dealing with courageous action, you might have them use the criteria they developed in working with the scenarios to write about a real person who they regard as couragous. A second possibility is to have them use the criteria they come up with from working on the scenarios and from their reading. Often their papers will compare and contrast the actions of the person they are writing about to literary characters. In this way this kind of assignment is still an extension of their reading.

Simulations

Perhaps the most dramatic method of sparking students interest and preparing students for what they will encounter and write about in literature are simulation activities. These activities work by placing students in a situation similar to one that a major character or characters are faced with in the work they are about to read.

As with other types of introductory activities, in order to design an effective simulation activity, the teacher needs to identify important literary issues that students will need to confront in order to understand the material, enter into the world of the students to create circumstances that they can easily project themselves into, and develop circumstances and roles for students to play. The key element of this kind of activity is that students will have the same kind of experience that the character or characters in the literature experience.

The Factory Simulation

The next page of your handout (Appendix, p. 60) which contains some drawings of various objects is your master sheet for a simulation activity for the short story that follows the activity, Jack London's "The Apostate." (The short story is not included with this paper.) For those of you who don't know this story, it involves the problem of child labor in factories. A key teaching problem is that students often have difficulty relating to the problems faced by the main character in working on an assembly line. (This activity is adapted from Johannessen, Larry R., Elizabeth Kahn, and Carolyn Calhoun Walter. [1984]. The art of introducing literature. *The Clearing House*, 57, 263-266.)

Begin by explaining to the class that they will be divided up into two or three equal groups. Each group must choose a foreman; the rest of the students in each group are assembly line workers. Appoint one student from the class to serve as the quality control inspector. Show the class the piece of paper with several simple drawings on it. Give each student a copy of the model or give a copy to each foreman once the groups have selected their foremen. Each group is given about 25 blank sheets of paper on which they will have to reproduce the drawings of the original model. Explain to the class that each group, drawing in non-erasable pen, is to reproduce 20 good copies of this model. Inform the class that we are going to find out which of the two or three assembly lines can produce the 20 good replicas in the shortest amount of time. Explain that the quality control inspector can reject products that do not meet his or her standards.

Give the groups a few minutes to select a foreman and then allow the foremen a few minutes to organize their workers and set up their assembly lines. Inform the quality control inspector that he or she is free to inspect the work at any point and should examine all completed replicas. Any replica that does not meet his or her standards should be thrown into the trash.

As the factory begins operation, the students acting as foremen are transformed from friendly classmates into unrelenting bosses; the student acting as quality control inspector becomes the hated top boss as he or she ruthlessly rips up poor reproductions and throws them into the trash.

After the simulation has been completed (perhaps twenty or thirty minutes), lead a class discussion focusing on the following questions: How did you feel while working on the assembly line? Why? Did you find the work monotonous and boring? Why or why not? What problems did you encounter on your assembly line? Why was this a problem? What was your attitude toward your foreman? Why? The quality control inspector? Why? What was your attitude toward your fellow workers? Why? What would it be like to have to do this kind of work for ten or twelve hours a day, day in and day out? Why? Have you ever had a job that is like this kind of work? What was it? How was it like this kind of work?

The discussion is extremely important in helping students put the experience they have just had into a context that will help them feel empathy with the main character. In other words, it prepares them for reading the story and gives them empathy with the main character because they have gained insight into the problems he faces working on an assembly line.

Follow-up Writing

The next page of your handout (Appendix, p. 61) contains a number of assignments that are parallel to the other assignments I have shown you. This activity prepares students for writing about literature in much the same ways as the previous activities have prepared students. I think I probably only need to comment on one or two of the assignments.

For the first assignment I have used Kate Chopin's short story "An Idle Fellow." There are certainly other possibilities, but this is one that seems to work pretty well.

The third assignment is a little different. (Read assignment.) Depending on your students, it may require some additional preparation before they attempt to turn the story into a television script. You may need to show them examples of what is meant by sets, stage and camera directions, and writing dialogue in script form. I usually have students work on this assignment in small groups, and we do the first scene of the story together as a class. You might even consider breaking the story up by scenes and assigning small groups particular scenes to turn into a script.

As with the previous follow-up writing activities I showed you, the point to keep in mind is that it is the introductory activity that sets the stage for successful follow-up writing. The excitement that is created as a result of the introductory activity extents to writing. Writing is, therefore, no longer an assignment to be done for school or for a grade, but rather an extension of what students have been doing with the literature.

