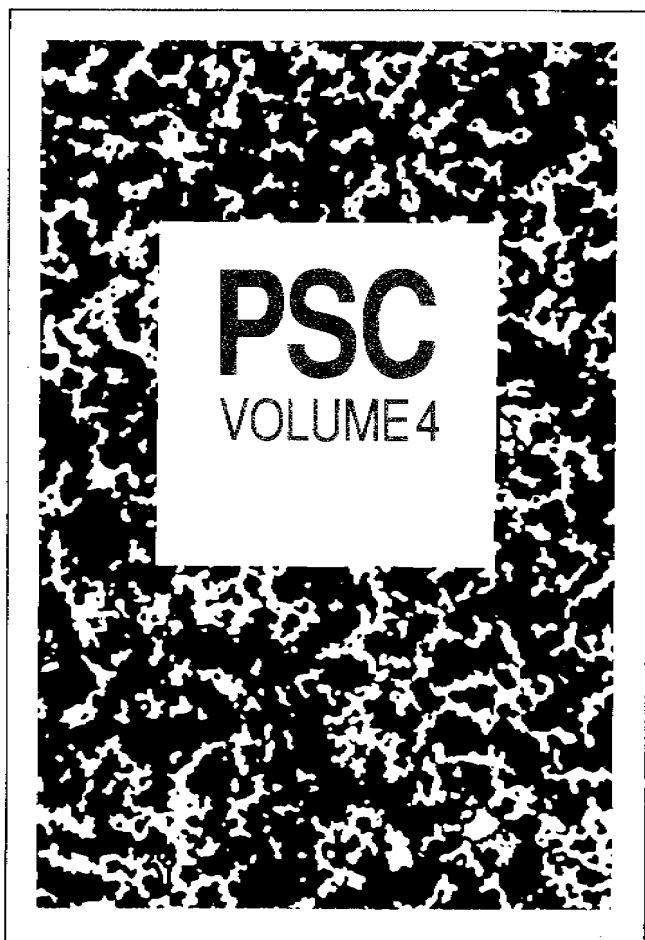


writing across the CURRICULUM



**Plymouth State College
Journal on
Writing Across the Curriculum**

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Journal on

Writing Across the Curriculum

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**Writing in the Capstone Experience:
Psychology Encounters Literature**
by
Henry E. Vittum and Robert S. Miller

In Five Parts:

- I. by Henry E. Vittum and
Robert S. Miller
- II. by Jackie Plante
- III. by Donald Hundgen
- IV. by Robert S. Miller
- V. by Henry E. Vittum

Courses that satisfy the integrative component of Plymouth's General Education program invite, if not necessitate, the use of frequent and varied writing assignments. A supporting document presented to the faculty in 1985 in favor of the then-new General Education program described an integrative course this way: "The course should be a capstone or culminating experience for the student....A significant level of analysis and synthesis is expected as opposed to simple presentation of facts and theories." The present General Education Handbook adds, "To the extent possible, the process of integrating material is achieved through extensive discussion and collaborative learning experiences rather than lecture, as well as through frequent writing assignments as practiced in WAC pedagogy."

Psychology and Literature, which has the distinction of being the first course at Plymouth given the integrative label, was offered for the first time in the Spring 1988 semester with an enrollment of just nine students. We, the two instructors, had spent close to a year preparing and planning. We had decided the course would compare three important theoretical approaches to psychology. The basis

for comparison would be to ask which of the approaches was most useful in analyzing literature and to ask which approach seemed best supported, if the content of literature were examined as a sort of "behavioral sample."

That first time, we studied the theories of three psychoanalysts: Freud, Jung, and Erikson; one radical behaviorist, B.F. Skinner; and three humanists: Rogers, Maslow, and Horney. After the class spent a week reading and discussing each approach, we spent several weeks reading works of literature that might be interpreted in that theoretical context.

For the psychoanalytic unit the choices were Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," Shaffer's *Equus*, Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*, Kosinski's *The Painted Bird*, and Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. For the behavioristic unit we chose Skinner's own *Walden Two*, Orwell's *1984*, Dostoevsky's *The Possessed*, and Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*. For the humanistic unit, we decided to read Chopin's *The Awakening*, Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, Bolt's *A Man for All Seasons*, and Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*.

We used a variety of writing assignments to facilitate learning. Most classes began with a five-minute quiz on the day's reading assignment. These quizzes served to motivate timely completion of these assignments and to stimulate discussion. The students wrote a research paper designed to deepen their appreciation of one of the psychological theories and a critical essay designed to allow them to practice applying psychology to literary criticism. (In later years we added a journal. That first time we were not so WAC literate as we are now!)

