CHAPTER NINE WRITING

Like *reading*, *writing* means two things at once. A person writing a letter or a poem, for example, is thinking out something and writing it down at the same time. She is doing two things that could be done separately. She might compose her letter or poem on a tape recorder one day and transcribe it from the tape another day. Or the two actions can even be performed by two different people. Balzac is said to have dictated his novels to a secretary, and John Milton, who was blind, is said to have dictated *Paradise Lost* to his daughters.

Just as comprehension can be independent of reading, composition can be independent of writing. We acknowledge this when we speak of oral composition and oral literature. The problems of verbal composing are problems of selecting and ordering words according to what one is thinking and are common to speaking and writing. Putting together words to render thought and feeling resembles composition in music, painting, and other arts, where also some elements of the medium are patterned to express and communicate.

Spelling and punctuation, on the other hand, are elements of transcription, not composition. It's understandable that transcribing and composing should become confused, since a person writing does both at once. The transcribing part is taking dictation from oneself, writing down some version of one's inner speech as one focuses on the subject for a certain audience. Of course, the fact of writing does itself influence composition inasmuch as transcribing thoughts permits reviewing and rethinking them. (In an oral culture, one revises by recalling and retelling.) But however entwined they become for proficient writers, transcribing and composing are distinct enough activities to entail different learning issues.

This ambiguity about writing causes confusion in teaching it equal to that caused in the teaching of reading. Grammar, for example, is thrown in with spelling and punctuation as "writing mechanics," whereas grammar is first learned through oral speech and remains an issue in speaking as well as writing and reading. It has little to do with the transcriptive skills of spelling and punctuating. If grammar is to change or improve, it must do so through further composing experience, and this can take place orally as well as while writing.

The mistaken notion that composition can be practiced only while writing compares to the fallacy that comprehension can be practiced only while reading. People talking are composing; they're putting ideas into words and sentences and discourse. Furthermore, even when just thinking, alone, people are composing to

the extent that they are verbalizing their thought. A written composition is some edited version of a person's inner speech, and inner speech develops in a very large measure from outer speech. A writer is both author and secretary. If you can help your students to regard their inner speech as something they can in some edited form transcribe any time to paper, they will take a giant step toward becoming fluent writers.

Since, then, talking to others and talking to oneself are composing acts, writing can be practiced, like reading, through activities other than itself that are oral, social, and intellectual. This opens the way for teaching composition by a rich variety of means. What you should do is arrange for those talking and thinking activities that will develop oral composition so that when students do transcribe their inner speech, they write something interesting and effective. We're not saying that thinking, speaking, and writing are all the same thing. They're not, because at each of these stages of externalizing one's inner life, the process changes. But all are acts of composing and are continuous with each other and with constructing in other arts and media.

As with reading, proficiency may weld thought and text so closely in the act of writing as to bypass speech. Also as with reading, however, speech remains the implicit touchstone. In any case, as a rendering of speech into text, transcribing can be practiced not only while composing but also separately as in taking dictation or transcribing a tape. If your students are still learning basic spelling, punctuation, and handwriting, you may want to consult *Becoming Literate* as you read this chapter. But spelling and punctuating only gradually approximate convention as youngsters shift from their own inventions of these to what they see in texts, as they adjust their hypotheses about the relations between the sounds and the sights of the language, and as they simply memorize those spellings that the regularities don't fully determine.

Before children learn to write, they can dictate their stories to literate helpers. Transcription is so difficult during the early school years that beginners must have means to compose without it while in the process of mastering it. Dictation enables them to spin out a story fluently without having to worry about these mechanical problems of writing and without having to limit themselves unduly in length. Seeing their words rendered on paper helps them establish a tie between vocal speech and writing. See page 119 for this procedure. Further work on transcribing is included in the latter part of this chapter and occasionally dealt with as part of other writing processes.

Grammar and vocabulary develop through all practice of discourse, because by their nature, they are integral parts of language itself, not just of literacy. Conversing, reading, performing, and writing all increase the learner's stock of words and sentence structures and her power to combine these, especially as practiced in the realistic ways this book recommends. Grammar is not just *naming* the parts of speech; it's composing and comprehending with them. Since it would become tedious for us to keep pointing out all the ways in which vocabulary and grammar develop throughout all the activities and kinds of discourse, we strongly urge that you note these ways for yourself as we describe the activities in this and other chapters.

The chapters on discussing, dramatic activities, and performing treat composition, because they recommend practices in oral composition or in rehearsal of texts. The quality of inner speech is improved both through vocalizing one's own spontaneous thoughts during impromptu exchanges and through vocalizing the

thought and language of authors during performed readings. The chapters of Part Three deal with composition of each of the ten kinds of discourse, so they array the variety of specific writing students may do. In this chapter we take up staple writing processes common to more than one kind of discourse.

DISSEMINATING WRITTEN PRODUCTS

People need strong reasons for taking that extra step to write down what they can think and say. So activity directions should make clear why ideas should be written down and what is to be done with the writing afterwards. It may be copied and distributed, passed around, performed as a script, posted where it can be read at any time, carried out as directions for how to do or make something, submitted for publication, incorporated into further activities for which it is needed as a preliminary, preserved as a basis for discussion or further reflection, and so on. The basic purpose of writing is to extend speech as a way of thinking, expressing, and communicating. It should not end in the deadletter office of a teacher's desk.

Sometimes students very much want your personal involvement in their writing, which an individualized management allows for by affording one-to-one relating, but routinely taking up and "marking papers" eliminates a more authentic audience and limits writing to what you can process. Students cannot write enough if you alone have to process it. Arrange for them to use each other also as audience, coach, conferencer, and editor. Recommendations in this chapter aim to give writing a real purpose, to exploit cross-teaching among students, and to make the most effective use of your expertise. In such a program, ways of disseminating take on great importance even though some writing such as certain journals or notes exist for the author alone.

Exhibiting or reviewing their writing gives youngsters great satisfaction. Broadcasting and preserving offsets the abstractness of writing by making it gratifyingly physical and social. Besides, students will be writing a large part of the classroom reading matter. Youngsters must think of themselves not only as consumers but as creators. Moreover, when people write, they read more, they become more involved in language, and they get caught up in cycles of giving and taking texts that gather momentum and accelerate progress in both reading and writing. The means of exhibiting and disseminating student writing must facilitate all this to the utmost. Performing is a major way treated in its own chapter. Here are other ways.

Not only bulletin boards, but also the backs of cupboards, bookcases, desks, walls, and even display boards hung from the ceiling can be used as places to show student writing. Directions written by students for games or activities should be appropriately stationed, like all other directions. Not only many schools today but many other public places are displaying student work, usually art, but briefer types of writing can also be exhibited, especially if related to other visuals and if placed where people wait or linger.

■ DUPLICATING

Make full use of the technology of copying and printing whenever it's available or affordable. Word processor printouts allow members of a writing workshop to

work over each other's drafts and revise on the same disk from which the copies were printed. Photocopying is easy for either few or many copies but more expensive than dittoing or mimeographing, which involve making a master that can print several hundred copies. Desktop publishing, which combines a computer, special software, and a laser printer, suits perfectly the publication needs of a writing program.[1] With it students can lay out and put out a quality illustrated magazine, brochure, booklet, newsletter, or newspaper to disseminate their writing to all sorts of audiences. Lobby hard for your school to purchase such a setup for its writing program.

Valuable writing networks can be maintained with other schools and communities via fax machines and computer terminals with modems. Students use this "electronic mail" to converse and correspond with pen pals and to share their writing and other texts with each other. Keep up with telecommunications for other possibilities of reaching remote audiences for your students.

One possibility is old-fashioned but not capitalized on enough in schools—submitting writing for publication. Many local newspapers would like to publish student reportage or feature articles, perhaps on a regular basis in reserved columns. Encouraged by desktop publishing, many organizations put out newsletters and may be grateful for good material. *Writer's Market* lists hundreds of regional and national periodicals specializing in dozens of subjects.[2] Many teachers give students basic information about how to prepare and submit manuscripts—yes, even in elementary school. Remind writing workshops to think about possible publication for some of the writing as they help each other to conceive and accomplish it. Once students get used to thinking about *placing* their work, they will make good suggestions to each other about reaching larger audiences. The idea that adults might really enjoy reading student writing does not seem laughable if you consider that the kinds of discourse dealt with in the third part of this book are all the same sorts that adults themselves read and write. Many aspects of a writing program look different after it's made realistic.

■ MAKING BOOKLETS

Physically making books seems to have a very deep and widespread appeal for many students. This process can begin as soon as children can collect a set of their pictures, paste them on paper, and staple them together between a front and back cover. One of the regular options in any student-centered classroom should always be the production of books. Beginning readers can make their own alphabet and number books and books about subjects of interest, using photographs cut from magazines or their own illustrations with captions if they can find a helper to dictate to. Older children can put together anthologies of favorite songs, poems, riddles, jokes, brain teasers, and so on, or collections of individual compositions that members of a writing group wrote in common, such as fables, memoirs, fiction stories, or haiku; or collections of works all by one individual, about herself or some other featured subject.

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[1] The Children's Writing and Publishing Center (The Learning Company) is software especially easy to use for this.

[2] Published annually by Writer's Digest Books in Cincinnati, Ohio.

Books can be accordion-folded in the Japanese tradition or rolled into a scroll, as well as conventionally bound. Soft covers can be made of construction paper or tagboard and fastened together with staples. Books can also be held together by paper-holding rivets or punched with holes and fastened with brads or sewn together with yarn or string. A more complicated process, but one that most teachers have found well worth the effort because of the beauty and durability of the final book, is to sew the pages together and then attach them to a cloth cover.

Such books can join the class or school library or be shared at home. Student-produced books build pride in the writing process. Teachers who have made a specialty of book-binding report that it provides astonishing motivation for some youngsters to write. Physically making books inspires them to want to write something to go inside, to create the mental book.

COLLECTIVE WRITING

Collective writing occurs when youngsters work together in a small group to produce a single piece of writing. It can be an appropriate process from the early years of schooling right up through secondary school. Students decide together what they want to write and how they want to go about it generally. Then they work out what they want to say sentence by sentence as one of the group writes it down and makes contributions also. They can take turns scribing; it's good practice in the transcriptive part of writing. Typically, someone proposes a sentence and others accept it or amend it. Sometimes members may have to stop and work out underlying problems of selection and organization before they can resume dictating. At the end, the scribe reads back the composition and everyone listens for places needing revision. A good practice is for members to check out punctuation by having one read the composition as others look on, listen, and say which marks, if any, need to be added or changed.

In general, collective writing might be used for the following purposes:

- To provide a chance for students to pool their perceptions, feelings, and ideas in working on a common writing task.
- To achieve writing that is both broader and deeper through the varied interaction possible in group work.
- To provide the means for individuals to get varied and immediate feedback to their expressions of ideas and feelings.
- To help students learn how to develop those group-process skills necessary for productive group work.
- To provide an opportunity for students to practice composing with the aid of peers so that individuals gain the skill and confidence to practice further alone.

Like the language experience approach to literacy described on page 119, collective writing provides a learner new to the writing process an opportunity to compose orally while a recorder writes down her words. Though most children find collective writing easier than individual writing, many primary-school children can write alone with great gusto and fine results, and advanced writers may find that collective writing interferes with rather than aids their own writing process. However, less mature writers of any age find that collective writing spurs them to greater production. More mature students may periodically return to col-

lective writing for the fun of interacting, to incorporate group thinking in a composition, or to collaborate on a new or challenging kind of composition.

An excellent beginning for students unaccustomed to small-group process is to work with only one partner. Because pairing limits the ideas and help that each can receive, it's good to increase group size to three, four, or five as soon as the individuals can handle that degree of cooperation. Short, concrete writing, like directions for a simple game or a script for a short skit, may also help launch beginners.

If they tape-record, members can first *discuss* a version of the composition without scribing, then play it back, noting down ideas or phrasing they want to keep, then dictate it to a scribe, or tape a real draft and transcribe afterward. Taping may be useful not only for beginners but for any group facing a long or complex composition. Many individuals may find it easier to compose on tape and later transcribe and edit, perhaps with a partner.

Teachers who have tried collective writing attest that it has proved to be a tremendous source of motivation for students who otherwise seem reluctant to write. Students experiencing it gain enthusiasm for communicating their feelings and ideas and increase their capacity to find ways of communicating effectively. It also leads in perfectly to the writing workshop.

THE WRITING WORKSHOP

A writing workshop is any small group of students writing individual compositions who help each other through all the stages of processing some subject matter into a finished composition. Note that this definition goes beyond any concept of a writers workshop as a "peer editing group" or as a situation in which members just exchange drafts in order to try out their compositions and make suggestions to each other for revision and polishing. We believe these groups should fully implement the "process approach," which should refer to the natural phasing of composition from the prewriting stages of mulling over, talking about, choosing a type of writing, and finding material, on to drafting and mid-composition consultation to further drafting, group feedback, revision, polishing, and editing. Not every composition needs all of this, but the writing workshop exists to help with any of these stages and their repetition when required. A workshop can help at least as much with prewriting as in responding to drafts.