Role Playing

Like simulations, role playing activities ask students to imagine themselves in situations similar to those experienced by characters in a work of literature. However, while simulations attempt to recreate an experience in the classroom or make it as close to an actual experience as possible, role playing activities are somewhat more removed from the reality of an experience. As with the previous activities I have shown you, the actual role playing itself is only the first step. The discussion that follows a role playing activity is just as important as the experience of playing a role.

"What If" Role Playing

The following role playing activity is intended as an introduction to John Steinbeck's *The Pearl*. (This activity is adapted from Johannessen, Larry R., Elizabeth Kahn, and Carolyn Calhoun Walter. [1984]. The art of introducing literature. *The Clearing House*, 57, 263-266.) A key teaching problem with the novel is that students often have difficulty relating to some of the problems faced by the main character, Kino.

I use the following procedures: Meet students at the door of the classroom with a large envelope and ask each to draw out a slip of paper. On each slip of paper is one of the three situations (Appendix, p. 62). (Read situations.)

Each of these situations has its parallel to a problem Kino faces in *The Pearl*. Kino, too, faces discrimination, the desertion of friends, and the decision of what to do with sudden wealth.

After drawing a situation, students are directed not to talk or compare assignments and to write a paragraph response to the situation drawn. After students have written their paragraphs, lead a class discussion of the

different problems and various solutions and feelings students wrote about in their paragraphs. Inform students that the main character, Kino, faces all of these problems in the novel and that as they read they should keep the various responses to the situations in mind.

Students are motivated to find out how the main character handles the situations that they wrote about and discussed. I think you can see how you might create similar role playing activities for literature you have your students read. It is simply a matter of identifying important literary issues that students will need to confront in order to understand the material, enter into the world of the students to create circumstances that they can easily project themselves into, and develop circumstances and roles for students to play. The key element of this kind of activity is that students will confront the same kind of issues that the character or characters in the literature must face.

Follow-up Writing

I have not provided you with sample writing activities for this introductory activity for two reasons. First, unlike the previous activities I have shown you, this particular role playing activity invólves writing. I am not trying to suggest that students should not write about literature when they do an introductory role playing activity that involves writing. Also, I think I have shown you plenty of examples of the range of writing activities you might have students do with these various introductory activities. I think you can also see how this introductory activity prepares students for writing about friendship, discrimination, and wealth in terms of how these themes are treated in the novel or in a response type of writing assignment.

Conclusion

I don't want you do go away today with any false impressions about introductory activities, so, before I close, I need to make a couple of things clear: First, because of time limitations, I have only been able to show you four types of introductory activities and how they help prepare students for reading and writing. There are other types of introductory activities. (To see a wealth of examples of these other types of introductory activities, you might take a look at *Introductory Activities for Literature and Composition, 7-12,* by Smagorinsky, McCann, and Kern [1986], as well as the other books and articles I have mentioned in this workshop. If you want to find out more about introductory activities, the bibliography lists a number of books and articles on the theory, research, and practice of introductory activities.)

Also, I am not trying to suggest that introductory activities are the solution to all of our problems in trying to teach students how to interpret and write about literature. For example, while a good introductory activity can provide the initial motivation for reading and help students with the targeted problems that the actvity focuses on, it cannot sustain motivation for an extended period of time, especially when students are trying to read and interpret a long and complex work. I would assume that good literature instruction would attend to other aspects of a given work.

In a similar vein, I am not trying to suggest that introductory activities will solve all of our problems when students write about the literature they study in our classes. While introductory activities can help to motivate and prepare students for writing about literature, some students may need additional help with problems such as how to work examples

smoothly into their compositions or how to connect their examples to explanations of what examples show. My assumption here is that teachers would attend to such problems as the need arises.

However, introductory activities do have much to offer. They can enliven literary study, help students learn how to interpret and write about literature, and help them become more independent learners. Introductory activities help to focus the classroom on the students and their own inquiry, lessening their reliance on the teacher. Finally, these activities can add a new demension to learning, one that focuses on a "fruitful" involvement with literature and writing about literature.

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APPENDIX

WORKSHOP ACTIVITY SHEETS

FRAMEWORK: WHERE DO WE BEGIN?

Directions: Read the following passage:

The procedure is actually quite simple. First you arrange items into different groups. Of course, one pile may be sufficient, depending upon how much there is to do. If you have to go somewhere else due to the lack of facilities, that is the next step; otherwise, you are pretty well set. It is important not to overdue things. That is, it is better to do too few things at once than too many. In the short run this may not seem important, but complications can easily arise. A mistake can be expensive as well. At first, the whole procedure will seem complicated. Soon, however, if will become just another facet of life. It is difficult to foresee any end to the necessity for this task in the immediate future, but then one never can tell. After the procedure is completed, one arranges the materials into different groups again. Then they can be put into their appropriate places. Eventually they will be used once more and the whole cycle will then have to be repeated.

