

The background is a solid yellow color. A large white circle is centered on the page. Overlaid on this circle is a blue spiral that starts near the center and winds outwards towards the top right corner. The title 'Coming on Center' is written in a large, bold, black, sans-serif font, slanted upwards from left to right. It is positioned within the white circle and the blue spiral.

# Coming on Center

English Education in Evolution

JAMES MOFFETT



Coming On Center  
English  
Education in Evolution

James Moffett

Boynton/Cook Publishers, Inc.

The quotation from William Butler Yeats' "Oxford, Autumn 1920" on page 154 is reprinted by permission of Macmillan, Inc.

Copyright © 1981 by Boynton/Cook Publishers, Inc. All rights reserved.  
No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner without written permission except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews.

For information address Boynton/Cook Publishers, Inc.  
206 Claremont Avenue, Montclair, NJ 07042

ISBN: 0-86709-005-7

Printed in the United States of America

81 82 83 84 85 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

# Preface

I wish I could say that these talks and articles produced between 1970 and 1980 were dated. That would mean that the political dangers to education that I and others warned about had been averted and that curricular proposals we made had been realized. Instead, however, these dangers have been realized and the sorely needed new curriculum averted. But these essays addressed increasingly, as the decade went on, the futuristic possibilities we should be thinking about in the very midst of the darkening '70s. I felt, and still feel, that cultural trends of a positive sort will mature in the '80s and, abetted by fiscal desperation, force the issue of educational change to the point of either drastically improving public schooling or pretty well abolishing it. So in one way or another the items forming this collection have spoken already to where English education is now and where it may go. I hope they will bridge usefully between past and future.

Roughly in chronological order, these utterances sketch an interaction between educator and society in the crucial area of language learning. I had published at the end of the '60s two companion volumes of theory and practice about teaching English that, as methods textbooks, soon enjoyed much use and influence—*Teaching the Universe of Discourse* and (retitled slightly in its revised version) *Student-Centered Language Arts and Reading, K-13*. The first, like this present volume, was a collection of talks and articles that, though not intended to eventuate as a book, naturally cohered because of a certain unity and continuity in the author's preoccupations. But I was also responding to responses: the interaction consisted of my addressing issues I was asked to talk or write on by various professional organizations or institutions who knew of my work. During the '70s I acted in some measure as a weather vane, a freelancer invited to hold forth on integration of the language arts or behavioral objectives or reading or humanities or writing or consciousness-expansion, according to current trends and funding. I tried to honor what some part or other of the society held important, all the while holding firmly to the development of my own ideas and ideals of growth. Shifts in both naturally formed a record that is part of what I have to say.

The bulk of this writing, however, comprises ideas about curriculum and methods intended to have some enduring utility—practical teacher talk or analysis of learning principles that aim to help educators think

more effectively about what they are doing. I hope very much, for example, that some suggestions here may facilitate the teaching of reading and writing and that other suggestions will enlarge far beyond these activities our notion of language learning and curriculum development. In addition to weaving throughout a thread of personal chronicle for secondary interest and enhancement, background notes should make some thematic connections to tie together the variety of learning matters dealt with at one time or another.

Robert Boynton and I have deleted some material that seemed to repeat key ideas an intolerable amount but at the same time permitted some redundancy to remain as themes recurred within different frameworks. Totally eliminating all redundancy seemed unwise to us on the grounds, as Editor Boynton expressed the matter in a note, "that each piece was, and is, of a piece and not simply a politician's theme mouthed on cue after the chicken and peas." I'm grateful indeed to him for being willing to help me prepare these items for publication and to let final decisions rest with me.

In selecting only those items that would balance and complement each other, I have also kept an eye out for variety of register employed, given that all are expository. Some were carefully composed then delivered live or simply printed; some were extemporized from a very bare outline then transcribed and edited to tighten; one is an interview. Since readers interested in language teaching are usually interested also in such distinctions, background notes try to bring these out by relating certain circumstances of production.

# Contents

1	Coming on Center	1
2	Misbehavioral Subjectives	10
3	Making Schools Pay Off <i>or</i> A Student-Centered Language Arts Curriculum	18
4	Interview	26
5	Teaching Literacy	39
6	Going with Growth: Fitting Schools to the Facts of Language Life	61
7	Bajan Bestiary	76
8	Integrity in the Teaching of Writing	81
9	Instructional Television for Language Learning in the '80s	94
10	Yoga for Public School Teachers	119
11	On Essaying	125
12	Writing, Inner Speech, and Meditation	133
	Appendix	182