This role in the total process befits the initial concept of the workshop as we proposed it in 1968, when we analogized it to writing from groups in theater, dance, painting, and other arts. *Participants help each other get good at something together.* They identify as creator when they respond as audience. They trade techniques. They understand that the more help they give the more they will get. In learning to troubleshoot and perfect someone else's product, you learn to do so for your own. A workshop epitomizes truly collaborative learning at its best.

An actors' or dancers' workshop adds the incentive that participants may also perform together and so want the best teammates possible. Writing workshops should cultivate exactly this spirit, in contrast to the old competition of grades, prizes, and isolated composition. The fact is that when a workshop works well, everyone's personal performance improves, and individuals learn from it how to function well independently. Furthermore, if writing is *used*, as we urge, workshop groups often publish, post, or perform their products together as a joint offering to others, like that of an actors troupe.

On pages 29–32 we explained why peer feedback may vastly improve drafts even when no members are more skilled than others. Most composition problems involve failure to allow for the reader in some way for which virtually any caring reader can furnish useful response. As members of a group gain practice in reading each other's writing, they become increasingly able to give and accept feedback and suggestions. Experience in a writing workshop builds a student's capacity to evaluate and develop her own writing without heavy external prodding. The writing-workshop group helps her to appreciate a range of alternatives for how things can be written. Ultimately, the writer's decisions about her writing are her own, but they are based upon practical feedback from a real audience.

■ PROCEDURES

The ideal size of a writing workshop is three to five, three especially for beginners. But the length or the kind of writing and other factors of a given activity have to be considered also, since frequently a writing workshop is embedded within a project having several phases. Small size minimizes or eliminates the shy reluctance that many teachers have found keeps some students from wanting to show their writing to anyone but the teacher.

Some writing workshops may form just to do a single writing project together and then disperse as members choose next to do different things. But some groups may stay together as a writing workshop for several weeks or months in order to get the benefits of longer acquaintance with each other's writing traits. This develops a strong trust in each other's judgments about their writing and in others' good will and good faith. In either case, the small-group atmosphere seems to encourage some students to be far less inhibited in expressing themselves than they would be before a larger group. And, because the students are writing directly for each other, their papers become much more interesting.

ENCOMPASSING THE TOTAL PROCESS APPROACH

The primary purpose of a writing workshop is to provide an immediate and especially empathic audience for a student's writing that will help a writer prepare her work for remoter audiences or otherwise realize her intention. But partners can help her understand her purpose so she can decide whether to realize it through a short story or a true case history or a parable or essay. She can do an oral run on some story or essay she is contemplating, and partners can listen and respond so that she gets help in turning over possibilities very early in the composing process, which starts with decisions about subject matter and mode of writing. They can remind her that she once wrote a piece that dealt with the same subject another way. Does she want to incorporate it or extend it in some way? If she decides on a case history, they can brainstorm with her about where to garner such material by interview or other research, which adults might give her leads, and, after she gathers the material, how to make best use of it.

Then she starts writing drafts, and partners respond to her writing to help her see how to improve it. They're in a position to do much more than indicate how she might sharpen and enrich her expression or logical organization. They know her pattern of decision-making up to this point, from the *ground* up. Maybe she could have utilized her material another way that she hasn't thought of, or maybe she's trying to fit the limits of the material when she should be filling it out in a

certain direction by more research. Revising drafts, in other words, is not just saying better what one has to say. Often the author has to re-think prior decisions about the genre chosen and the source of the material.

Suppose the case history shows something other than what the author originally thought. A potential disaster can be converted into an original, publishable study. A full-fledged process approach enables a writer to discover what best to do *while* composing, not just *afterwards*. What otherwise could be a lot of floundering across several unsuccessful pieces becomes one experience sustained until it rewards. Partners learn a huge amount from helping an author do that. Furthermore, their close involvement with her project suggests projects *they* might do. Suppose, for example, that the author comes to realize that the personage in her case study does not represent clearly enough the type of person or experience she originally wanted to address. The group then gets the idea that if they *all* did case histories they could do justice to both her original type and to the variations from which it can be generalized. So they plan a book of case histories illustrating a basic phenomenon through examples that bring out the differing aspects so troublesome for a single case study.

RESPONDING TO DRAFTS

Consider now just cross-commentary on drafts. The first types of writing that are brought to workshops for discussion and revision should be brief, so that the group gains experience in responding without having to spend a large amount of time reading lengthy papers. Members agree beforehand whether to read papers aloud or silently; whether the author or another reads aloud; whether to discuss papers or make marginal notations. Clearly, it makes a difference here whether handwritten or printed drafts are used. Students should assume that revision is normal and includes far more than proofreading for transcription errors; it covers general choice and treatment of subject and may entail deleting, inserting, reorganizing, and rewording. Invite students to rewrite each other's sentences where phrasing is important, with the understanding that the author may accept or reject a proposed rewording.

Learning how to respond usefully to other people's writing is the most difficult aspect of the writing workshop. When sitting in, you can model the ideal role, as usual in small-group processes, but you may also set forth as general directions for responding to drafts the following specific ways of using the group to help the author. One or more of these may be used on each occasion.

- *Title* each paper on a separate slip and compare titles with each other's and with the author's. The author first commits herself to a working title, which she writes only on a separate slip. After other members have revealed their titles one by one and discussed how well each fits, the author reveals hers, and the group compares how close or far other titles came to hers. This is a very effective and engaging way to broach useful exchanges about the major composition issues of unity, emphasis, and main point. It might well be the best procedure for novices to begin handling a writing workshop without the teacher.
- *Describe* to the author what her paper seems to say or to be doing, exactly what you thought or impressions you got at various points. Don't try to be teacherly or to give advice for revision; just react as an authentic reader. From

nonjudgmental description an author can usually get ideas about how to revise, because she knows what she intends and can weigh this against the effects you describe.

- *Ask* the author questions that actually express queries, uncertainties, or wonderings that occurred to you as you heard or read the paper. "Did you mean for us to feel sorry for Pat at this point?" "Does your argument depend more for evidence on experimental findings or on what past authorities have said?" This will often enable the group to compare intentions with effects and thus help the author know if changes should be made.
- Let the *author ask* questions about what the readers thought and felt as they read her paper. Besides giving her control over discussion of her paper, this has the advantage of heading off sheer criticism and letting the author be the one to raise matters that may need change. Usually an author worries or wonders about some aspects of her effort and wants to know if certain ideas or effects got across. Her questions constitute a natural invitation to suggest ways of revising, which she can then more easily perceive as help than as sniping.
- Take a *what-if* approach as a way of helping the author test out where change may be needed. What if she put in a certain bit of explanation near the beginning instead of near the end? Or began with the dialogue first and then wove in the description of the setting? Or told the incident from another person's point of view? Or used *beach* instead of *shore*? This keeps members thinking of alternatives so that they can not only revise better but also compose better in the first place.

A workshop can help an author follow through on her purpose even after the composition is finished by discussing where it might be submitted or performed, for example, or otherwise placed or used. Workshop colleagues should have such investment in each other's work that even after revisions and editing are over they naturally continue to think about how it might accomplish its purpose beyond their own circle.

WORKING IN THE REPERTORY

Often a workshop is also a working party like any other inasmuch as members choose an activity together and set about doing it. This means that, if their group is long-term, they are periodically deciding what kind of writing to do next. They browse through and discuss the writing repertory as listed on page 168, illustrated by *Active Voices I–IV* or classroom samples, and treated in Part Three, taking into account your recommendations to individuals. You can also go over with a workshop group the kinds of writing they've already done and advise them as a group about future choices. When all members do the same kind of writing at the same time, they benefit from the special insights this gives them about each other's difficulties with that particular form.

A workshop might comprise, however, members who are separately choosing what to write. This degree of individualization especially befits advanced writers, who may have already acquired experience in the main categories and are ready to refine choices within these according to particular projects and interests. Although your advice to them may still concern coverage or breadth, you can

focus more on helping individuals perceive how best to fulfill their aims. Because the workshop will in any session be dealing with different types of writing, some of which some members may not have done before, it will take on a different and more sophisticated function as they continue to try to help each other on the basis of the experience accumulated while writing one kind in common. The new heterogeneity provides unusual cross-fertilization, because each member becomes acquainted, through helping colleagues who have made different choices, with writing she hasn't done before. And when she does a new kind of writing, she may benefit from the experience of those who have already done it. For both broad and particular writing experience, workshops need to become conversant with the possible types of writing that may be chosen—that is, with designations for them, basic directions for how to do them, and examples of what they look like and can do.

Secondarily, the writing workshop can help students enormously with spelling, punctuation, and usage. Often members catch inadvertence; just finding out that something is wrong is worth a lot. Groups can edit for consistent style, effective paragraphing, and so on, because they're both inside and outside: they didn't create the text, but they know what its aim is and how it has evolved.

■ TEACHER ROLE

Your paramount mission is harder and more fun than assigning grades or marking papers; it is to make group process so effective that youngsters can teach each other. You help students learn how to do something that is very difficult—how to give and receive relevant, tactful, and insightful feedback. Your perception and expertise about writing are fed in as you think they will increase members' perceptions.

From listening to members' comments or looking at their marginal notations on each other's papers, you pick up on any problems that are common to more than one student or that may be special for the kind of writing they did. From time to time you can select sample papers that exemplify issues you feel are widespread. Project or distribute these to the whole class and focus on these common problems by inviting commentary and parlaying responses into a discussion. In most cases, raising issues in the workshops better befits an individualized approach. An especially well functioning workshop group might show others the way if you let the rest of the class encircle them some time, provided with copies of drafts, and watch.

Besides modeling the ideal participant, when you sit in on a group you can note for yourself which writing problems they're not picking up on, then tell them what you've noted—what they seem helpful about and what not. Ask them how they think a certain problem of order, for example, could be improved in their writing of directions. This should not result in mere prescription from either you or them, because most writing problems are relative to many matters of content and form, and learners must develop good judgment about them.

Often the comments of inexperienced students will at first be naive, unhelpful, vague, and subjective. Your main job is to ask the right questions about their reactions to each other's writing until they begin to see which kinds of changes would improve what bothers them. Yours is a kind of translating job between the initial reactions one may have to a piece of writing—it's confusing or monotonous, arresting or persuasive—to those specific aspects of the text that account for the response.

Take monotony, for example, which is the effect, let's say in this case, of long run-on sentences having no subordination. If you ask the group why they think it seems monotonous, some student will probably think of the run-on sentences, especially if you ask someone to read aloud a passage while you all listen. Then ask how they would revise the sentences to eliminate the monotony. Someone will suggest cutting them up into shorter ones, dropping the *ands* and *buts*.

That may be as far as some undeveloped students will be ready to go at that moment. A more mature group, or that same group in a few weeks, may be able to go on and remark that they have merely traded monotonous sentences for choppy baby sentences but that the writing is still flat somehow. Ask them if they see another way to put the ideas together that loses nothing but is not flat. When ready, they will suggest combining, in effect, the kernel sentences so as to produce more complex ones with subordinated clauses. In other words, what's lacking is really subordination, other conjunctive relating besides *and* or *but*. See page 223 for examples of this solution.

But conjoining and embedding sentences calls for more than grammatical facility, because these are ways of relating things, of thinking. The main purpose of sentence complexity is to render a writer's complexity of thought. Perhaps the original problem was not due so much to any ignorance of subordinate clauses, since these might have been encountered in conversation and reading, as to some "flatness" of thought in composing. If the group resists being pushed beyond a certain point, it may be that they're not yet mature enough to perceive the reader's need for ranking and other explicit relating of ideas. In that case you have to wait and let them grow a little more.

On the other hand, one or two of them may be ready and can formulate the problem in some terms that will help the writer perceive that need. Or it may be that the writer can understand the reader's need for more explicit relating with conjunctions of time, place, and logic but just hasn't the verbal habit of using them. In her case, the words will come more easily on paper when her oral fluency expands to include subordination in her sentences. But the talk going on in a writing workshop becomes an important part of other oral experience that will make subordination and other sentence-embedding easy and natural for her.

In a writing workshop, attention focuses on the actual learning issues, not on one's status with the teacher and on peer rivalry. Errors are exploited, not avoided. Writing is learning, not being tested on a sink-or-swim basis, as is all too often the case when a student discovers—too late—after she has handed in a composition, all the things that are wrong with it. Final products from the writing workshop benefit from learning and leave a feeling of achievement, instead of revealing ignorance and leaving a sour taste. But it's you, the teacher, who has shown the learners how to do this for each other. Out of your spirit you create the climate of collaborative learning and helpful responding. Out of your understanding of language and composition, you focus the issues implicit in the assignments and set up model ways of commenting and proposing.