On the following scale, rate how comprehensible you found the above passage:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
UNDERSTOOD NOT AT ALL						UNDERSTOOD VERY WELL

From Bransford, J. D. and Johnson, M. K. (1973). Consideration of some problems of comprehension. In W. Chase (Ed.) *Visual Information Processing*. New York: Academic Press.

TECHNOLOGY AND FAMILY LIFE OPINIONNAIRE

Directions: Read each of the following statements. Write *A* if you agree with the statement or *D* if you disagree with it.

Agree or
Disagree

_____ 1. Technological advances make life better for everyone.
_____ 2. Most parents spend too little time with their children.
_____ 3. Parents should exercise more control over what their children watch on TV.
_____ 4. Parents too often use TV as a kind of baby-sitter for their children.
_____ 5. Children should be given more freedom in deciding what to watch and when to watch TV.
_____ 6. Most teenagers do not try to spend time with or talk with their parents.
_____ 7. It is dangerous to place too much faith in technology.
_____ 8. Most parents try to talk with their kids about problems.
_____ 9. It is possible to become addicted to television viewing.
_____10. Teenagers try to talk with their parents but most parents never seem really to listen.
_____11. The real problem with technology is that people do not know how to use it sensibly.
_____12. Most teenagers watch too much television.
_____13. Children who watch too much television often believe that the violent shows that he or she watches portray life as it actually is.
_____14. Those who worry about the negative effects of technology should think about the many modern conveniences available today.
_____15. If people let machines do too much for them, then eventually people will no longer be able to do things for themselves.

Adapted from Johannessen, Larry R. (1991, Winter). A day in the African Veldt: Teaching irony in literature. *Illinois English Bulletin*, 78, 56-62, and from Johannessen, Larry R. (1991, October). Confronting the limits of technology. *NOTES Plus*, 9, 11-14.

Technology and Family Life Writing Assignments

1. **Writing about "The Veldt":** Write a letter to someone in the class who disagrees with you about Bradbury's stand on one or two of the statements on the opinionnaire. Try to convince this person that he or she is wrong and that your interpretation is correct. Make sure that you use evidence from "The Veldt" to support your viewpoint that Bradbury would agree or disagree with a particular statement on the opinionnaire.

2. **Writing about technology and its effects:** Read the story given to you. Then, write an essay in which you interpret what the author is saying about technological advances and their possible effects. Make sure that you use evidence from the story to support your interpretation of what the author wants readers to understand about technological advances and their effects.

3. **Writing about/in response to "The Veldt":** Write a composition in which you explain how your opinion has changed and why you have changed your opinion about one or two of the statements on the opinionnaire after reading "The Veldt." Make sure that you explain what your opinion was before reading the story and why, what your opinion is now after reading the story, and provide specific evidence from the story to explain how and why your opinion has changed.

4. **Writing from "The Veldt":** Write your own ending to "The Veldt." The story ends with David McClean, the psychologist, finding the children sitting quietly in the nursery--on the African Veldtland--having a picnic lunch. What happens next? Will McClean realize what has happened and try to turn off the nursery? Will the children try to kill him as well? What is the outcome of this scene? Make sure that your ending is consistent with what has happened previously in the story and with how the characters are portrayed in the story.

5. **Writing in response to "The Veldt":** Which technological advancements have had the most impact on your life? What specific benefits have resulted from these advancements for you, your family, and/or society? What problems or negative consequences have resulted from these advancements for you, your family, and/or society? Bradbury warns us that technological advances can have negative effects. What worries you the most about the advancements you are writing about? Why?

Vietnam War Opinionnaire

Directions: Below is a series of statements. Circle the response which most closely indicates how you feel about the statement. Be prepared to explain your answers.