The most successful writing assignment, however, the one that clearly necessitated synthesis, was given in place of a final exam. Each student and each instructor was to write an imaginative paper describing one of the psychologists we had studied engaged in conversation with one of the literary characters we had encountered. We

were to place these individuals in a particular setting and write a dialogue that might occur between them.

Everyone brought these papers to the final exam meeting. That session was spent reading them to one another. Since most of us made liberal use of humor in these creations, the meeting was a most enjoyable ending for the course. More importantly, the papers took us in new directions and gave us new insights. They provided, we thought, clear evidence that the kind of synthesis that is supposed to occur in an integrative course had happened.

There follow four of these papers, two by students and two by the instructors. The first student, Jackie Plante, received her BA from Plymouth in 1989 with dual majors in English and Psychology. At that time she was an aspiring novelist. She now resides in Nashville, Tennessee. The second student, Donald Hundgen, received a BA from Plymouth in 1992 with a major in English and a minor in Psychology. He presently runs his own graphics design business here in Plymouth, New Hampshire.

Freud and Frazier

by

Jackie Plante

After an urgent call the evening before, Dr. Freud agreed to meet Frazier on Lake Logie. Dr. Freud does not know what the urgent matter is and can only assume a crisis of some sort has arisen for this man he once knew. This being before Frazier's establishment of a so-called Utopian society. The men are on the lake, equipped with fishing gear.

"I believe you asked me to come here because you have a problem?" Freud asks while he casts out his fishing line.

"It's important that no one knows I have come here to see you," Frazier says in a worried voice.

"Our talk will be confidential. So go on and tell what has possessed you to have us meet out here in the middle of a lake."

"I've felt as if something has been eating away at me, from the inside," says Frazier hesitantly. "Like something is missing from my life. It isn't as if things aren't going well at Walden Two, because they are going fine. It's just that I've thought about jumping off this cliff." Then in a long breath he rattles off his confusion. "It doesn't make sense to me, it doesn't make sense to say that my surroundings are pushing me to this end, being here doesn't make sense." In a final sentence, he states in a hopeless voice, "I should be talking to a Walden Two psychologist." With this surrounding air of confusion, Freud begins the treatment.

"Maybe that's where we should start then; why with me and not at Walden Two?"

Frazier contemplates his answer as he reels in his fishing line, seemingly disappointed at not having caught anything. He decides to change the lure and speaks to Dr. Freud. "What I am doing with this lure is in a sense the same reason why I am here; I need a change. The lure I was using just wasn't working for me. Do you realize I've used this lure every time I've gone fishing for ten years? I've caught fish with it, but nothing really big. Well, I want to catch something really big, whether it be fish or fame. I want to be someone. I want to be able to show people I am good at something. Now do you see why I do not want to go to anyone at Walden Two?" This he says with some rising enthusiasm in his voice.

Freud thinks a moment while watching Frazier change the lure. "You're saying it is because at Walden Two no one is allowed to shine out among the crowd;

everyone is the same. To use your analogy, everyone's tackle box has the same lure in it. Is that correct?"

"You know that is how it works at Walden. No one can be better or worse than the other. This way there is no competition to be the best, no manipulating other people, no putting your own wants and needs before the community," Frazier says in an almost convincing manner.

"Mr. Frazier, you appear quite defensive; something is indeed eating at you from the inside. It is simple to see just on the basis of what you are telling me. I will tell you you are, in fact, putting your needs before those of the community. You are here, concerned solely with yourself, and your desire to be the best. At Walden Two you can only be one of them, and your inner desires are asking for more than this equality. You built this community but cannot receive the recognition. You must throw back that big fish without even taking a picture of it. Anyone who wasn't there will never know of it. You can never elate in your success. Why? Because it doesn't matter. People can't live by these rules."

"What are my desires for, Dr. Freud?" he asks.

"They are asking to be let out. They do not want you to hold them in any longer."

"Is there a name for what I am fighting?" he asks wholeheartedly, not knowing whether or not to expect an answer.

"Yes, Mr. Frazier, you are fighting an instinct."

"Instinct? What kind of instinct? Am I abnormal?" As Frazier says this, he catches his line in his clothing. Freud attempts to unhook the lure. Freud then begins to talk.

"There are basic human instincts in all of us, and you are no exception. It is just as I help you unravel this hook from your clothing, it is an instinct to help you. This, of course, is a minor instinct compared to the one you are experiencing." The doctor is in a firm position and has

Frazier trying to remember what his mentor long ago had taught him.

"Instincts, I can't recall them. Are they a source of positive reinforcement?"