But your reaction is as a real audience—an adult and cultivated one, to be sure, for that's what you are—but also as a first-person individual. As the students mature, you should be able to assert your own ideas and attitudes more frankly, without fear of damaging student confidence and initiative. If students are accustomed to thinking independently and to working for their own reasons, not yours, you can play your personal point of view more freely in discussion and make critical judgments of their work, as a master among apprentices.

CONFERENCING

There are at least three distinct ways of conferring with writers about their work, all having different purposes, and all of which may be named "conferencing."

■ MID-COMPOSITION DIALOGUE

One way has been especially associated with elementary school because of the exemplary work of Donald Graves and Lucy Calkins,[3] but college composition courses make use of it too. Writers of all ages benefit *from mid-composition dialogue* with someone who is not attempting to assess or advise but just acts as a kind of confidant to talk with about what they're writing. Aides, older students, or peers can learn from you to conference with writers in this sense. Children not ready for a writing workshop may especially want to chat with an older person about their work in progress, partly just for validation and support. Students used to workshops will still want to talk one-to-one about a work in progress because of the special nature of these sessions.

Typically, the writer reads or shows what she's writing and says what she's trying to do, how she feels about it so far, and what she plans to do with it next. Or if the writer doesn't open with such remarks, they are things the listener can ask. "How's this piece going?" "What are you going to say next?" The main point is to invite the writer to think out loud about the work in progress and to respond to this by remarks or questions that help her think further. It's all right if the conferencer is just a good listener, but she can also ask focusing questions like "Is this mainly about your grandma or about the trip itself?" Simply retelling a writer's story can help the writer see holes to fill or another direction that might be explored. It's not appropriate to try to influence the piece a certain way but to elicit from the author some oral drafting to re-energize and clarify her compositional process at this stage. Go for the flow of ideas. Prompt the author to talk about her work, then play to what she says.

Testimonies abound of how elementary children zestfully revise a piece many times because of such conferences even though they did most of the talking. An older student can use such sessions to orally outline or try out a version of what she hasn't yet brought to the point of committing to paper. She can do an oral run of the whole story or essay as she sees it now. Or if she bogs down, that shows her where she'll need to work out something. The writer controls this mid-composition dialogue because it's basically a sounding board to hear better what she has committed to paper and a chance to talk out what she has in mind until she realizes what she wants to do next.

■ COACHING

Another major sort of conferring, on the other hand, emphasizes feedback, critiquing, and coaching. The writer is listening less to herself now as reflected back and drawn out by another than to this other's responses as common reader and as

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[3] See Donald Graves *Writing: Teachers and Children at Work* (1983) and Lucy Calkins *The Art of Teaching Writing* (1986), both Heinemann Educational Books, Portsmouth, NH.

adviser. This sort of conferring gives you or an aide a chance to feedback about a completed piece, in lieu of "marking," or about a piece still needing revising or editing. Many older students want an adult's personal involvement in their writing along with specific help just meant for them. Sometimes they want to compare your response to a composition with that of their workshop. This is fair enough and possibly very valuable for all parties. After you've responded, you can discuss with the writer and perhaps with the workshop group too how you think yours and their responses relate.

In this coaching sort of conference, you can also let the writer feel in control of her writing by asking her how you can best help or what she wants response to. In most cases, this will connect with comments you had in mind to make. When it doesn't, bring up these other matters when it seems most timely and in a way she can most likely really take advantage of. If the composition is regarded as finished, you can say much of what you would if you were *writing* comments. If you *have* written comments, ask how they struck the author and whether you should elaborate.

The nature of your response has to be truly individual. Ask yourself how you can respond to *that* person so that she'll get the most from what you say, considering both the paper at hand and other work past and future. Depending on how she will take it, now may be the time to point out certain patterns in her writing which this piece exemplifies. You could range from ideas, organization, and style to spelling, punctuation, and usage. (You might show her how to diagnose her spelling and punctuating problems, as indicated later on page 226.) Even when you're suggesting that the pattern needs changing, if the pattern is indeed personal, and if the writer perceives this as your caring effort to help her realize herself, she will probably take it well. What's hard to take is feeling that you're trying to impose some impersonal pattern to realize some goal of your own.

Describe what you think happened or didn't happen in the composition, what might be improved if it's to be revised, or what it suggests about future work. Make sure she knows just how well she has done some things and how difficult some of them may be. You don't have to trump up appreciation if you start with the attitude of looking for accomplishment, however modest, instead of looking for all the things the author can't or didn't do. Bring out what she *has* done and build from there.[4]

Or make suggestions about how the piece might get published or otherwise disseminated. Maybe you see ways in which this composition ties in with her past work or might even be combined with it. A "finished" piece is so only relatively. Maybe you think she would do well to incorporate one composition within another or to make one the beginning of another project. Help her to keep connecting one piece of work with the body of her work. Writing can be a fine way to quest. Help students identify and pursue their quests across compositions and across types of writing. An author might take an important subject into another mode. You will think of ways of responding that fellow workshop members may not. In one-to-one coaching you can not only supplement workshops in this way but also teach individuals to think of these things when they're back in their workshops conferring with each other.

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[4] In *Writing Narrative—And Beyond* (Canadian Council of Teachers of English, 1986), John Dixon and Leslie Stratta give inspiring examples of doing just this with actual student papers.

■ COUNSELING

Thus does critiquing and coaching lead into the third sort of conferencing, which is counseling, described on page 25 as part of individualizing curriculum and on pages 247–251 as part of evaluating. In those cases, you and the student are considering writing in the broader framework of their whole language arts program.

WRITING STIMULI

Students who claim they have nothing to say or can't think of anything to write about are assuming only a couple of stereotyped kinds of theme topics. They have not been licensed to open up for writing the huge reservoirs of experience they have stored within and can tap at any moment. When people compose, they specialize their inner speech by focusing their attention on some part of their sensations, memories, feelings, or reflections. Imagination is some kind of interplay among these. Writing stimuli elicit verbal response that can be shaped for some purpose. Students must understand that good writing subjects lie everywhere at hand.

Prompts or activity directions should show how to get at all of this material. But these aim only to help students see the possibilities for themselves. Some will need prompts only at first, some maybe never. Any time an individual knows what she wants to write, let her go to it. Activity cards or other prompts just exist to help young writers get to this point and to remind them of the variety of kinds of writing and ways to start them. On their own, many primary children gravitate toward lists, signs, accounts of routines, descriptions of favorite things or of family and pets, and so on. They, and older children too, will imitate the kinds of writing they see around them, because they want to do what big people do—as much with writing as with other things.

Traditional writing prompts have been *topics*, on the unfortunate assumptions (1) that mode doesn't vary, only the subject matter, and (2) that teachers will assign the subject matter or supply it in a text about which students are to write. Actually, subjects are precisely what *authors* must choose. And modes or forms of discourse are precisely what teachers should array for students. It is types of writing, not topics for writing, that the teacher should be concerned with.

We do not include below the kinds of prompts designed to use writing to test reading, because we feel this should not count as part of the composition program and, in fact, seriously endangers it. Book reports, term papers, and essay-question exams represent a special kind of writing that serves the institution more than the student and, as evaluation of the student's coverage of some content, differ significantly from out-of-school counterparts. Students who do the kinds of writing in Part Three will in fact do the testing stuff better when they have to. Writing about one's responses to books, for nontesting purposes, is discussed on page 421 in *IDEAS* and on page 158 in *READING* as well as under "Learning Logs" on page 211.

Part of the great importance of interweaving the language arts is that it generates marvelous stimuli and motivation for writing. "Prewriting" should thus occur constantly and naturally as part of the cycling of subject matter in a student-centered curriculum. Performing calls forth scripting. Discussion naturally extends itself to paper as students pursue ideas that social exchange has involved them in. Many kinds of writing begin with improvisation as a preliminary or even a first draft. Part Three suggests many specific stimuli and prewriting activities accord-

ing to the kind of discourse. Below are some general sorts. Often they come from the other arts, for some of the best language stimuli are nonverbal.

■ THE WRITER'S NOTEBOOK OR JOURNAL

The best writing stimuli are our own feelings, memories, sensations, reflections, and imaginings. But these are often fleeting, and unless we note some of them down, we may not recover them. This is why so many professional writers keep notebooks to record these in whatever form they occur—images, scraps of overheard conversation, general observations, dreams, reactions to events, and so on. They know that good writing frequently evolves from these flotsam and jetsam, really gems and germs when one thinks of what may be done with them. A notebook is to collect these in—*too* many—so many that one feels rich in writing possibilities.

Dating entries makes these into journals, which can be worthwhile, but this notebook shouldn't get lost among journals kept for other purposes, though it may well overlap with others. *Notebook* captures the idea of possible further use, of kernels for compositions, as indeed notes are.

Encourage students to carry a notebook around or to keep one at home and one at school and to get in the habit of jotting things down that they want to save, that they might later want to fill out, change around, and polish up to make something with. They can take the notebook to their workshops or conferences and try out ideas from it by telling more about some of the notes. Dividing these into categories of notes one often needs may facilitate making entries.

Some students use this not only as a sourcebook for writing ideas but as a place to do drafts of some of these. They feel comfortable with the privacy of it and try out in it whatever tentative writing they're not yet ready to show to anyone else. The writer's journal or notebook may also include reflections about one's own writing processes—choices of subject matter or manner, patterns in how one proceeds, problems or ambitions.

■ LEARNING LOGS

A lot of useful writing is never meant to have an audience but is destined to remain some form of notes for oneself. Adults write down in their own words, as a study aid, something they are trying to remember or understand. This makes a lot of sense in trying to make some new information or concepts one's own. It's not only an active form of digesting but a way also of manipulating material so one can apply it. As part of writing across the curriculum, teachers of different subjects, including English, encourage students to keep learning logs for this purpose. Charts, graphs, and other graphics can go into this log to supplement efforts to write one's way to a better understanding. As students chronicle their learning, ask questions that go beyond what they know, make guesses, and reorganize the subject, they also create a record that allows them to look back and make second entries about their own learning progress and about *how* they learn, their *interaction* with the material.

But anyone anytime may find that writing down what they understand and don't understand of something they are trying to master will help them consider-

ably to master it. This is using writing to learn, as a thinking tool. Encourage students to use their log in this way for any material whatsoever anytime, to write in an exploratory fashion, letting their mind wheel around their topic freely to stimulate their thinking and to help them gain insight into it.

■ PICTURES AND FILMS

Assemble a large collection of thought-provoking photographs cut from magazines and perhaps mounted or laminated. Let each student choose one that she would like to write about. "Say what you think is happening in your picture. Make up a story from (or about) what you see." In a box put together a set of photographs of the same persons doing different things in evocative settings and let students arrange and rearrange them into stories. See "Student Art" on page 296 and "Photographs" on pages 313 and 335. Students can bring in pictures of either sort.

Some teachers well-versed in the art and literature of film tie writing to movies in a variety of ways, but you don't have to be a cinema specialist to open up this connection for your students, especially if a VCR is handy to allow individuals or small groups to view on their own. The school or classroom might have some tapes, and students can bring in their own or ones from a library or rental store. But many may view a film elsewhere and write a review of it. Reviews can be posted or published periodically. Films of literary works or other books invite interesting comparisons of the two versions. But it may be the *subject* of a film that will stir most students to want to write something after viewing it—overcoming some handicap or making friends in a new place. Many teleplays and documentaries can be recorded and shared that deal with social and psychological issues your students are involved in or already pursuing.

Good paintings, drawings, or pieces of sculpture often have a dramatic quality that provokes composition in words. Also, paint blots similar to Rorschach ink blots can lead to free-association composition. And pictures produced by the students themselves are a constant invitation to verbalization.

■ MUSIC

Recorded or live music can trigger a response in movement or language; it evokes mood. Students can "Write what this music makes you feel or think of." Because music stimulates the brain's synthesizing hemisphere, it can help students get started on a composition before the more analytic focus on form and convention takes over. Ethnic music evokes the culture of which it is a part.

Songs too are a good stimulus for writing. They merge the melodies and rhythms of words with those of music and steep us in the heady elixirs that are the primitive fountainhead of all expression. Music can free up bodily response, stimulate pantomime, and brew poetry. The notes and beats of music fasten down quite precisely the number of syllables in a line, the pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables that make up a metrical pattern, and hence the larger patterns such as those of stanzas, because singing words puts syllables in one-to-one correspondence with notes, which act as a kind of rack upon which language can be stretched and very pleasurably measured. Not only does a definite metrical structure afford youngsters a frame to flesh out with their own material, it often actually triggers the material. Words fit a tune, but a tune can draw forth words also. Musical phrasing inspires verbal phrasing.

Many poems, then, may be written as new words for old tunes, a very popular activity for people of all ages. Children sensitized by hearing and moving to music can clap and beat out the metrical form of familiar poems and then fill these forms with their own feelings and stories. Some students will try their hand at making up both the tune and the words.