1. "The only heroes in war are the dead ones."
   Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

2. "My country right or wrong" is not just a slogan—it is every citizen's patriotic duty.
   Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

3. Rambo is a good image for Americans to have of the Vietnam veteran: he represents all that America stands for and the American soldier in war.
   Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

4. No cause, political or otherwise, is worth dying for.
   Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

5. Most American soldiers participated in acts of brutality against Vietnamese civilians.
   Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

6. "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country."
   Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

7. It is never right to kill another person.
   Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

8. The men who fought in the Vietnam War did so because they were very patriotic.
   Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

9. Movies like Rambo are very bad because they show a distorted view of what war is really like and of what it is like to be a soldier.
   Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

10. "The soldier, above all other people, prays for peace, for he must suffer and bear the deepest wounds and scars of war."
   Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

11. The Vietnam War was a guerrilla war; therefore, it is understandable that Vietnamese civilians suffered as a result of American military actions.
   Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

12. People should never compromise their ideals or beliefs.
   Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

13. For soldiers who served in Vietnam, the difference between death and survival often meant not worrying about potential harm to innocent civilians or doing the right or moral thing.
   Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

14. When Vietnam veterans came home from the war, most Americans treated them as returning heroes.
   Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

Adapted from Johannesen, Larry R. (1992). *Illumination Rounds: Teaching the Literature of the Vietnam War*. Urbana: NCTE.

Vietnam War Writing Assignments

1. **Writing about "Centurion" or "We Have Met the Enemy":** Write a letter to someone in the class who disagrees with you about O'Brien's stand on one or two of the statements on the opinionnaire. Try to convince this person that he or she is wrong and that your interpretation is correct. Make sure that you use evidence from "Centurion" to support your viewpoint that O'Brien would agree or disagree with a particular statement on the opinionnaire.

Write a letter to someone in the class who disagrees with you about Moore's stand on one or two of the statements on the opinionnaire. Try to convince this person that he or she is wrong and that your interpretation is correct. Make sure that you use evidence from "We Have Met the Enemy" to support your viewpoint that Moore would agree or disagree with a particular statement on the opinionnaire.

2. **Writing about the Vietnam War:** Read the story given to you. Then, write an essay in which you interpret what the author is saying about the Vietnam War. Make sure that you use evidence from the story to support your interpretation of what the author wants readers to understand about the Vietnam War. Also, make sure that you explain how your evidence supports your interpretation of the story.

3. **Writing about/in response to "Centurion" and/or "We Have Met the Enemy":** Write a composition in which you explain how your opinion has changed and why you have changed your opinion about one or two of the statements on the opinionnaire after reading "Centurion" and/or "We Have Met the Enemy." Make sure that you explain what your opinion was before reading the stories and why, what your opinion is now after reading one or both stories, and provide specific evidence from one or both stories to explain how and why your opinion has changed.

4. **Writing from "Centurion" or "We Have Met the Enemy":** Write a new scene for "Centurion" or "We Have Met the Enemy." Imagine that the narrator and Bates find themselves in a situation similar to the one Hucks and Leland were confronted with in "We Have Met the Enemy" and Hucks and Leland find themselves in a situation similar to the one the narrator and Bates were confronted with in "Centurion." Describe how the narrator and Bates would have reacted or how Hucks and Leland would have reacted. Will the narrator and Bates kill the shadowy figure that they see run into a cave behind their position? Why or why not? Will Hucks and Leland do more to help the old men than the narrator and Bates did? Why or why not? Make sure that your scene is consistent with how the characters are portrayed in the story and that you have some dialogue between characters.

5. **Writing in response to "Centurion" or "We Have Met the Enemy":** Write about a time that you or someone you know had to make a difficult choice in which no matter what course of action was taken there would be unpleasant or negative consequences. What was the situation? What choice had to be made? What did you or this person decide to do? Why? In the two stories, the characters have no desire to harm innocent people, and yet they make decisions that result in acts of brutality. In the situation you are writing about, what were the unpleasant or negative consequences of the choice? What did you or this person learn from this experience?

What Makes a Good Romantic Love Relationship?

Directions: Based on your knowledge and understanding of what the basic elements are of a good relationship, rank the following relationships in terms of how long you think they will last. In other words, how long will each last (**#1=longest; #2=second longest; #6=shortest**)? Be prepared to explain your rankings.

_____ 1. Scott and Kim are both freshman in high school. They have been friends for years, but only this fall did they discover they liked each other more than just as friends. Both are rather shy about things, and Kim takes a lot of good natured kidding from her close circle of female companions. Recently, Scott has been feeling a little jealous of a particular football player who has been flirting with Kim, but Kim hasn't really been paying the football player much attention.

_____ 2. Scott and Julie have been married for two years. Scott is a very successful young lawyer with a lot on his mind and bright prospects for the future. Julie married him right after she graduated from college. She wanted then only to be a housewife and make him happy in his home life, but she's begun to feel that she doesn't mean a whole lot to Scott. Julie's tried to discuss the matter seriously with Scott, but he just brushes her off with a "You're wrong dear--you're very important to me, and I love you very much." He suggests that if she's feeling trapped at home she she should get a job or "maybe do some kind of volunteer work--you know what I mean, dear."