"What language you speak and so innocently! One does not experience instinct because it is a source of whatever that was you said. One experiences it because it is innate in us all. It's the energy we receive from our libido. Right now your libidinal energy is focused on that of aggression, the aggression instinct. You have, in fact, been experiencing it all along. Even while you built your community in order to be better than the rest of the world. You believed that the outer world was corrupting society, shaping them as you would say, into selfish animalistic people. Well, you're partly right." Frazier tries to interrupt: "Let me say..."

Freud silences him with his ceaseless assault. "But it is not the environment that shapes him or her; it is the basic innate instincts that are crying to be set free."

Frazier gets in a few words. "But look at my community. It is working; people come and stay. It is the way it was determined to be."

"Let's not talk about determinism. You don't remember instinct because you used to disagree and ignore my lectures. You'll listen now, or you will find yourself in this water with your lure."

"Go on, Dr. Freud."

"Take a look at your past. Can't you see your aggression? To build a community, my man, to build a community by your own will alone. Don't you see what this is? It is sublimation. You don't realize your animal instinct; you make yourself believe it is for the good of others, but it is not. It's for your own well-being. You are here with me now because you want someone to recognize all you have done. By your own rule you are not supposed to do this. Instinctually, this was an attempt by you to make sure no

one would be recognized. This way you could not be challenged."

"Stop! What do you make me out to be? I never once thought any of those things. It was for the good of the community, for the good of the children. They would have an endless amount of love and be prepared for life's disappointments. Dr. Freud, you may resent me for not walking in your footsteps, but don't call me a dictator." Frazier is red with fury and worry. What if Freud is right: Had he done this to be a leader, a Jesus Christ? After all the image had passed his mind while on the cliff.

"Frazier, look at me and listen carefully. Did I once say you knew you were thinking all of these things? No, I didn't think so. I didn't because you didn't know; it was happening in your unconscious."

With this last word, Frazier's line is pulled taut, and his pole bends with the strike of a fish.

"I've got it!" He yells in his excitement. Freud helps him haul it aboard the canoe; all this was done without a hitch, and a mutual satisfaction was shared between the two men. Frazier, after the catch, is first to speak.

"If I'm not mistaken, you are leading me to the id, ego, and superego. Am I right?" he asks with a bit of realization.

"You are correct. Go and tell me more, Frazier."

"My id got me to build a community in order to show my abilities. My superego made me give the community rules so that my id intentions would not be discovered. Finally, my ego, my conscious self, brought me here to settle the repressed battle that has been raging within myself. What I thought to be a community run by positive reinforcement was actually a community run by libidinal energy and its instincts. You're also telling me it will fail unless each person has a way to sublimate his or her aggression. If not, the aggression will come out in a severe fashion because they would not dare to come for help as I

have. Why? Because they have been so influenced by my animalistic desire to control, they have adopted my false morals and values?" Freud stops him here.

"You are beginning to see it now. Relax and enjoy your catch. Whenever you must change your lure to get a bigger or better catch, or even hope to, go ahead. We are all different people with different avenues to fulfill our instincts' desires. An attempt to make all people equal will result in destruction. Don't be afraid to follow your instincts, or your repression will build again and you'll be afraid to change your lure. You may begin to think it is the only one in the box when, in fact, a better one may be right in front of you, and you may not even know it."

New Roses for Jude Fawley

by

Donald Hundgen

Jude Fawley had gone off on another of his self-mortifying drinking binges. It was like the lines from a poem by A. E. Housman:

Ale, man, ale's the stuff to drink
For fellows whom it hurts to think:
Look into the pewter pot
To see the world as the world's not.
And faith, 'tis pleasant till 'tis past:
The mischief is that 'twill not last.

And poor, wretched Jude did not so readily awake from his perfidious potations. Rather for a while did he linger in the quagmire of his inebriated subconscious, finding himself ensnared within the grasp of a most singular dream.

His eyelids, all sticky and sore, did pry themselves open to yet another darkness from the one they had hoped

to escape by opening. He was in a dark, strange room reclined upon a sofa, the structure and material of which he had never encountered in a sober state. The chamber had an odd aroma to it, of clean metal and wood and other substances he could not begin to name. After some interval of bleary scrutiny, he observed, sitting in crepuscular shadows at a very ponderous desk, just barely revealed in the light of a single, small lamp, the shape of a middle-aged woman who was apparently busy at writing something. Being not a little disoriented, Jude contrived a scheme whereby he might attract the attention of this nocturnal apparition. He groaned miserably.

The woman looked up and was indeed startled to behold so disheveled and unhappy a sight as Jude Fawley upon her couch. It was not simply Jude's identity that surprised her, for she could not clearly perceive this in the darkness, but the fact that anyone at all should be sprawled upon her sofa.