For the most part, music has not been well used in the teaching of language arts. It's usually true that when one medium is joined with another, as language with music, both are enhanced and hold greater interest for students.

■ LITERARY FORMS

Youngsters often need transpersonal forms into which they can project feeling without knowing that they're doing so. The material of folk literature furnishes one kind of public medium. The technical forms of poetry and song offer another. A ballad or chantey or sonnet or rap provides a vessel for holding powerful personal feeling and yet distances it in a communal pattern. After hearing or doing a reading of one of these, students write something in that same form.

Imaginative writing wells up from a source constantly enriched by an inflow. A teacher who wants her students to write should let them take in an enormous amount of folk literature and poetry from books and records. Not only do students absorb images and ideas that they can recombine in their own expression, but as they internalize the rhymes, rhythms, and other formal patterns, they're absorbing in a peculiarly effective way the vocabulary, locutions, and language structures bound to these patterns by association.

In fact, *any* genre the youngster chooses to read can be a stimulus for writing in that mode. Reading a short story in letters will often inspire a student for the first time to write fiction. Recipes, rebuses, brain teasers, codes, directions, advertisements, limericks, and so on—all can provide models for writing.

■ CHANGING MEDIUM, MODE, OR POINT OF VIEW

A composing task that may seem less demanding to an inexperienced writer than producing out of her own head but that imposes almost all of the major problems any writer faces is to change a text from one mode of communication or type of discourse to another. Following are some of the possibilities, with arrows to indicate that they will work backward as well as forward:

a script ⟷ a story
an informative article ⟷ a transcript of an interview
a TV show ⟷ a script
a movie ⟷ a story
a pantomime ⟷ a story
a pantomime ⟷ a play with dialogue
a story ⟷ a shadow play
a radio play ⟷ a story
a story ⟷ slides with narration
a news report ⟷ a story or poem
a poem ⟷ projected pictures or a movie
a story ⟷ a Readers Theater presentation
a story ⟷ a Chamber Theater presentation

a song or story ⟷ a musical
a story or poem ⟷ a diorama or three-dimensional representation
a proverb ⟷ a fable
story, biography, or chronicle ⟷ a comic strip
a narrative poem or story ⟷ a play
a photo ⟷ a poem
a letter ⟷ a diary
a story ⟷ a series of letters

For more on this see "Transforming Texts" on page 164.

Among other things, this activity often entails shifting point of view. Many students are stimulated by the suggestion that they tell a familiar story from the first-person point of view of one of the characters, or tell the story as a minor character might tell it, or as an object in the scene, such as the story the andirons in the hearth would tell. If there's an animal in the tale, how would *it* view the situation? How would one of the characters later tell the story to her grandchildren? How would an archaeologist who came upon the scene of the tale decide what had happened?

■ RECAPITULATING IMPROVISATIONS AND PANTOMIMES

A small group does a pantomime or an improvisation for a group of classmates, who write an account of the skit as soon as it's over. The members of the audience compare their versions with each other's and with the version the performers had in mind. Depending on how elaborated they are, these recapitulations can be used as minimal situations for others to improvise from (page 106) or as stories in their own right, which will probably differ a great deal even for the same skit. The greater ambiguity of pantomimes makes them better than improvisations for comparing differences in inference and interpretation. Individual recapitulations of pantomimes may differ not only in the ascribing of motives to the characters and the determination of the circumstances one should assume as background for the action, but even in accounts of the action itself.

Recapitulation is a different kind of writing than sensory recording (outlined farther on) because by the time a story or presentation is over, one knows considerably more and interprets differently than one does in the middle of registering the events. A recapitulation reads much more like a summarized, connected narrative. The important things are sifted out from the less significant details, the behavior of the actors is understood in terms of the outcome, premature inferences are corrected, and the series of events is economically coded as a totality. Learning about such abstractive differences is one purpose of the process. But the main goal is experience in writing narrative.

Writing recapitulations in small groups is a particularly intimate and intensive way of sharing and reacting if the audience is just three or four people who all write what they saw. Their stories and the discussion provide excellent feedback for the performers, who get a full and explicit response to their efforts and some clues about how to improve their improvising or pantomiming. The writers might afterwards carry their stories farther away from the source by inventing along the lines of their original divergence from each other.

SENSORY WRITING

Sensory stimulation is such an important source of composition material that it deserves special consideration. Also, we can illustrate with it many kinds of processes and perceptions that apply to all writing. Sensory stimuli underlie some of the writing types described in Part Three. So that you can apply the process to other writing, we will outline here how to work sensory material from the ground up, put it through classroom interaction, and revise it into a finished product.

We begin with sensory recording, which is the writing down of ongoing events. The recorder writes down what she perceives as she's perceiving it. Professional equivalents of this are the on-site news reporter's notes or the transcription of a sportscast. It's a way for schools to help youngsters become good observers, to pay close and conscious attention to the exchange between them and the environment at any given moment.

Sensations are inner coding of outer things. To verbalize them is to transform sensory experience into understandings. By helping learners sense more you may help them say more. And sensory recording resembles comprehension also, for in reading both books and reality one must make inferences, and the best interpretation is the one that allows for the most cues.

People look *for* and listen *for*, however. Looking and listening for their own sake are rare and sophisticated. Though an infant's attention is diffuse, we all begin very early to tune in and out, to select according to our desires and fears. To say that children have a great curiosity and live in close touch with nature is not to say that their observation is pure and even. We don't always understand their selectors, but they have them—psychic focal points around which they are organizing the world to map it for delights and dangers. So behind sensory abstraction lies a big motivational issue. Adults' efforts to train children to observe objectively are somewhat at odds with the learner's reasons for looking and listening, which relate to private concerns. We should honor her more primal motivation by letting her select observing situations likely to engage her interest, while at the same time helping her to focus where she might not have of her own accord, so that she may achieve some autonomy from her drives and observe more comprehensively what lies around her.

Because sensory recording, when done as an isolated activity, begs the question of motivation, it needs to be embedded in another activity for which interest is assured. To observe objectively and to write down observations for their own sake ask too much of most youngsters. What you need to do is find situations calling for observation. Even very young children will observe closely and talk and write about animals that are kept in the classroom, cared for, lived with, and experimented with. A familiar, pleasurable, and well-motivated activity can provide the context that will in turn motivate a new, different, and more advanced activity, in this case observing and writing (see *TRUE STORIES* and *INFORMATION*).

■ ONE SENSE AT A TIME

One way to begin is by recording one sense at a time instead of all at once. Isolating each sense creates a small focus, to develop the skill of paying close attention to a limited range of stimuli, and also simplifies choices of what to record.

SOUND

Prewriting practice focusing on sound can begin in simple relaxation periods: "Rest, close your eyes and listen. Relax completely and hear as many sounds as you can." After a few minutes: "How many far away sounds can you hear?" Afterward ask students to list orally and compare the sounds they heard. "Are there any unusual sounds? Familiar sounds?" Such a three-to-five-minute session could occur a number of times outdoors and in other places around the school as well as in the classroom. Since school sounds will be limited, tapes would increase the range considerably. Also, when the students don't know the sources of the sound, an interesting game can be made of identifying the site where the tape was made and the actions producing the sounds.

The isolated sense of hearing differs from sight in two ways that are obvious and yet not often considered. One is that for a sound to be produced, something must happen, whereas what one sees may be action but it may equally well be static, a still life. Hence sound falls into a sequence of happenings, and a record of them automatically becomes a story of sorts. Second, since hearing alone gives us very limited information, we're forced to *infer* more than we do when looking. Seeing informs us more fully than hearing and therefore requires less inference.

These two differences help to define the recording of sound: it's action-centered, and it involves some guessing. Both are qualities youngsters like. But, further, it can emphasize chronology and interpretation. Tapes are obviously better for interpretation; students recording on location receive a lot of visual information about the setting and possible actions even though they may be looking just at their papers part of the time. Another advantage of taping is that setting and actions can be chosen for their particular interest to youngsters. It's important, however, not to jam the tapes with sounds but rather to capture a series of distinct sounds.

After the stage of listening without writing, students are ready to write down sounds. Place the class in the sound locale or play a tape to them. A homemade tape might present a short and simple sequence such as someone going out a door, whistling for a dog, placing a bowl down, and patting the dog while it slurps up its water. Or the tape might present a set of unrelated sounds such as the crinkling up of aluminum foil, paper clips dropping into a tin can, and popcorn popping. Tell them they're going to find out if they all heard the same story. Distribute overhead-projector transparencies and grease pencils or notepads and pencils to the students. Tell them that this time they're going to try to capture what they hear by writing it down in a short form. They don't have to use whole sentences and keep repeating "I hear...." They're going to "take notes," an expression that will be used a lot and that relates to their work as recorders for small groups. To save time, they may write single words and short phrases.

This process of notetaking is an important prewriting skill that students need to develop. Tell them not to worry about getting down everything but to capture as much as they can. Also tell them not to worry about spelling but to make good guesses. This is a way of writing a story, and they can compare them and then treat them like any other stories. Recording should probably have an upper limit of ten minutes unless the students are very mature or experienced.

Next, discuss the order of recorded sounds. This can be done with the whole class immediately after they've recorded them or have returned to the classroom. (After about two whole-class sessions, they can carry on this discussion in small groups.) Project one of the transparencies or copy one of the student's lists onto

the chalkboard and say that they're going to put together a sound story from their notes. "Probably no one person could note all the sounds by herself, and some of you may have heard things the others didn't hear. So we'll fill out the recording together." Read aloud the sounds on the transparency, then ask, "What other sounds did *you* hear?" As these additions are enumerated, write them on the transparency or chalkboard. "But *where* do they go—before and after which other sounds?"

This leads not only to establishing chronological order but also to distinguishing it from simultaneity (sounds occurring together) and from repetition (recurring sounds). Discussing these temporal matters naturally entails using corresponding verb tenses and aspects—perfect, progressive, and repetitive ("It keeps on. ..."). Help the class set the record straight, writing the sound events in order of occurrence, placing simultaneous sounds side by side, and inserting repeated sounds at points where the students agree that they occurred. They can compare their inferences as they decide together such things as: What made that noise? What action took place? What did the noise sound like?

A second issue for discussion concerns the form of notation. Whether this should be brought up on another occasion is perhaps something for you to decide in light of your students' maturity and readiness. At any rate, looking at the transparency being projected, remark that some words tell the thing making the sound (*bell, airplane*), other words tell the action (*scraping*), and still others describe the sound (*click*). Sometimes a phrase may combine these (*bells ring, foot scraping, click of metal*). Point to the words that exemplify these different ways of recording, and note that this recorder used all of one kind, or mixed them, or used more of one than the other. Project another student's transparency or copy another student's list on the chalkboard and ask the class which ways of noting that person used. Then direct them to look at their own recording and notice what they did. Finally, ask them which kinds of words do which things best. What do you want to know—the object involved, the action causing the sound, or what the sound is like?

The point is, of course, that recording, or note-taking, forces us to sacrifice some information for other information; things have to be left out. Also, the basic parts of speech are focused on in this way without being formalized—nouns, verb forms, and sometimes adjectives (*loud banging*). Students can discuss the practical matter of which kinds of words have which advantages for recording which kinds of information. This would be a good time to talk about how they might write up their notes—into a letter, a poem, a piece of reportage, and so on.

A fine opportunity exists here to increase and refine vocabulary. While comparing variant wordings, students can discuss whether "bell" or "buzzer" is the best word for the sound source, whether the bell "rang" or "tinkled." Some recorders will have included adverbs such as "faintly" or "suddenly," and these can be shared and thereby provide a model for other pupils. Sometimes only one student may know the correct name for something heard ("air conditioner"), but that name is then made available to the whole class. You too supply vocabulary, of course.

After a session or so that you lead with the whole class, students are ready to work in small groups with tapes as their only sound source. The groups do essentially what the whole class has done before except that now they have the general mission of guessing where the tape was made and what was going on there. Whereas the school sound recording relied only on the socializing motive of comparing, now a guessing-game motivation is added. One person in each group is

appointed leader. After each person lists the sounds she hears, the leader reads her list of sounds, asks her colleagues what else they hear, and writes additions onto her paper. Again, they discuss when the sounds occurred in relation to each other.

Since they did not see the objects and actions producing the sounds, which in most cases could have been made in different ways, the effort to determine which sounds in a record are the same or different will naturally cause the students to discuss differences in how they named the sounds. They may discuss which names are best and which assume more than they know (words for sounds assume least; words for action causing them, more; and words for objects, most). If one student challenges another's item "wheel turning," she is questioning not just the other's wording but the amount of inference she made. But all she says is "How do you know it was a wheel?" Is that the same sound as someone else's item "clicking"? To answer that, they have to check where the two items came in the sound sequence.

In other words, merely comparing their recordings carefully ensures discussion of several important relations of words to things. Students have to collect everybody's sounds, put them in order, and find out what different words they used for the same sounds.