_____ 3. When they first met there was some kind of explosion. But it wasn't an explosion that lost its effect after the initial blast was over. Regina and Joe met about half a year ago at a party for entering freshman at their university. Both tell all their friends they've never felt like this before; both want to spend all spare moments with each other; both would readily admit that they would do *anything* for the other. They spend a lot of their time talking about how strange university life is and being thankful that they have each other to serve as comrades in arms against the turmoil of the first year away from home.

_____ 4. When Armando entered the local high school as an exchange student from Italy, all of the girls went crazy--especially Tanya. For months the girls in his English class kept flirting with him, hoping that he'd show some of that famous Italian romantic style and ask them out. Tanya tried everything she knew, all the tricks in the book. Finally he asked her out to a movie, and now she's the envy of every girl in the school. They get along fairly well and have been seeing each other almost every Saturday night for three or four months. Lately Tanya has spent a lot of energy fending off females that still seem interested in Armando even though it's common knowledge that the two are an item.

_____ 5. Alvin and Sarah were married one month before Alvin started medical school. Very much in love, their parents still went overboard to make sure that the marriage would work. Alvin's father set the two of them up in a nice apartment near campus, and Sarah's mother is always stopping by with homemade bread, cookies, pastries, and so on. Both of them knew that a marriage that includes a first year medical student would be tough, but Sarah is trying her hardest not to mind Alvin's extremely late hours and perpetual exhaustion. Alvin feels guilty about neglecting Sarah, reminds himself that Sarah does love him, and tries not to worry too much about it. She seems fairly happy.

_____ 6. Roscoe is a soccer player in college. Anne is an artist just out of high school. The two have been living together for a number of months now. The physical attraction between Roscoe and Anne is considerable. Though they both come from different backgrounds and have dissimilar interests, their minds meet on a lot of things. When they don't, the two usually have horrendous fights involving a lot of yelling and the occassional thrown tube of paint. The fights almost always die quickly with both apologizing to the other. Anne says that their differences make them stronger as a couple. Roscoe isn't sure about that, but he's willing to go along with it for the time being as long as Anne doesn't forget--as he puts it--"how to act like an animal as soon as the lights go out."

Adapted from Kern, Steve. (1983). The effects of introductory activities upon reading comprehension: An exploratory Pilot Study. Unpublished MAT Thesis. U of Chicago.

Romantic Love/Marriage Relationships:
Writing Assignments

1. **Writing about "The Chaser"**: Write a letter to someone in the class who disagrees with you about how Collier would rank one or two of the relationships from the "What Makes a Good Romantic Love Relationship?" sheet. Try to convince this person that he or she is wrong and that your interpretation is correct. Make sure that you use evidence from "The Chaser" to support your viewpoint about how Collier would rank one or two of the relationships on the "What Makes a Good Romantic Love Relationship?" sheet.

2. **Writing about Romantic Love/Marriage Relationships**: Read the story given to you. Then, write an essay in which you interpret what the author is saying about romantic love/marriage relationships. Make sure that you use evidence from the story to support your interpretation of what the author wants readers to understand about romantic love/marriage relationships.

3. **Writing about/in response to "The Chaser"**: Write a composition in which you explain how your opinion has changed and why you have changed your opinion about what makes a good relationship after reading "The Chaser." Make sure that you explain what your view of a good relationship was before reading the story and why, what your opinion is now after reading it, and provide specific evidence from the story to explain how and why your opinion has changed.

4. **Writing from "The Chaser"**: Write your own ending to "The Chaser." Imagine that it is five years later, and the narrator and Diane are married. Describe what their life is like. Will he return for the "life cleaner"? Will they be happy? Make sure that you include the main characters in your ending and have some dialogue between characters. Also, make sure that your ending is consistent with what has happened previously in the story and with how the characters are portrayed in the story.

5. **Writing in response to "The Chaser"**: Describe a time when you or someone you know tried to change another person. What specifically did you or this person want to change about the other person? Why? In "The Chaser," the old man suggests that Alan will tire of his relationship with Diane. In the situation you are writing about, what was the result of attempting to change the other person? Why?

Courageous Action: What Is It?

Directions: As a group discuss the following incidents and answer the questions posed for each incident. Then, based on your discussion of the incidents, list your own criteria for defining a courageous action.