"My goodness!" she exclaimed. She had a slight accent that her visitor could not immediately place. "Now, who may you be?" she inquired. "We are after hours here, and I don't recall hearing you enter. If something is troubling you, it may be that we can set up an intake appointment for you. As it stands, I am not seeing many people at this time. You see, I am writing a book."

Jude, who had always had a weakness for books, picked himself up into an erect position on the sofa.

"What-what kind of book?" he slurred.

"*Neurosis in Our Time* it will be called. It's really a very serious problem."

"New Roses? New Roses, you say? In our time? Ah, a romance! That sounds very nice," confessed Jude.

"Yes, we do need more new roses. Can never have enough of them."

"You don't exactly get my meaning," said the woman patiently.

"What time is it anyway?" Jude asked.

"It's late. After hours!" The woman looked just the smallest bit disturbed. Unable to see her company very clearly, she adjusted the lamp so that it cast greater illumination on the setting of their conversation. "Good heavens!" she cried. "You look as though you stepped out of a book yourself! Some dusty Victorian novel!"

"Victorian?" mused Jude. "Now that's a name that rings a faint bell, though I cannot say why."

"What is your name?" the woman asked finally.

"Jude. Jude Fawley."

The woman was silent for a moment. "This is very peculiar," she muttered to herself. "Your name--is--familiar." She observed the curly black hair and the wan, desperate look of a character from literature. The clothes were certainly not up-to-date, but then some people fancied antique clothing. "I suppose," she said, "you are the Jude Fawley of Christminster, and in the acquaintance of--"

"Two very troublesome ladies!" cried Jude, leaping to his feet but almost falling. "How is it you know me and I don't know you? Who are you?"

"I am a doctor. Dr. Horney, Karen Horney, a psychoanalyst. I know you because I'm afraid you have a rather broad reputation."

"Is that so!" said Jude, collapsing again onto the sofa. "Now what have you heard?"

"I think it would be more appropriate if you tell me about yourself, because I may have heard incorrectly."

"That may be true. But you are a doctor, you say? A lady doctor? Ha!" Jude looked amazed.

"I am."

"And what was that other word? Sicko--sicko--"

"Psychoanalyst."

"Is that some new approach? Is it Christian or more the model of Aristotle?"

"Neither, exactly. Have you ever heard of Freud?"

"I can't say that I have," admitted Jude, scratching his head. "Sounds German. The Germans are very esoteric. Well, what are you writing about new roses for?"

"NEUROSIS!" corrected the doctor. "It's quite a serious problem, you know. Actually, you should know very well, Jude, from what I have heard."

"What have you heard? Has Arabella been to see you?" Jude suddenly looked frightened.

"Ha ha ha, no, no, nothing like that."

"Where am I, anyway?"

"The Horney Institute in New York City. It's summer and the year is 19--"

"19--! New York City! I seem to have misplaced myself worse than ever!"

"That would appear to be the case, Jude."

"Damn demon alcohol!"

"No doubt it has played a part. Tell me, Jude, have you made any progress with resolving that--uh--conflict in your life? The two women; and that other matter?"

Jude groaned. "Ah, that is hopeless! Sue has returned to that crotchety old twit Phillotson and Arabella--she'll sleep with anyone who will marry her and help her pay the bills! Things are as hopeless as ever."

"It doesn't sound as if you are very happy."

"Would you be?" cried Jude. "As to the women, well, they both have their qualities. If only God could work a miracle and combine 'em together! As they are they are no good to themselves and no good to me. But why am I telling you all this?"

"It is natural, Jude, to want to resolve such problems and talk them out. I am perhaps the best person to tell your problems to. That's what psychoanalysts are for; to help people sort out their inner conflicts."

"Inner conflicts! There is nothing inner about Arabella and Sue! It's all as plain as day to me!"

"And you have no conflicts inside of you?"

"I have a bit of gas and a headache coming on. I believe it's not quite respectable for me to be here with you--spilling my woes to a strange lady doctor. Lady doctor! I've never heard of such a thing! It's almost as preposterous as that quack we have in our town. Vilbert's his name. At least he's got cures to sell. What have you got? Still, I could trust him about as far as I could throw a fit!"

"You are insightful in that, I suspect," said Dr. Horney.

"Ah, flattery means nothing to me. But yes, I'm not the half-wit it would seem. I've read a good many books on difficult subjects. I thought I'd be a learned man, once upon a time, but providence has had other things in mind."

"Are you dissatisfied with yourself?" asked the doctor with a sincere tone.

"With myself? Never! You always bring it back to me! That's rather unfair of you, just as life has been unfair to me. I was ready to go to Christminster! I would have gone and made a fine scholar! The old churls in their mortarboards wouldn't have it. Just because I was a poor bloke and had a skill! Why, I built the very roofs over their heads so they could fall asleep reading their fine books!"