When the class is reunited, the leaders are asked to report what their groups decided was the locale and action of the tape. The climax of the game element in these sessions comes when the teacher tells them what's happening on the tape. (Clearly, some skill is needed to tape a sound sequence that is neither too easy nor too difficult to guess.) Students who have had some experience with this can make their own tapes in various places around the school or community and ask their classmates to guess where the tape was made.

TOUCH

Recording tactile sensations also operates on essentially a game motivation. Place in paper bags or envelopes three to six tactually interesting objects—such as velveteen material, popcorn, a damp sponge, a peeled grape, sandpaper, a rough stone, a bead, a paper clip—that are recognizable when *seen* by students. Give one bag to each group. A person reaches in and feels one of the objects, without seeing or revealing it, and says aloud what she feels—the shape, texture, consistency, and so on—but without naming it even if she thinks she can identify it. The rest of the group write down what she says as well as they can keep up with her. It should be explained that each person may miss some things the "feeler" says, but that the group as a whole will probably be able to piece her words together later. "Just write down key words." These monologues are usually brief.

Afterward, the group drafts a composite account of what the feeler said, the tactile description of the object, which can be revised as a riddle and in rhyme if the group prefers. This will be read before the class later to see if others can identify the object from the description of it. Each person in the small group has a turn reaching into the bag and feeling an object not described before. After all the members of the class know what the objects are, they may be able to change the descriptive words to more precise terms, such as *rough* to *gritty*, or *smooth* to *concave*. Then these descriptions will be put together as a riddle book and exchanged with other classes. To compose the description for the book, a group uses a collective writing method.

Activity directions should make one specific suggestion: if the description repeats "It is" and "It has," these sentences can be combined by using series with commas: "It is square, fuzzy, and thicker in the middle." Say that shortening in this way will make it possible to read a lot of riddles before the class and will save space in the books. This practice exemplifies again how the combining of kernel sentences into more complex sentences can be organically entailed in an activity instead of set up as an isolated exercise.

Students can learn several things from this activity besides verbalizing their sense of touch, which, of course, is learning one way to describe. As recorders, they're taking dictation. As drafters of something to be read to the class and to be passed to other classes, they're composing and editing. As guessers themselves of what each object is, they can learn, by the absence of names, how names simplify identification, and, conversely, how much can be said about a thing that doesn't appear in the name. Difficulty in guessing an object relates to the low sensory level of tactile information; ease in guessing relates to how telling the particular details are, whether the details mentioned are characteristic of many objects or of only a few, and whether these details combine to evoke the whole of the object. These issues can be discussed as the practical matter of which kinds of riddles are hard and which are easy.

SMELLS OR TASTES

The same general procedure can be followed for guessing games dependent on olfactory or gustatory senses. Small jars with screw tops containing substances such as peanut butter, a cheese with a strong odor, pine needles, moist earth, a rose, or fish might each be opened in turn and smelled by one blindfolded member of a group and described to the rest of her group without naming what she thinks it is. The rest of the group writes down what she says, and then together they write up a composite olfactory description of the object. They need to decide which is the best order for the descriptive details, which things, if any, should be omitted because they're either redundant or misleading, and what could be added or changed. This description can be presented to the class as a riddle or compiled into a riddle book.

A set of foods such as fresh fruits and vegetables like diced onion, carrot, turnip, lemon, apples; condiments like salt and cinnamon; or staples like flour, cornmeal, or sugar can be put into closed jars and tasted one at a time in the same manner as the smelling game. Or pupils may describe the taste of their favorite food without naming it, and the others may guess what it is. In either the smelling or tasting, we have another experience in verbalizing the nonverbal.

People naturally resort to comparisons to express what they touch, hear, smell, and taste. For something new or unknown they ask, "What is it like?" So trying to verbalize sensations causes youngsters to use similes and metaphors, which otherwise do not spontaneously crop up much in their speech. This is the way for students to work with comparisons, not in special lessons.

■ ALL SENSES AT ONCE

Students mature enough to record on their own out of school can engage in multisensory recording as described in the following outline. Activity directions to the

student appear with roman numerals. These are followed by indications of issues that can be raised in subsequent discussion. The discussion suggestions are addressed to you so you can think about the issues inherent in the activities, but it's better to write such discussion suggestions into the activity directions to students than to lead discussion yourself. The activities should be chosen by small groups to ensure good motivation, and you might sit in with a group to help them focus on these issues, but unless you have never worked before with the whole class on sensory writing you would do better not to impair the individualization for the sake of being able to lead whole-class discussion.

I. RECORD SENSATIONS AT A LOCALE AWAY FROM SCHOOL. *Choose any place away from school that you would like to visit. Go to that place with paper and pencil, and for fifteen minutes write down what you hear, see, and smell there. Think of what you write as notes for yourself later. These notes will be used to write something, to be decided later. Bring your notes to class. Don't worry about spelling or correct sentences; write in whatever way allows you to capture on paper what you observe in that time. Include your thoughts and feelings about what you observe. You may also want to say what things look, sound, or smell* like.

• **Two worthwhile issues can be raised and dealt with in the discussion of these first papers:**

A. The difference between and relation between sensations and nonsensations; physical facts, on the one hand, and inferences, personal reactions, similes, and so on, on the other hand. Both should be valued, but it's important for the learner to be able to spot what she has mixed of herself with the environment. *Observation* thus takes on its double meaning of sensory data and personal reaction. With a sample paper before students, ask what things in the paper might have been recorded by any observer and what things show traces of the particular person doing the recording. The use of "loaded" words and comparisons could be brought out as well as just obvious personal statements. Also, compare two papers for the relative amount of sensory data versus personal reaction. Ideally, this would lead to the discovery that, given the time limit, a gain in one is a loss in the other. Then have them underline words or sentences that they feel convey nonsensations. As a check for them, let them exchange papers and have a neighbor underline words or sentences that they feel convey nonsensations.

A good way to enliven this process might be to suggest that the class make reportage booklets containing two sections called "Interesting Places" and "Mood Scenes." Then they'll need to focus as editors on decisions about how to classify and arrange pieces for publication. They'll need to look at a set of notes and ask, "Given this set of notes, should the author play up her personal reactions, or should she stick more to straight reporting? Which does she have more of in her notes—reaction or observations?"

B. The *form* of the notes: word lists, telegraphic phrases, and whole sentences; amount of paragraphing and punctuating. Since these are notes to oneself, they should not be judged for correctness or intelligibility to others but only for their value as notes. Discuss the gains and losses of different forms of notetaking. Ditto or project two papers of contrasting form. What do you lose when you use just word lists? broken phrases? whole sentences? They should get some sense of which words are dispensable, which words or phrases capture a lot quickly, which

suffer a loss of detail, and what the advantages and disadvantages are of longer phrases and whole sentences. (In general, lists cover a lot of items but lose the detail of each item, whereas full sentences modify, qualify, and elaborate single items, but don't cover as many items.)

Students should be encouraged to develop a notation style that works well for them—that enables them to go for coverage or go for detail, to strike whatever balance they want. This should help with the next two activities.

The purpose of the *second* activity could be introduced by an analogy: "Just as a photographer takes many shots to get the one she likes, let's try more than one collection of notes before we decide which is the best to reshape into our article for the literary magazine."

II. RECORD SENSATIONS AT A NEW LOCALE OR TIME. *Do as you did in activity I, but this time change either the time or the place. If you went to an indoor place before, go somewhere outdoors now. If you went to an active place, go now to a still place. If there were no people where you went before, go where there will be people. Or you may return to the same place you went before, but go at a very different time of day, or when the weather is very different. Remember that you are to take notes of what you observe, see, hear, and smell and of what thoughts and feelings you may have about what you observe. If you have found a better way of taking notes since last time, use the new way.*

• **Discussion of these papers might center on two new issues, besides perhaps picking up the two earlier points if the students seem to want to pursue them.**

A. Again with a sample before the class, ask if they can tell the time, place, and circumstances of the recording. How much can they tell of the mood of the observer and what she felt about the scene? Is there a main mood, impression, keynote, attitude, and so on? Does one sense dominate—sound, sight, or smell?

B. Try now to lead into the selection process of the observer. Get students to imagine what things were *left out*. Ask the writer of the paper to recall what things she did not put down. Ask everyone to look at her paper and compare it with her memory of the scene. Ask the authors of the sample papers and then the others how they came to include some things and reject other things. If they say they put down the "most interesting" or "most important" things, ask how they decided some things were more interesting or more important. This more or less unconscious selection process is at the heart of composing: some awareness of it should help later with activity IV.

Unique difficulties of recording are rooted in the fact that the observer may have no prior personal relation to what she witnesses; she confronts raw material that she must encode for the first time. These difficulties are qualified, of course, by the fact that any observer brings to bear on what she witnesses her memories of similar things or perhaps of the same things, so that the "raw material" becomes immediately associated with past experience and hence assimilated into the inner life. It's this association that may make certain things more "interesting" to an observer than others are. Thus, the degree to which you can figure out how to engage the inner life of pupils and help them draw on personal associations is going to increase their involvement in the project.

III. RECORD SENSATIONS WITH SOME OTHER STUDENTS. *Do as you did in activities I and II, but before you leave class, plan with two or three other students to go somewhere at the same time. Decide together where to meet and when. After you meet, place yourselves at different points at that place (not too close together) and then begin to take notes on what you see, hear, and smell. Again, include whatever thoughts and feelings you may have about what you observe.*

Read aloud all the papers of one group that had a common locale. Discuss what things all noted, what things only one or two noted, differences in physical vantage points, differences in inference and personal reaction or mood.

To prepare for rewriting, use this set of papers to confront the question: "What would you have to do to this set of notes (the sample before them) in order to make it understandable and interesting to other people?" Have them look at their own papers, ask the same question, and write some responses on the papers. Some possibilities are:

1. Filling in detail of things just named.
2. Clarifying some of the wording or references.
3. Dwelling more on some things and less on others.
4. Cutting out some things and adding others.
5. Giving more or fewer personal reactions.
6. Rewriting to avoid repetition of the same words or monotony of sentence structures (finding different words and constructions).

These discussions of activities I to III should make possible some successful collaborating in the small groups on activity IV.

IV. COMPOSE ONE OF THE FOREGOING PAPERS. *Help each other to select and rewrite one of your papers. Take notes from activities I, II, and III to your group, and exchange all three papers for the three papers of someone else in the group. Read these three and decide which one could best be rewritten into an interesting composition for the class to read.*

Write some comments on that paper. Say why you think it has the best possibilities and for what sort *of finished composition. Where might it* go, *or what might it* do? *Make suggestions about how it could be rewritten for that. Would you like to know more about some things; put some things later and move others nearer to the beginning? What suggestions would you make about changing the words and changing the way some sentences are written? If you see spelling mistakes, correct them. Try to be as helpful as you can; remember that the other person is doing the same thing for you and that her comments will make it easier for you to decide what to rewrite and how to rewrite.*

When you and your partner have finished reading each other's three papers and writing comments on them, talk about the comments. Then exchange with another and do the same thing again until you have been all the way around the group. Next, look over the comments made on your papers and talk over with the other members of the group any questions you may have about what they said. You don't have to follow their suggestions, but knowing what they think should help you decide which paper to rewrite and how to go about doing it. Rewrite *means not only improving sentences but also making large changes—adding new things, cutting out old ones, and moving other things around.*

Now rewrite, in whatever you think will be the most interesting way, what you observed at one of your three places. All of the finished papers will be photocopied later for the whole class.

Discussion of the finished papers should feature a comparison with the original papers from which they were rewritten. Copy or project an activity IV paper along with its predecessor and ask the class what changes the writer made, how she got from one stage to the next, and what purposes they assume she had for making such changes. For discussion pick two or three pairs that show different degrees of revision or different bases of revision.

REVISION

Asking students to rewrite only one out of three recordings allows them to choose the material of greatest interest to them and to their audience, and in most cases spares them from being stuck with a dull set of notes. The very process of selecting the best set—through discussion, written comments by other students, and the author's own comparison of recordings—accomplishes a lot of the composing that one normally expects from written revision alone. Any act of composition begins with a selection and focus of material, from which different writing issues ensue. This is a fact both teachers and pupils need to grasp securely. The novice writer can grasp it by having to make decisions about her raw material.

The activity direction for writing up their notes into a composition for others would hold well for a revision of any first draft *not* written as notes. But revising notes establishes the revision process in a situation that provides an especially strong reason to rewrite—to put notes in a form that other people can understand. When the commentary from peers is helpful, the motivation is strong to make changes willingly. Putting together a publication, furthermore, motivates students to pursue their composing process until they have achieved a version they like. Once the concept of rewriting is extended well beyond just a notion of tidying up, then a further draft becomes more like an initial composition, and a fresh impetus to write arises again.

While remaining concrete and germane to the publication goal of the project, the issues raised in the process of revising can range among many important semantic, stylistic, rhetorical, and linguistic matters. A project such as this one can help establish the writing workshop as the means of getting into these issues through practical collaboration. For example, comparing recordings made in the same time and place can direct attention to alternative wordings for the same thing: "Which is better, considering mood and purpose, the word *flower* or *blossom*?"