1. Not long ago two parents in Chicago were charged with second degree murder and child abuse. They had starved their child, broken its bones (several ribs, two legs, an arm and skull), and put the infant in a pot on a hot stove. Did those parents fear anything? What should they have feared? Are they courageous because they did not fear the consequences for themselves? Why or why not?

2. The evidence suggests that Richard Nixon knew about the Watergate burglary, at least soon after it occurred. He certainly knew about and was probably involved in the cover-up. Any attempts to cover up such activities could be very dangerous politically. Assuming Nixon did attempt to cover up the activities, should his involvement in the cover-up be considered courageous? Why or why not?

3. Captain Smith comes to a battle zone which is new to him. The enemy holds the village which is important to supply routes. Soldiers who have been there before the captain say that several approaches to the village are heavily mined. They believe that the village contains hidden gun emplacements as well as machine gun nests. Captain Smith, however, says that the village must be captured immediately. Ignoring the warnings, he sets out to take the village by frontal attack with three squads of men, himself at their head. Is the captain courageous? Why or why not?

4. Corporal Jewkes is lost in the woods near a village that, unknown to him, is in enemy hands. The village is heavily guarded and the surrounding area is mined. He makes his way through the mines, of which he is unaware, and into the village. Not knowing what is inside, he enters the first house he comes to. It contains a gun emplacement, but the guards are asleep. Jewkes quickly kills the guards, and takes the guns. To this point, should we consider Jewkes' actions courageous? Why or why not?

5. The members of two rival gangs, the Archangels and the Killer Bees, meet on the street. Zip, a young man in the process of being initiated into the Killer Bees, is told to confront Big Mike, leader of the Archangels. He knows if he does not, his own gang members will ridicule him, probably beat him, and certainly throw him out of the gang. Therefore, Zip approaches Big Mike and begins to taunt him. Are Zip's actions courageous until now? Why or why not?

6. One day Big Mike comes to school wearing a brand new pair of blue suede shoes. He promptly dares anyone and everyone to step on those blue suede shoes. Being something of a poet, he says, "Put your soles on my suede; I'll put my knife in your life." Are his actions courageous? Why or why not? If someone intentionally tried to step on Big Mike' suedes, would that person's actions be courageous? Why or why not?

7. A woman has been beaten by her husband several times over a period of years. Finally, during one beating, when it seems to her that his rage will result in her death, she runs to the kitchen in panic and grabs a paring knife. When the husband catches her arm she turns and begins flaying him with the knife. Are the woman's actions with the knife courageous? Why or why not?

8. Corporal Kallikak has been on the front lines for a long time. Losses have been very heavy. While his squad is pinned down by heavy machine gun fire, his best friend is killed at his side. Suddenly Kallikak flies into a rage. Swearing at the enemy, he grabs a grenade launcher and in a fury charges across open ground and fires at the gun emplacement, destroying it. Are the corporal's actions courageous? Why or why not? Would your opinion change if he had been killed before firing? Why or why not?

from Johannessen, Larry R., Elizabeth A Kahn, and Carolyn Calhoun Walter. (1982). *Designing and Sequencing Prewriting Activities*. Urbana: ERIC/NCTE.

Courageous Action Writing Assignments

1. **Writing about Courageous Action:** Read the story given to you. Then, write an essay in which you determine whether or not the main character exhibits all the criteria for a courageous action. Make sure you use evidence from the story to show how the character does or does not exhibit each criterion.

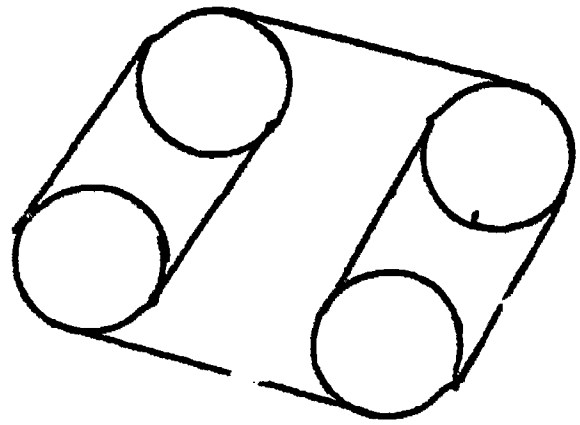
2. **Writing about Courageous Action:** Write a composition in which you explain Atticus Finch's definition of courage and compare his definition to your definition from the courageous action scenarios. Make sure you use evidence from *To Kill a Mockingbird* to show what his definition is and how his criteria are similar to and different from the criteria you say are necessary for an action to be considered courageous.