"You sound as if you have something to be proud about, but instead you are very bitter, Jude."

"It's not what I wanted. I was capable of more. I still am! But no one will have it."

"Could it be that you are angry because you could not live out your ideal self?"

Posh! I would have if I could have! Imagine locking someone out of a future course because of a silly prejudice! Jude the stone mason! And you! A lady doctor! That comes close to straightening my curls! These must be different times indeed. I must admit that you sound fairly learned for a woman. Arabella--now she's got a figure to bring the troops home, but a brain like an empty barrel. If only there were a way to put some of her flesh on Sue, and

maybe a dash of her practical sense, then Sue would be an angel! Well, she already is an angel, but--"

"Is she really?"

"Why yes, but--but--what is all this anyway?"

"Sue would be ideal then, wouldn't she? And it would have been ideal, if only they'd said: 'Jude Fawley, come to Christminster!' You set your aspirations pretty high, and they were disappointed time and time again."

"Well, shouldn't one have high hopes?" cried Jude indignantly.

"It is good to have goals, so long as they are realistic, Jude. One must be in touch with reality as much as one's dreams and ideals. Reality is a very complex thing."

"Reality, you say! Reality is insufferable, Miss--Miss--"

"Horney. Yes, reality can be difficult. Living in society can be difficult. Sometimes we have conflicting needs, and reality does not make it easy for us. We might settle for a good fantasy. Or go drinking."

"Fantasy! Fantasy, you say! My life has been more than a fantasy!"

"It most certainly has, Jude. You have touched many people in very real ways, and yet you torture yourself because you can't seem to make up your mind over these two women, and because you couldn't go to college. You have a lot going for you just as you are, except that maybe you need to take a shower, stay away from liquor, and talk to someone about your inner conflicts. Did you know that liquor kills brain cells?"

By this time, Jude was fuming. "Brain cells!" he screamed in anguish.

"You seem to be suffering from a serious neurosis."

"New roses again!" snarled the man writhing on the couch. "I am going to lose my mind talking to you! New roses indeed! You are quite the romantic. Sue would like you."

"Not new roses! Neurosis! That's a disease suffered by people who are out of touch with their real selves."

"Real selves!"

"Yes."

"What's a real self? How can a self be anything but real?"

"Jude, have you ever felt you were not being yourself?"

"There have been times when I'd have liked to plead that, but it's always been far too real."

"Exactly. You are always real, or you always have that potential; but you think otherwise, and you make yourself jump through hoops. You torture yourself with impossible--"

"There you go again with this torture business. It's not me who is doing the torturing! It's them! It's you!"

"Yes, it often does seem like someone else is doing the torturing. That is called psychological projection, a kind of disowning of the self. But you are the one who is doing it."

"How is it that you know so much about me?"

"I have read your chart, Jude."

"My chart, where is it? I must see it!"

"It is in every good bookstore and library. You are indeed well known."

"Oh my God!" Jude gripped his skull and made a horrifying grimace. "The whole world knows about me?"

"It's generally not our procedure to be so indiscreet, Mr. Fawley, but I'm afraid that you have come to us a little late. Society has been bold, to say nothing of art and literature. It is mostly the fault of man named Thomas Hardy."

"Hardy, you say?"

"I wouldn't be angry at him. He was just trying to be his real self, but I understand it puts you in an awkward predicament. He's written quite an insightful account of

your life, by the way. I would try to get a copy if I were you. It might inspire you to come back and see me for further conversation. I'll give you a special rate, because this would be a rather special case." Dr. Horney paused and watched her unexpected client watching her across the darkness. "I'm afraid our fifty minutes is up. Do you have a place to stay, Jude?"

"Oh, it does not matter," moaned the wretched figure as he stood up. "If I am as well known as you say, someone is bound to take me in."

"Indeed, many people have, Jude," she said warmly. "I dare say you have many sympathetic fans. And there are many people in the world just like you, even today. That's why I am writing my book." She rose from her desk and fetched something out of the shadows. It was a book.

"Here is another volume I have written."

Jude looked at the title. "*Our Inner Conflicts*. Is this about new roses also?"

"It will tell you all you really need to know, Jude. But do come again. It's been--it's been very real."

Psychology and Literature

Final Exam

by

Robert S. Miller

"There will be another joining us in a while. Meantime why don't each of you three begin by telling the others how you come to be here," Dr. Horney said and turned to the woman seated on her immediate left.