The conjoining and embedding of short sentences to form fewer, more complex sentences naturally come up for scrutiny as a matter of getting from notes to finished pieces. In sensory recording, the order of the words follows closely the order of events and results in sentence fragments or short declarative sentences that repeat the same words and begin with *now*, *then*, and *next*. A student who revises merely by expanding kernel phrases ("coat falling") into kernel sentences ("I see a coat falling," or "the coat fell") ends up with a lot of repeated "I's" or "coats" and a string of data predicated in a string of separate sentences. Comparing

a telegraphic recording and a rewriting of it in full sentences leads to discussion of sentence elements and sentence expansions.

Although the heart of the matter is learning to build complex sentences by combining simple ones—a major linguistic development in the elementary and junior high years—it can be broached as a practical matter of style. Some will suggest joining sentences with conjunctions like *after, while*, and *during*. This leads to subordination, and here you must make sure that students' suggestions allow for proper emphasis as well as for style. If, for "The pole is breaking. He slid down the pole," someone proposes "While he was sliding down, the pole broke," suggest that maybe the author meant, "After the pole broke, he slid down," or "Because the pole was breaking, he slid down." The author is then consulted, as should happen often in these discussions. Comparison of alternative sentence structures is extremely valuable. (This instance shows, incidentally, the best way for sentence-combining to occur—as an organic part of revising.)

Another common problem in the rewriting of sensory recordings is the mixing of tenses. Many students get hung up between the present viewpoint of the recording and the past viewpoint of the revision and reflect this in a wavering of predicates between the two. This creates a fine opportunity for students to become aware of predicates as point-of-view indicators (as explained in *Teaching the Universe of Discourse*).[5] Discussing the inconsistency raises it to consciousness, where it can be resolved.

Again, sensory recording offers rich possibilities for development of vocabulary. Some discussion should center on how things are named and include specific suggestions from partners and you to the writer about other words she might use. Working with such raw material makes a good issue of titles. Setting up a working title, perhaps to be changed in the final draft, helps the writer think about the totality of her subject and about what she intends to do with it. All directions for compositions and drafts thereof should constantly remind students to entitle their pieces. Recordings themselves are obviously excepted, but as a lead into revision, you might ask a group to propose titles for a sensory recording that would do justice to it. If the recording has a natural unity or coherence, proposing titles can bring it out; or if the recording is miscellaneous, the titles can suggest ways of reshaping that would build a unity from selected elements in it.

At the risk of pulling sensory recording a bit out of the many contexts it may have, we've tried to present it as a base of operations. It illustrates the importance of slowing down the early stages of the writing process to garner material for later selection, focus, and shaping. Staying close to one's own sensing and feeling is what makes writing authentic and uncontrived. Options in activity directions should point out the kinds of writing that may be drawn from this sensory store—reportage, poems of description and feeling, settings for stories and plays, reflective essays prompted by some scene or moment. Along with memories, dealt with in *True Stories*, sensing is a great source of what a writer has to write about. But it is rawer material than memories and hence poses more primitive problems of composing, throwing into relief that process of selecting and shaping that is the heart of all composing.

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[5] See especially pp. 35 and 47, James Moffett, Boynton/Cook.

SPELLING AND PUNCTUATING

The transcribing part of writing consists mainly of spelling and punctuating. We will deal first with each separately then with some activities that teach both at once.

■ SPELLING

More than half a dozen ways exist to improve spelling, beyond the activities described in *BECOMING LITERATE*.

- Prolific writing practice
- Prolific reading
- Self-diagnosis
- Proofreading
- Spell checkers
- Spelling games
- Special books

SPELLING THROUGH WRITING

Teachers are increasingly finding that plentiful and continuous experience in reading and writing teaches spelling very powerfully without special effort. Plaguing students with isolated skills prevents them from logging the quantity of reading and writing it takes to show how these bigger things automatically teach those smaller.

The main thing is for the writer to plunge ahead with what she has to say and make educated guesses on spelling without fear of penalties for errors. Spelling improves with constant trying, but kids who write a lot and with pleasure will make many mistakes, of course, for the simple reason that they dare to try to spell any word they can say. But if they're made to feel that spelling errors are shameful, they won't attempt enough writing to practice as much as they need. The continual groping to put words onto paper causes students eventually to find out how those words are spelled—to generalize, to memorize, to ask others, to consult the dictionary, and so on. The conditions for success are that they care about what they're saying and that they not feel penalized for misspelling what they're trying to say. The value of dictionaries is slight if students have few occasions to write their own sentences, or if papers go nowhere but to the teacher's desk. But if they care, they may look up the first letter or so, the easiest to spell, then guess two or three alternatives for the next letter until they find the right one, then look nearby to find the word. You want to so involve youngsters in pushing from speech to print that *they* take the initiative to spell out what they have to say.

SPELLING THROUGH READING

The visual memory of words seen repeatedly in reading helps to standardize student spelling perhaps more than anything else. Plentiful reading not only provides the quantity needed from which to generalize the regularities of spelling and to notice minor patterns, but it also provides many occasions to visualize *irregular* words and eventually to memorize them. When most people are unsure how to

spell a word, they write it down and look at it, to compare the sight of it now with their memory of the sight of it on other occasions and so to see if it "looks right." Locking the overall look of a word into visual memory seems to have a role in successful spelling comparable to the great role of auditory discrimination in word recognition. Reading while also *listening* to the text fastens words in memory doubly well, because hearing a good vocal rendering of words reinforces the sight of them, especially if the oral reading is vivid and hence *memorable.* Clearly, the language-experience approach and the lap method can set up very powerful spelling momentum. Solo writing and reading can carry these to fruition.

SELF-DIAGNOSIS

The most effective single thing you can do to help a student improve her spelling is to show her how to diagnose and correct her own spelling errors. In a class demonstration, then during conferences, show students how to classify their errors so as to reduce them to a few *kinds,* each of which has its own corrective action. The procedure is to circle or list some of a student's errors as you're going through her writing folder and classify them according to categories given below. Keep in mind that you want to turn over the diagnosis to the students themselves.

Self-diagnosis can be done by learners of any age, at their own level of development, and is far superior to formal spelling programs that take every learner on a tour of every kind of mistake. Besides being boring and time-consuming, speller series are extremely inefficient, because their shotgun approach does not aim at only what each student needs. Any given student makes only certain errors. She shouldn't waste time surveying the whole field but should zero in on her own particular difficulties.

It has often been argued that the study-test approach with word lists teaches spelling effectively if boringly. Short-term memory can get a student through those tests, but only long-term memory counts. Also, the sight-word learning involved in memorizing word lists can obviously take place from seeing words over and over while reading silently, from reading while listening, from watching others write down one's dictation, and from writing down words for which the spelling is given by the dictionary or other people. These are more interesting and memorable ways of doing the visualization that is supposed to be the strong point of memorizing miscellaneous words. Finally, if the amount of time spent studying word lists and taking tests on them were spent reading and writing while getting pertinent tips from the teacher on individual difficulties, it would be seen that word lists do not compare favorably for spelling efficacy and, in addition, take time away from reaching the true goals of reading and writing.

Self-diagnosis furthers these main goals and takes little time for each student. You need only go over spelling errors once in a while and not at all for some students. The more successful you are at transferring the diagnosis to students, the less time anyone will spend. Helping as suggested below can be part of a coaching conference.

CLASSIFYING MISTAKES.

Let's take some errors from an actual piece of student writing:

ferther stoping srill fawsett
cloged kichtion turpintine

"Ferther," "fawsett," and "turpintine" are all logical errors based in fact on this student's understanding of sound-letter correspondences. For example, *er* and *ur* are both possible spellings for the sound; to be wrong with "ferther" and right with "turpintine" is a matter that can be corrected simply by memorizing the troublesome parts of the words, for nothing else can tell the writer which alternate spelling to use when the sound is in that position. The same is true regarding the *aw* and the *s* in "fawsett," which are alternates in English for *au* and *c*, given the position. Unstressed *in* and *en* ("turpintine") are also logical alternates.

But doubling the consonant after a short vowel and before the verb ("stoping" and "cloged") is a regularity of English spelling that if grasped can spare the student from making such errors. For this, no memorization is needed, only a generalization. Doubling the *t* at the end of a word ("fawsett") is rare in English except for French-derived words like "etiquette."

"Srill" seems to belong to a third category of error, faulty pronunciation, since the student seems to write pretty phonetically. You should ask her to pronounce the word, in order to check this hunch; then you would pronounce the word so as to bring out *sh*. "Kichtion" could be a phonetic spelling—*kich* plus the *shun* of "nation"—but might involve some mispronunciation too, so you should hear the student say it.

Sampling typical misspellings gives us three main categories of errors, to which we will add a fourth, the reversal of letters.

Some misspellers have a tendency to reverse letters or otherwise juggle them out of order. This kind of crossing of wires may not betray an ignorance of phonetic knowledge either, being usually a neural condition, but it may interfere with such knowledge or make it hard to acquire. Most likely, you'll never know for certain why a child who reverses does so. (Finding out whether a child also reverses numerals, however, might shed light on her problem.)

COUNSELING. Help each learner discover what she knows and doesn't know yet about spelling. Encourage youngsters to call on all sources of help but also to learn to diagnose their own kinds of mistakes.

Clump together for a student samples of her misspellings that all show a phonetic "rule" she's ignoring. Suppose in looking over a youngster's writing folder, or in observing her play spelling games, you notice that she doesn't seem to know that adding a mute *e* usually makes the preceding vowel long (*mad-made*) or that the *k* sound in the final stressed position is often spelled with a *ck* (*kick*). A little thought can reduce a discouraging quantity of misspellings to a very few manageable remedies. Point out the errors that exemplify the same problem and suggest a certain letter-moving device to make or to play with that will teach the rule or make it memorable. Show her how to clump together herself those errors that are of the same type in the sense that they could all be corrected from knowing the same phonetic generalization.

If she misspells *phonetically*, however, ("bleek" for "bleak"), she's at least misspelling logically. You should tell her just that (so she will distinguish and take credit for a superior form of error) and add that all she can do to improve in such cases is to memorize the one phonetic variant—"bleak"—that happens to be correct. That is, she's right by the system but wrong by convention. The value of the system, however, even with a highly irregular language like English, is that it reduces possible spellings from virtual infinity to a couple or a handful of real

possibilities, one of which is right. It's better, for example, to memorize one out of two to four possibilities for a word than one out of chaos. Phonetic knowledge narrows down the field that the mind must select from and, in the process, allows logic to aid memory. It may help some youngsters to convey this notion to them.

A learner may *seem* to misspell some words unphonetically, not necessarily because she doesn't know the relevant phonetic facts but because she doesn't pronounce those words conventionally, at least not in conformity to standard pronunciation upon which correspondences are based. Demonstrate the standard pronunciation and explain that the spelling conforms to it: for example, "pen" rather than "pin," "hold" rather than "holt." When someone writes "correck," for example, ask her to pronounce the word, then check whether her spelling is right, at least according to how she says it. Then tell her the word is spelled "correct" because many people say it this way (pronouncing the *t* clearly). The same for "she go," which is usually not a misspelling or a grammatical mistake but an accurate transcription of the writer's pronunciation of a dialect in which final *s*'s are often not sounded.

The learner has to know when her pronunciation is causing her to misspell, whether it is nonstandard or simply an option in standard, like omitting the *t* in *often*. Younger children especially just may not have the sound of a word straightened out yet. In any case, sound the word according to how it's spelled and connect the spelling to that pronunciation, but don't make the learner feel wrong for pronouncing the word as she was taught at home. All she needs is some help in making that mental adjustment between her pronunication and the one that goes with the spelling. You'll no doubt have to help establish this equivalence in particular cases—allowing for your own pronunciation!

Generally, when learning a spelling regularity seems to be indicated, counsel students to look at whatever charts or films or play with whatever spelling games, such as suggested in *Becoming Literate* and *Word Play*, that are available and relevant. Sometimes you might state a generalization or strategy if you think a student can benefit from it.

By placing these *kinds* of misspellings in an order of elimination, an overall strategy can be stated like this:

1. Compare pronunciation with standard, to detect differences.
2. Practice sequencing letters if needed.
3. Learn what the phonetic system can help with.
4. Memorize what it cannot help with.

That is, becoming aware first of dialectical differences or personal disarrangement provides a framework within which a student can zero in on spelling difficulties that all people face in common—generalizing the phonetic regularities and ascertaining which spellings are systematic and which have to be memorized.

SELF-CORRECTING SPELLING. Here are suggestions which you may find useful in tutoring and can relay to the learner for self-correcting, often with partners. They're addressed to the student and follow the four-step elimination process above.

- You may be spelling some words as you sound them, but you may sound them a different way than standard pronunciation and therefore misspell them. Check this out by comparing your pronunciation with that of partners or other people.