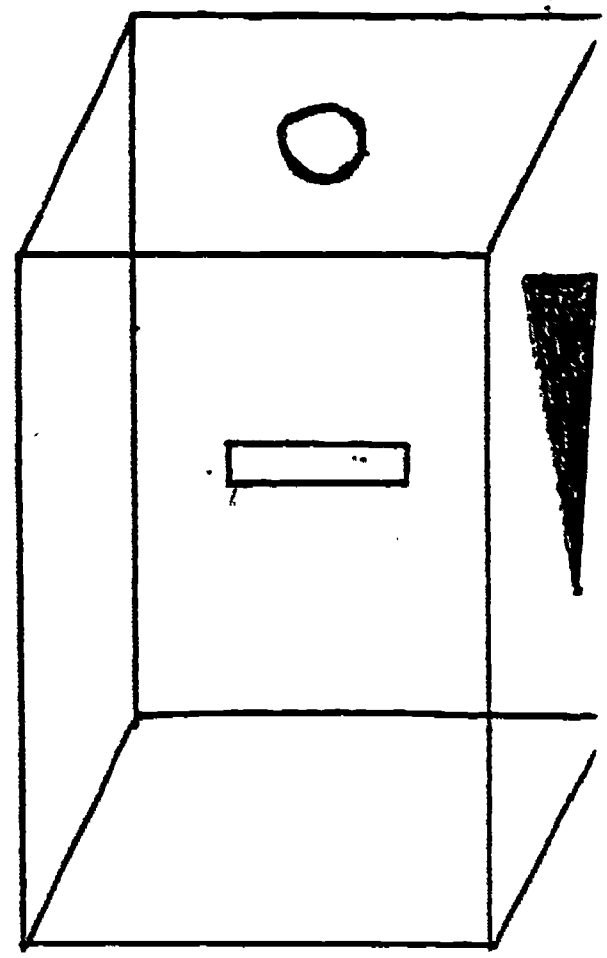
   Write a composition in which you explain how Hemingway defines courageous action in *A Farewell to Arms* and how his definition is similar to and different from your definition of courageous action from the courageous action scenarios. In writing your composition, you should use evidence from the novel to illustrate what his definition is and how his criteria are similar to and different from your criteria for a courageous action.

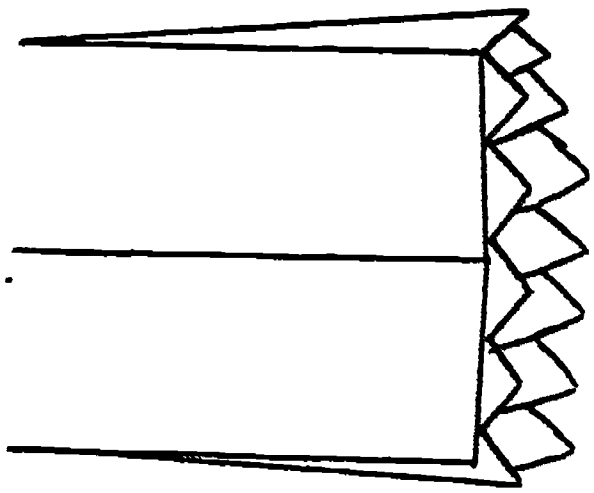
3. **Writing about/in response to Courageous Action:** Write a composition in which you explain how your view of courageous action has changed as a result of reading the story (stories or novel). Make sure that you explain what your view of courageous action was before reading the story (stories or novel) and why, what your view is now after reading it (the stories), and provide specific evidence from the story (stories or novel) to explain how and why your viewpoint has changed.

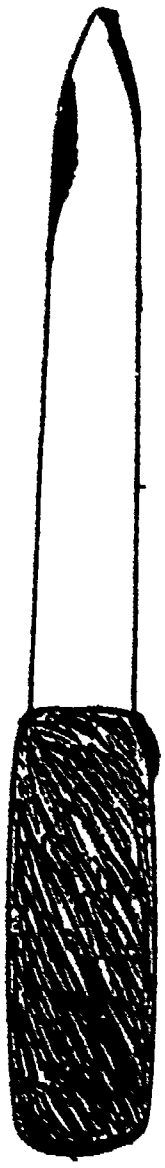
4. **Writing from Courageous Action:** Rewrite a scene from the story or novel involving a courageous action. How would the actions of the character have been different for the actions to be considered courageous or not courageous?