"I really do not know," Edna began. "I was swimming. I was feeling at peace. I was feeling a part of the sea. I remembered my father and a man I used to know and then I could smell flowers--the flowers that bloomed in

June by the doorstep when I was a girl. Then somehow I was traveling. A strange woman was my companion and seemed to be taking me somewhere. I was clothed and dry and felt I was soaring through space. The old woman explained I was, and through time too. She said we were going to New York City to the year 1950 to see a doctor. I thought it very odd."

Nora interrupted, "Why that must have been the same old woman who brought me here. I had just walked out of my house. I stood for a moment outside the door. I was wondering where to go next and whatever to do when she appeared out of the shadows. 'Just follow me,' she said. She said a doctor wanted to see me. I thought she meant my friend Dr. Rank, that he must have changed his mind. I hesitated because she was so strange. But then she offered me a macaroon, so I followed her. What a strange old woman she was, I wondered who she could have been."

"That must have been Mistress Hibbins," Hester stated. "She has special powers and brought us here also. She seemed to realize I was thinking of taking little Pearl away for a while. The child is now an heiress and needs to learn something more of the world. Mistress Hibbins approached me and said she had just become Boston's first travel agent, and volunteered to make all the arrangements."

"Oh, was that your little girl I saw on my way in?" Nora inquired.

"Yes," Hester replied.

"Oh, how I love children," Nora said. "I have three of my own. We play and play. I'll miss playing with them. Maybe I could play with little Pearl."

"As I recall, I have two children," Edna said apparently to herself. "I think they're boys."

"I usually don't entrust little Pearl to strangers, but she took kindly to that woman at the desk--they're going to the park. Pearl likes trees."

"Your Pearl will be just fine," Dr. Horney assured Hester. "I've made such progress helping Madame Stavrogin develop her repressed maternal tendencies. And she's a wonderful receptionist--so social. Mistress Hibbins found her for me in Russia--apparently she was leading quite a meaningless life."

"So Mistress Hibbins works for you," Hester said.

"Yes," Dr. Horney admitted. "She showed up here one day and claimed she could travel around time and literature and find interesting people for me to study. I figured she was a harmless narcissist and I'd humor her. So I said, 'Okay, lady, find me someone who'll make me take seriously what Freud said about the Oedipus complex.' The next day in she walks with the guy, Paul Morel. Good grief, such a mother complex! We've been at it ever since, Mistress Hibbins and I. It was only sometime later that it occurred to me she could also find me cheap help. Do you realize what a New York employment agency would have charged to find a receptionist like Varvara?"

"Maybe you should explain just why you've brought the three of us here together," Hester said with just a hint of impatience in her voice.

"The four of you, actually--there's one still to arrive. I'm in the process of refining my feminist psychoanalysis. I've broken with Freud in part because of his utterly incorrect ideas about the psychology of women. Why the bias that man himself displayed in comparing male and female development is practically by itself sufficient proof of the existence of womb envy. Penis envy indeed!"

Edna felt faint. Hester stared at Dr. Horney. Nora spoke, "Why Dr. Horney, what on earth is womb envy?"

"Nora, you of all people should know, having been married for a number of years to a veritable personification of the concept." Dr. Horney went on to explain the meaning of the term and presented a convincing argument that

Torvald Helmer indeed provided a vivid example. "It seems to me far more likely, Nora," Dr. Horney concluded that, "Torvald envies you your anatomy more than you envy him his."

Nora for once seemed lost in thought. Edna fanned herself with a handy medical journal. Hester attempted to redirect the conversation. "Dr. Horney, you still have not explained why you would want to meet the three of us."

"To study self-realization, of course. The realization of self, one's own true inner identity is, I believe, the ultimate goal of human life both for women and for men. It is the central concept in my theory. As I build my feminist psychology then, I must study examples of women who have achieved this state or are on the way to doing so. Such are hard to find in American society of 1950. Present day American culture is male-dominated. To compensate for their inadequate biological state, womb-envying men make women feel inferior. They establish obstacles to keep them out of the workplace and out of the creative professions."

Nora again appeared thoughtful, and Edna inquired of Dr. Horney whether a vague sense of *deja vu* was often a side effect of time travel. Only Hester seemed unsurprised by what Dr. Horney had to say.

"The result of all this," Dr. Horney continued, "is that many modern American women develop neurotic patterns of feeling and behaving. I want to study you, because each of you has overcome obstacles not unlike those facing modern women and have achieved or are on the way to achieving self-realization.

"You, Nora, will be interesting to study because you have just taken the first step necessary in overcoming what for you was a long-standing neurotic pattern of the compliant type. You managed when your neurosis was no longer working to make a sudden break from it. I will be anxious to see where you go from here. You, Edna, much

more gradually overcame your own neurotic pattern, the resignation type. I believe it was the influence of your friends Robert and especially Mademoiselle Reisz that brought this about."