Develop your ear. Do you spell *wanning* for *wanting*? It will help you a lot to tell this sort of misspelling from others. Even when you spell a word as *everybody* sounds it, you may still misspell it—but for another reason.

- If you tend to reverse letters and write *feats* for *feast* or *retrop* for *report*, play tic-tac-toe with letters, Scrabble-type games, letter cube games, and crossword puzzles. Spell words and sentences on a table, floor, or magnet board with physical letters or stamps. Play other games where you handle letters or put them in order one by one.
- Look for patterns in spelling. Take doubling of letters, for example. One pattern holds for *furry, silly, petty*, and so on. Contrast, however, the pattern of *fill, fall,* and *follow* with that of *file, fail,* and *foal.* Vowel spellings are by far the biggest problem. When pronounced as in the alphabet (long), they often get spelled by some combination of two vowels, whereas other (short) vowels may be signaled by doubling of the following consonant. But you'll notice subpatterns within main patterns, and words of several syllables often have different patterns from short words.
- Here's a useful way to figure out which spelling of a sound is correct in words of several syllables. When the vowels don't get stressed in a word—like the *i* in *pres*ident—they all tend to sound alike and so are hard to spell. But if you're hesitating between *adiration, aderation, aduration, adoration,* and *adaration*, just think of the word in another form—*adore*—where the vowel is stressed and fully pronounced. With your partner, think of other forms of words like *competition* and *abolition* that let you hear the vowel so you can spell it. Word families help spell some consonants too. Think of how *critical* shows you how to choose between *critisize* and *criticize*; and *grade* between *gradjual, grajual,* and *gradual.* Other forms of a word help also for silent letters. Spelling *sign* just by sound, you might write *sine*, but if you think of *signal* or *signature*, you know how to spell it correctly. Think too of *muscle, bomb, soften,* and *condemn.* Sometimes when English words aren't spelled as they sound, it's because the spelling is used to show this family relationship instead.[6]
- Sometimes instead of showing words related by the same meaning, spelling distinguishes one meaning from another when the words sound alike. Many jokes and puns are based on these homophones: "The little pig thought his father was a boar." (See page 267 in *Word Play*.) People sometimes confuse words also that don't exactly sound the same but sound close, like *affect* and *effect.* Use the meaning to help remember the spelling.
- Many words are made by combining a root word with common forms that are stuck onto the front or the end of it—prefixes and suffixes. Take these words themselves as examples: *pre* is a common combining form meaning "before," and *suf* another meaning "after." The root word is fix, or "fasten." *Prefix* has only one *f* and *suffix* has two because both *suf* and *fix* already have an *f.* Or take the word *misspell* itself—one of the words most frequently misspelled! People wonder if it should have one or two *s*'s. Don't wonder. It has one for

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[6] This point has been well developed by Carol Chomsky in an article from which we have drawn some of the words used as examples: "Reading, Writing and Phonology," *Harvard Educational Review* 40 (May 1970): 287-309.

the prefix *mis* (meaning "wrong") and another *s* for the root word *spell*. So—two *s*'s: *misspell*.

- With your partner look through your writing folders and other written work for misspelled words. Help each other collect these in a spelling notebook for each of you, grouping the words according to the kind of mistake. Think of as many words together as you can that follow the pattern of one of your words when correctly spelled. Make a letter-moving device for that pattern (see page 134) or find and use one someone else has made. You can turn your misspelling lists into games that are fun to play and that will also help you spell better.
- Make up funny sentences by putting as many of your misspellings in a sentence as you can. Have your partner read these aloud to you as you write them down.

PROOFREADING

Some investigators of spelling errors have reported that at least half of student mistakes are with words they know how to spell. Most experienced teachers have probably come to realize that they waste a lot of time correcting errors on student papers only to have them say that those were just "careless mistakes." Slips of eye and hand do account for a very large part of what teachers too often assume are errors of ignorance. The point is that proofreading belongs to students, who can point out errors to each other in the writing groups when they exchange papers. Proofreading in groups teaches each individual to proofread alone. What makes proofreading really work is the anticipation of doing something interesting with the writing after it has been improved.

SPELL CHECKERS

Students who write with word processors have a valuable tool in spell checkers, which mark not only spelling errors but typos as well. Because spell checkers list suggested alternative spellings, they provide students with words related in spelling from which to choose. As they look at the little array of words spelled only slightly differently from each other, they focus closely on orthography in order to select the word they need. So often in English good spelling depends on knowing which of several variants is standard. Then when students go through their document on the computer screen to change all the instances of a particular misspelling, they again have the correct spelling repeated in their visual memory. The advantage of this way of learning to spell is that it isn't isolated in an inauthentic exercise but embedded in the more significant task of preparing a piece of writing for an audience. Busy young writers are constantly asking other people how to spell words. Consider spell checkers as one way they get answers.

SPECIAL GAMES AND BOOKS

A number of well-known spelling games may help some youngsters focus precisely on letters and letter order in an entertaining way. See pages 268–273 for spelling games. For more on crossword puzzles see page 271. See the rest of *Word Play* for other activities that will develop spelling in a playful way, and see the games and materials on pages 133–138.

Another activity valuable and pleasurable for spelling precision is making one's own specialized dictionary for a certain lingo or subject-matter vocabulary (see pages 198 and 405). It motivates students to find out exactly how the words they want to include are spelled and to become involved in the more technical ways that dictionaries treat the sounds and spellings of words. They learn, for example, the way standard dictionaries indicate how a word is pronounced, stressed, syllabified, and changed before certain endings. At its greatest depth, making dictionaries engages students with etymology and hence the historical determinants of spellings.

THE VALUE OF SATURATION EXPERIENCE

There are some important reasons why spelling has to improve slowly after literacy has been accomplished. If English had an isomorphic alphabet, as soon as a child became literate she could spell any word at all. But an English-speaking learner will only gradually learn irregular and alternative spellings, that is, *conventionalize* her spelling, because grasping the basic system isn't enough when the system is so imperfect. A lot of small generalizations and a lot of ungeneralizable spellings place a heavy burden on memory and offset the learner's main asset—her logical ability to summarize data.

Time and experience are in favor of the learner, however, because the more new and old words she encounters, the more grist she has for her classifying mill, the more she can generalize patterns and memorize the ungeneralizable, and the more she can categorize her errors as we have suggested. The fact is that massive language experience—oral and written—is the best teacher of spelling. This is not a debonair view. The human brain is made to produce just such generalizations as the spelling rules, but the data of English are so confusing that teachers must be patient about the final conventionalizing of student spelling while at the same time making possible the massive experience in hearing, saying, seeing, and writing words that refines spelling until the irregularities and alternatives have been memorized. Teachers do not usually value enough the logical (phonetic) sort of misspellings. A student who writes "fawsett" for "faucet" has accomplished the major, thoughtful part; now all she can do is memorize which alternative spelling happens to be right in this case. Auditory and visual perception, the generalization of patterns, the memorization of irregularities—all will be learned from total language saturation.

■ PUNCTUATING

Punctuation is like spelling in that it translates speech to print. Learning punctuation also involves perceptual pairing and applies equally to reading and writing. As with sound-letter relations, the task is to match some graphic symbols with some voice qualities—in this case, some things like commas and periods with some other things like pitch and pause. Preschool children and illiterate adults can talk all day and have no punctuation problems, because the voice indicates the segments of speech in meaningful ways. The issue in *writing* punctuation is how to transcribe certain significant voice qualities such as stress, pitch, and juncture (the interaction of which we will call somewhat inaccurately but conveniently "intonation"). The issue of reading punctuation is how to translate commas and periods back into voice qualities.

LEARNING PUNCTUATION BY VOCAL INTONATION

Good punctuation is a set of signals showing the reader how to read the flow of words as the speaker would say them. Most punctuation can be heard, certainly the basic kinds. Indeed, if most punctuation could not be heard, print would not be very effective or expressive. Print tries to reproduce the voice with various devices, such as paragraphing, capitalization, italics, and punctuation marks. Only whole sentences reveal intonation (and sometimes even a larger context is needed).

The chief hurdle to punctuating well is not being aware of what one hears. Children hear and produce intonation with ease—in fact, with such ease that they are almost totally unconscious of what they're hearing and producing. The features of intonation are especially important cues to meaning when one's vocabulary is limited. Even when she doesn't understand the words, the child can tell from vocal cues much of an adult's meaning and intention. It's fair to say that children are at least as responsive to intonation as adults, probably more so. But in order to punctuate with periods and commas as they punctuate orally, youngsters will have to raise their intuition to the level of awareness.

Let's put it all this way. Except for questions and exclamations, which are obvious, a drop of the intonation contour almost unfailingly calls for a punctuation mark. The issue is which one—comma, dash, semicolon, colon, or period? Even if she chooses unwisely, a learner who puts *some* mark of punctuation there has fulfilled the first principle of punctuation—to segment the flow of speech. Whether a comma or a period is called for depends on the length of pause and on whether the intonation drops merely to a lower point, somewhat suspended, or all the way to the bottom for a distinct closure. (Read this last sentence aloud.) A true comma splice would occur only when a full drop was mistaken for a half drop; a period after a sentence fragment would occur when a half drop was mistaken for a full.

It's true that some of the more sophisticated usages governed by logic are not necessarily audible. One can't always hear, for example, when two sentences are joined by a semicolon or colon and when they are separated by a period. And one would be hard put sometimes to distinguish by ear alone a colon from a semicolon or a comma from a dash, or a series of commas from a series of semicolons. Even here, however, rules do not help, for in such cases a writer usually has an option as to which mark to use.

Another kind of logical punctuation that may or may not be audible is internal punctuation of individual words—apostrophes and hyphens. There's no way to hear the apostrophe of possession and contraction. It must be explained through instances and demonstrated through transformations. Hyphenation, however, can almost always be heard, because pitch is sustained through a compound word. Compare: "He entered the second grade" and "He entered the second-grade classroom."

SEQUENCING

In the name of "scope and sequence" too much has been made of order in learning to punctuate. Comma usages have been parceled out over many years of schooling, whereas any learner allowed to read and write as much as she should will encounter or need to use many different kinds of punctuation fairly early and all at once. Let a student's reading and writing capacity automatically program the punctuation. The sentence structures she can handle in these activities will determine how many comma usages she needs to know. Overcontrolled reading mate-

rial tends to hold back punctuation, because of the avoidance of "difficult" sentence structures. Individualizing is the only way to be sure of not holding someone back.

It's helpful, however, to recognize three rough stages of punctuating, related to sentence structure:

1. Full stops—periods, question marks, exclamation marks. These all do the basic segmenting of the speech flow into sentences. They may as well all be learned at once, because they can all be used with no other punctuation in the same simple sentences. Included here are capitals for sentence beginnings and names, hyphens for compound words, and apostrophes for contractions and possessives.
2. Internal punctuation—commas and dashes. This includes series, relative clauses, appositives, direct address, and all other comma usage that segments or sets off parts within a sentence. Dashes are just emphatic commas, indicated vocally by heavier stress and/or longer pause.
3. Semicolons and colons—the connectors between sentences, that is, between independent clauses that could be separate sentences. These are the logical, hard-to-hear punctuation marks that as alternatives to periods are options writers play to indicate relationship.

The marks for dialogue—quotation marks, suspension points, dashes for interruption, italics for stress—can be learned any time and depend on when the learner has first contact with quoted speech.

PRESENTING PUNCTUATION

The presentation that really works is reading. Children first become acquainted with the shapes and usages of punctuation marks from seeing them repeatedly in the same sorts of situations in texts. Often, in fact, the rules contradict or omit some of these situations.

LISTENING WHILE READING. We have here, then, a strong argument for much experience with the lap method of reading while listening and for the language-experience approach, both of which show and sound punctuation at once. Following the text while listening to a good reader sound the intonation allows the learner to associate periods, capitals, question marks, and exclamation marks with the stopping and starting of sentences, and she can hear the differences among declarative, interrogative, and exclamatory intonations. She can hear and see simultaneously the pause-and-half-drops of commas and dashes, the change of speaker indicated by quotation marks, and so on.

Recordings are a great help. Just listening to them a lot while following the texts will help students of all ages link voice with punctuation. This is one of those kinds of learning that sound almost too simple but still provide impressive results if done often enough. Professional reading brings out memorably the purposes of punctuation.

DICTATING WHILE WATCHING. Watching a scribe write down one's dictation is one fine way to become aware that speech emits more than word sounds and that these extra things—the intonation—have to be symbolized on paper just as much as the word sounds. See page 119.

TEACHER EXAMPLES AND EXPLANATION. As a supplement to other means we will describe, you might do a standup presentation if you have many students that you feel will learn from a bit of lecture-demonstration.