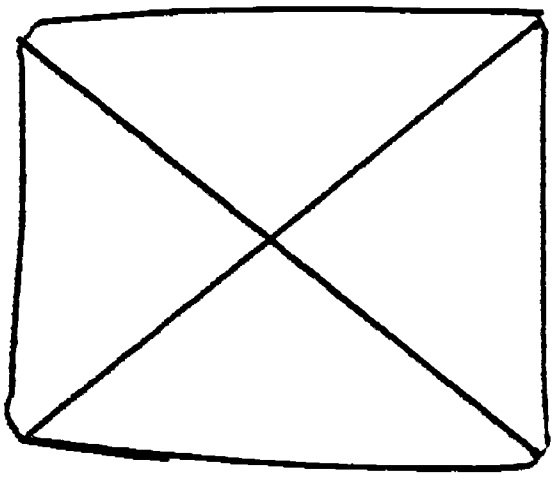
5. **Writing in response to Courageous Action:** Write a composition in which you determine whether or not someone you know or have read about exhibits all the criteria for a courageous action. Make sure you use examples to show how the person does or does not exhibit each criterion.

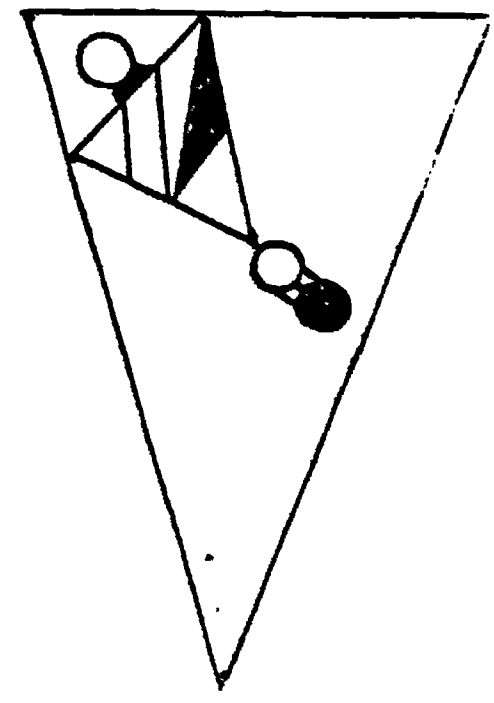












The Factory Writing Assignments

1. **Writing about work**: Read the story given to you. Then, write an essay in which you interpret what the author is saying about work. Make sure that you use evidence from the story to support your interpretation of what the author wants readers to understand about work.

2. **Writing about/in response to "The Apostate"**: Write a composition in which you explain how your opinion of child labor and/or work has changed and why it has changed after reading "The Apostate." Make sure that you explain what your opinion was before reading the story and why, what your opinion is now after reading the story and why, and provide specific evidence from the story to explain how and why your opinion has changed.

3. **Writing from "The Apostate"**: Turn "The Apostate" into a television script. Divide the story into a number of scenes. Describe the sets, add the stage and camera directions, and turn all the conversation into dialogue. Pay particular attention to how you can visually show what London wants readers to understand about child labor and factory work.

4. **Writing in response to "The Apostate"**: Write about a job that you have had (or someone you know has had). In "The "Apostate," the grinding routine of factory work stunts the boy emotionally and physically. How did your job effect you emotionally and physically? What were the positive aspects of your job? Why? What were the negative aspects of your job? Why? What did you learn as a result of this job experience?

Role Playing Activity: "What If"

1. Your father has just won the Millionaire's drawing of the state lottery. How do you think this will affect your family? What kinds of things will your family do with the money? What would you like your father to do with the money? Would you like anthing specifically for yourself? If so, what, and why do you want it? If not, why not?

2. You have had the same best friend since grade school. You feel that you really understand your friend and have a close relationship. After being elected to the student council, your friend seems to develop a new set of interests. You believe that your friend has changed; you do not understand him or her anymore. How do you feel about this? What do you do? Why?

3. You are very good in art. You have spent a long time on a painting which everyone says is very good. Your art teacher urges you to sell it to an art dealer and suggests $50 is a reasonable price to expect. You try selling your painting to the three art dealers in your area. Each of them offers you only $20. You have the feeling that they are making this low offer because you are "just a teenager." How do you feel about this? What do you do? Why?

Adapted from Johannessen, Larry R., Elizabeth Kahn, and Carolyn Calhoun Walter. (1984). The art of introducing literature. *The Clearing House*, 57, 263-266.