"Mademoiselle Reisz?" Edna asked quietly.

"Yes my dear," Dr. Horney said. "She was the very first to provide you with the kind of unconditional positive regard so often associated with growth."

"And as for you, Hester. You interest me precisely because I do not yet know where you got your incredible sense of self-realization. I know only that it is so strongly established that it has withstood remarkable threats to its existence. I'll be especially interested in comparing you, Hester, to the fourth member of this group, who is like you in many ways. She too seems to have always known exactly who she is and how to maintain self in the face of any adversity. The comparison will be fascinating, however, because each of you has such a different sense of self."

Before anything else could be said, the door burst open and in rushed little Pearl.

"Oh, Mother," little Pearl cried. "Madame Stavrogin has just introduced me to the most interesting woman. She is out there at this very moment, and, Mother, you must watch what she has taught me to do. Look Mother, she has taught me to make dimples."

A Tiny *Opéra Sérieuse* Awaiting a Composer

by

Henry E. Vittum

Setting: Hell--its penthouse, with three doors, each with a sign over it: left reads FREE WILLERS; right reads ACADEMY OF MENTAL SCIENCE; center reads VISITORS' ENTRANCE.

Cast: **Sigmund Freud**, a male in his 80's with a perpetual look of surprise on his face.
 Hester Prynne, a female in her 40's with a perpetual look of satisfaction on her face.
 El Shaddai, God (what else is there to say?)

Time: Probably.

[As the scene opens, Hester enters left. Her gown "of sombre hue" has shrunk from the heat, but her badge is as big and red and golden as ever. Her underdrawers have not shrunk correspondingly, nor has her cap. Her face is the color of a steelmaker's.]

[Moving downstage, she is heard, at first in a mutter but then in increasing volume.]

Hester: If I had realized that it would come to this, would I have given myself to Mr. Dimmesdale? Was I a fool? Was he, in truth, only a figment of my imagination? Did he love me? Was he just an animal unpenned for the nonce? Where is he now? Does he know himself? Is he--

[Freud appears in the door left, standing there listening to the crescendo. His suit, so grayed but still so brown, has shrunk also. There is a permanent smell of singed hair about his head and beard. His cigar is eternally lit, and his eyes held always open by two charred sticks.]

--a tool of Satan? No, no, no; that was old Chillingworth, a name worthy of the body which bore it. [She puts her hand to her breast and shudders slightly. Then she begins to speak in a more reasonable volume.] This is my identity; this is my badge, this is my integrity. ADULTERESS they say it stands for. Pooh! It stands for ALLOPATH.

Freud [coming forward down right]: Now, see here, Mrs. Prynne. You have gone too far, for you are talking in my field of medicine.

Hester [turning to see the speaker]: Oh, it's you, *Herr Doktor*. *Was ist das Leben ohne Liebesglanz?*

Freud: Now cut that out. Just because I taught you some very easy German when our sessions became boring, you don't need to use your cleverness on me.

Hester: Cleverness? By the saints (am I permitted to say that here?) no one in Boston thought me very clever. They punished me for my bodyworks and paid me for my handiworks, but they never paid much attention to my mind.

Freud: Can you blame them, *Mutterchen*? *Muss ist eine bittere Nuss*.

Hester: Now, who's being clever? Or is it just plain nasty?

Freud: Tell me, Hester, why you didn't just give up, take your jewel to England, and live a better life?

Hester: Is this session going to cost me anything?

Freud: No more than I have exacted before.

Hester: You can't fool me any longer. I was once married to the devil himself, but you are no Mephistopheles.

Freud: Take care, there. You are nothing more than a feminized Faust. You sold your soul, but you think it was noble because it was for love. In your conspiracy of silence you subconsciously collaborated in your husband's desire for revenge.

Hester: What are you saying, you fiend?

Freud: Damned I may be for rejecting God, but fiend I'm not. You helped undermine that clergy-*shmendrik* Dimmesdale's moral and physical existence with your dream of illicit bliss. I think your outward show of piety hid the real thoughts you had. I think your whole entrance into fleshly things was an intellectual. . .

Hester: Stop it! I won't listen to that kind of judgment. I swear in the name of my creator [at that the stage trembles; there is a high, piercing whistle sound; and Himself stands

at the door marked VISITORS' ENTRANCE] that what we did had a consecration of its own.

El Shaddai [with force, but not that of a stentorian]: Shame, Despair, and Solitude have made you strong, but taught you much amiss, to quote an eminent Salem writer who was "positively hell-fired."