Contrasting In the first place, explain that when we talk, our voices rise and fall, pause and go on, lean hard on some words and lightly on others. Illustrate: "He likes candy," and "He likes candy?" Which is the question? How can they tell? Then say, " 'At night I sleep.' That is a sentence. My voice rounds it off and you can tell it is finished. This is a sentence too: 'Get your clothes.' And so is this: 'What did you eat?' Now, suppose I say, 'At night I sleep—' Is that finished? Why not? The whole sentence is 'At night I sleep in my bed.'" Go on to pair off "Get your clothes—" with "Get your clothes off the bed," and "When did you eat—?" with "When did you eat the pie?" Make up other finished and unfinished sentences and ask them which is which. Then they can make up some pairs.

Relate speech to print by saying, "But there's no voice in a book. How are we going to know how to read the words the way the author would say them? When we write, how can we let our reader know where our sentences begin and end?" This is the place to illustrate the use of periods, capitals, and question marks. Later, commas are introduced the same way.

Contrasts can get across many kinds of punctuation. For example, write an ambiguous sentence—"They saw many colored butterflies"—and ask someone to read it aloud. Can it be read another way? How would you show the difference to a reader? Ask them for examples of other compound words, remarking that two words that are compounded in one sentence may not be in another. After they're sensitized to the audible difference, make a statement to the effect that just as your voice joins the two words in speech, so the hyphen joins them in print. Some capitalized words can also be distinguished by ear: "I live in the white house," and "I live in The White House."

Defining a sentence Defining a sentence as a complete thought is futile; not only children but linguists and philosophers as well do not understand what a complete thought is. It could be a word, a phrase, a sentence, a paragraph, or an entire book. Defining a sentence as a subject and a predicate is equally self-defeating. Do children have to wait until they can understand these terms and concepts before they can punctuate sentences? Moreover, "after I came home" has a subject and predicate but is a dependent clause—a sentence *fragment*, not a sentence. Often a student mistakenly puts a period and capital in the middle of a sentence even though she would read the sentence correctly. Many traditional efforts to teach punctuation actually *create* the errors they mean to forestall.

The only way a sentence can be defined is by vocal segmentation, the sense of closure conveyed by a complete intonation contour (which expresses the intuition of syntactic completion). Children know a sentence when they hear one, and this operational definition is what teachers should utilize.

Faulty punctuation persists—needlessly—into junior and senior high school, causing dreary hours of proofreading by a long chain of teachers. The problem is not that difficult. That it persists is testimony to the inadequacy of the rules approach and the complete-thought definition.

Meanings of the symbols Compare the different punctuation marks to rest symbols in music, and describe them as a progression of increasingly larger breaks—comma, dash, semicolon, colon, and period—while remarking that the length of pause alone may not be enough of a clue to which of any two marks is

called for, and that, furthermore, emphasis and meaning make a difference too. A dash is a kind of comma—but more emphatic. Like an arithmetical plus sign, a semicolon merely adds one sentence to another; this summing indicates closeness between their actions or meanings. A colon is like an equal mark: the elements on either side of it restate each other. These last three sentences illustrate the usages they talk about. If illustrated, the practical purpose of using semicolons for a long series and commas for subseries contained within it is easy to grasp and remember. In fact, presenting sets of instances of each of these kinds of punctuation will do more good than lengthy explanations. If you state generalities about the instances, state them logically, not grammatically. If you give out a summary sheet, limit it to illustrating inaudible cases...and to one page. We have done all these things in this paragraph, but for students you need more instances, of your own making or finding.

A virtue of the intonational approach is that the voice is a remarkably objective guide, indicating personal options in a public medium. That is, one does not punctuate as one pleases; one punctuates as one speaks. Most personal options can be heard. When they cannot, the few logical principles stated above will supplement vocal discriminations.

PUNCTUATING UNPUNCTUATED TEXTS

Students can create unpunctuated texts for each other to punctuate, following directions something like this:

- Write a brief story, or copy down some part of a book that you like, leaving out all punctuation marks and capital letters.
- Exchange unpunctuated papers. Read the original text to your partner as the punctuation tells you to while she writes in the marks she hears. Reread parts or all if asked. Take turns.
- Each of you put in the right punctuation and capitals for your partner's story when it's your turn.
- Check your punctuation against the book or your partner's original story. Talk over differences. Ask your partner to read it again if you want. Ask other class members or the teacher to talk about your differences too.

PUNCTUATION GAMES

These games too show youngsters the value of punctuation by removing it. The main point is funny ambiguity. Try saying these in different ways and punctuating them accordingly:

- what is this thing called love
- may I call you George
- what do you think I'll cut your hair for nothing and buy you a drink

But the point can be just to think up sentences that can be said more than one way and to see how many ways one can think of punctuating one string of words.

"GET THE POINT." One player writes on chalkboard or paper an unpunctuated, uncapitalized sentence that she knows two or more ways of punctuating. She

writes these ways down beforehand to show later. Her partner reads the word string aloud and puts in punctuation marks and capitals that will fit the way she read it. If the first player accepts this version, the second player erases it and tries another until she has exhausted her ideas for how to read the word string. Then the first player shows her the sentences she wrote down beforehand, and they compare to see if one thought of any punctuation the other did not.

The same idea can be spread around a class as a kind of ongoing sport by means of activity directions that tell students to make up, or to take from books, magazines, and newspapers, word strings that can mean different things when punctuated differently, then to photocopy or post these unpunctuated so that everyone in the class can try her hand at discovering the possibilities. After a while the author or collector posts the sentences she has in mind. This is one of those verbal games that can become a fad and do a lot to raise language awareness. Try to keep a few rotating on the bulletin board.

COMPOSING AND TRANSCRIBING DIALOGUE

One reason this program emphasizes scripts and transcripts is that punctuating conversation tends to bring up a greater quantity and variety of punctuation problems than regular prose or poetry. Conversation has more front and end sentence tags, more stressed words, more interruptions, and more unfinished sentences. It also helps many kids really understand the value of punctuation as a guide for *recapturing* speech—this being the very particular aim of scripts and transcripts. Finally, dialogue helps kids distinguish sentence fragments. If in answer to the question "When are you going?" someone says "In the morning," the latter is a true sentence as defined by intonational closure, the only honest and reliable definition. But if someone writes "He planned to go. In the morning," but reads that aloud in one intonational contour, she has committed a sentence fragment.

Making scripts can take the form of solo composition, group composition, or transcription of an improvisation (see page 312). Whatever the source, students writing a script become more aware than usual of writing as the rendering of voice on paper and become more sensitive to punctuation. The words are coming from characters who are supposed to be actually speaking, and a script-maker is trying to capture the personality and emotions of the characters in what they say and by how they say it. This is a perfect situation for relating intonation to punctuation. You or an activity card may have to give them, in fact, a few extra pointers that they won't have learned from nondramatic punctuation:

- "That's what *you* think!" (Italicizing shows emphasis.)
- "I'll be happy to do it (if I can't find a way to get out of it)." (Parentheses can show a different or lowered voice.)
- "Sometimes when I see that room I wonder...I wonder if maybe he did live there." (Three dots—suspension points—can show that the speaker paused, hesitated.)
- "Well, if that's the way you feel about it...." (Suspension points plus a period can show that the sentence trailed off and was left unfinished.)
- "Put up your sword or I'll—" (A dash shows the sentence was broken off sharply or interrupted.)

READING ALOUD

Performing texts is, of course, a corollary to the above. Students-as-actors will have to heed punctuation especially closely for cues about how to deliver lines. Nothing is so likely to make punctuation seem important and functional as this experience. Actors are *grateful* for punctuation and far more expert at reading it than most educated adults. All of the many kinds of rehearsed reading in *Performing Texts* will work wonders for learning punctuation.

You can listen for punctuation during the coaching sessions when students read alone to you (see "Analysis of Oral Reading" on page 153). Diagnose which marks or which marks in certain situations a student ignores or misinterprets:

- Basic segmenting of the language flow into sentences.
- Segmenting of parts within sentences.
- The setting off of clauses, phrases, and tag words from the main body of the sentence.
- Inaudible marks that are purely conventional or logical.
- Optional punctuation, sometimes inaudible.
- Hyphens and contractions and capitals.

Tell students, when coaching, to read the way the punctuation tells them to. Keep depicting it as signals to guide the reader, to help her re-create the silent voice behind the words. Tell the students what you perceive about their understanding of punctuation from the way they read it. If they don't believe it's important, counsel them to play "Get the Point." Transcribing their own speech might be the best avenue for some—their improvisations, if they lean that way, or just their solo writing on the tape recorder.

When students are writing in groups, tell the scribes to read aloud to their groups what they've written, and tell the others to say where the periods and capitals go. Before passing on a group composition, they should test sentences in this way. Individuals writing alone should pair off, read their papers to each other, and check each other's punctuation. The writer understands that she's to read so that her listener can follow most easily; the listener says where she thinks the marks go. A good way to catch faulty punctuation is to have someone other than the author read a composition; the resultant misreading makes the point very well. For the same reason, when you read a student paper aloud, read punctuation exactly as written, correct or not.

■ TRANSCRIBING

Taking down live or recorded speech gives students excellent practice in handwriting, spelling, and punctuation. The following activities help to teach these transcribing skills:

- Taking dictation from classmates or younger children or the teacher.
- Watching someone else take down what one dictates and then reading it together later (see page 119).
- Acting as scribe for a group.
- Writing down from memory such oral material as songs, jokes, recipes, and so on.

- Writing a lot, which is taking dictation from one's own head.
- Proofreading each other's spelling and punctuation, checking with other people and the dictionary when not sure of spellings, testing punctuation by reading aloud whole sentences.
- Taping something and then transcribing it afterward, as for improvisations and oral history.
- Taking down live speech, as during interviews.

We have spoken about most of these in other places. Here are just a few more ideas about some of them.

WRITING DOWN ORAL LITERATURE

Transcribing can be writing without composing—just putting given sentences down on paper. Who gives the sentences? In one case the oral culture one lives in supplies the ready-made words—the jokes, riddles, songs, scary tales, sayings, recipes, jump-rope jingles, limericks, nursery rhymes, and other folk material passed on by word of mouth. These can be written down and made into booklets by groups or individuals. All the student has to do is transcribe what she remembers. Composition is not a factor, and she can concentrate on transcribing skills for a well motivated reason.

DICTATION FROM CLASSMATES

Activity directions can tell partners to take turns dictating to each other something they have written or some interesting passage from a book. They should choose something funny or exciting or absorbing—either a complete selection of short length or an intriguing excerpt. Riddles and jokes and anecdotes with a punch line are all good. But a big part of the motivation of taking dictation is to see later how close one came to writing the passage down the way it was in the book. Partners can help each other check out the spelling and punctuation. If one of them wrote the selection, they can compare the composition with the transcription and go over any differences. Did the author punctuate this composition the way she read it to her partner?

TRANSCRIBING FROM A TAPE

Many students should do a lot of this. For many it will be an important way of composing too. Those lacking confidence to put thoughts directly onto paper should be encouraged to talk into a recorder, then to transcribe this later, making changes in wording and ideas at the same time, if they want. Separating composing from transcribing may make a lot of sense to youngsters in an oral-electronic age to whom writing often seems strange. Once they've said what they have to say the easy way—orally—then spelling it out, especially with a partner to help, may not seem too daunting. Purposes are the same as for any other writing.

Partners are important, because such kids need support often, not to mention some pooling of literacy knowledge. Also, transcribing from a recorder requires running the tape back and forth a lot while one writes, and four ears are often better than two for making out those hard-to-hear places and for deciding which marks to put where.

The tape may be of someone else's voice. A student may have done an interview with someone and now wants a transcript of it. Or a group may have done

an improvisation and now wants to turn it into a script. Encourage transcribers to ask you or classmates to listen to passages they aren't sure how to spell or punctuate. They have to decide too how much they want strict fidelity and how much they want to edit out "uh's," changes of mind, and so on.

To teach transcribing is *not* to ride herd on mechanics. This is partly why we distinguish transcription from composition. When writing, youngsters should feel uninhibited by concern for spelling and punctuation, drawing spontaneously on what they have learned about these things in other contexts. They should be encouraged to write any words, use any sentence structures, that come into their heads. We strongly urge you not to correct and grade papers. See page 247 for alternatives in evaluating.

A teacher who marks up a paper for mechanics almost inevitably establishes a value scale for students upon which transcriptive errors rank higher than content and composition. Student writing has actually been made inferior by penalizing spelling and punctuation mistakes. Like the girl who said she used the word "bar" instead of "trapeze" in a story because she was unsure how to spell the latter and didn't want to be marked down for it, most students adopt the error-avoiding strategy of using only words they're sure they can spell and sentence constructions they know they can punctuate. In the long run, avoiding risks can't possibly reduce error. Student strategy should consist of making educated guesses and of checking with other people or the dictionary. What educates the guessing are the practices recommended in this chapter.[7]

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[7] Like chapters 6 and 7, this chapter has benefited considerably from our experience working with Yetive Bradley, Robin Cano, Juanita Ingle, Bobby Seifert, and Irving Wasserman, all of whom taught us much.