Hester: Who called for you? You're not my creator. I spoke of him who spun my tragic tale and left me with the words: Be true! Be true! Be true! Show freely to the world, if not your worst, yet some trait whereby the worst may be inferred!

El Shaddai: Don't be disrespectful. I am *der Heiland*.

Freud [aside]: Now who's being clever?

El Shaddai [turning to Freud]: I heard that. You listen, too. I am about to give you both a lesson in love--not sex alone, Sigmund, and not heated passion, Hester--but love, sacred love. Another woman wore a letter A on her bosom, a symbol of the power of sacred, not profane, love: *Amor vincit omnia*.

Hester: But that Prioress was merely a creature of a poet's mind.

Freud: Why, my dear, what do think your origin was? The Garden of Eden?

El Shaddai: All right, you two, let me finish. Your act, Hester, led to nothing except darkness. The Lady's act led to light. You sinned, Hester, you sinned. And so did your lover. But your sin was worse.

Hester: Oh, you were listening to *his* talk [jabbing a finger in Freud's direction].

El Shaddai: The only blacker sin was your husband's. Your sin was sexual passion; his was intellectual pride. Take care that you don't add that sin to your already blackened soul. Social worker you may have been, but a psychologist? Never! Never! Never!

[As Himself delivers these "nevers," he fades from the doorway. Freud wags his ears at Hester and disappears through the door up right. Hester stands still for a moment looking first at the center door, then at the one right. She then turns to the audience with a triumphant gesture.]

Hester: Those two can't believe it, but I've been self-actualized!

[Lights go down. A whistling can be heard in the distance. A faint smell of singed hair lingers in the air. Hester, with hand on her bosom, smiles smugly as the curtain falls.]

A Budget Director's View of Writing

by

James C. Hobart

Words wield great power. In my own experience, I have learned that numbers also wield great power. The reality is that both are abstractions for human concepts that reside in each of our brains, and in our collective realities. And they permit us to act in a complicated society.

Why do I say that words have power? We have a lot to express, emotions to communicate, an urgency to our messages. Body language isn't sufficient (ducking, cowering, puffing up, hiding, crouching). We have to rely on abstractions. Tiny little bits of sound that have been agreed upon through time and usage evolved to include complex meanings and sets of emotions, expressions, and postures. One word can convey a tremendous amount of conceptual effort: "e pluribus unum," "synergy," "Watch Out!" "You idiot," "society," "compassion,"... These words raise human interaction to higher levels and become a shorthand for expressing increasingly more complex ideas in a short period of time. Imagine a life where all thoughts had to be conveyed through charades!

Both our personal lives and our society are quite complex and varied. If there is one trend that everyone agrees upon, it is that we are doing more and more in less and less time. That makes the effect of each action important, and the consequences of mistakes more serious. People want to believe other people's words, and to rely on them on faith. They have little time allowed NOT to base their own actions on them. We accept credit cards from

3,000 miles away and act on them. We travel distances to transact business with people we have never met. We lay off and hire employees, using information conveyed through letters, forms, and answering machines. We set prices which people pay. Instead of describing where we live with natural symbols and hand gestures, we give addresses, social security numbers, and fax locations. We communicate important information through electronic bulletin boards. I sat in a municipal zoo 1,000 miles from home, and at the ubiquitous electronic teller drew \$100 from my checking account. Much of this is based on faith (and solid business systems).

And we have faith that it will all work, that people will understand what we say and will act in a manner that will contribute to our goals. We simply believe in words, even in the midst of a political campaign where words often become hard to believe. We become finely tuned to words so that when they are not truthful, we sense it. And yet, with little hesitation, people are willing to stake their lives on some words, justifiably, when someone calls for help.

I think that words are among the most important tools in civilization; they let us transmit information, organize our energy, control our time, convey our feelings, and shape our lives.

What do words mean to you? Well for one thing I can't understand what you are saying unless you use conventional words, in conventional sentences that are arranged in logical patterns. I can't follow emotional grunts or visceral complaints if I can't find the logical or emotional basis by which a thought is conveyed.

How many people really know what my job is? Do you know each other's academic interests and passions? Do you really know what some profession does? Do you know why you program a computer? Can you produce a statistic? Well, if you can do any of these things, and you

want to tell someone who can't, you are forced either to demonstrate the process entirely, or to find an abstraction to convey your meaning. The tougher the concept, the more difficult and careful the use of words. If I am to understand you, I have to be able to follow your thoughts. And simple words don't always do the job. If what you want to say is complex, it sometimes requires shading of meanings. A well-chosen word can illustrate an entire concept. Do you have an idea? Is it "brilliant," "erroneous," "dangerous," "clever," "terrifying," or just an "ordinary" idea? I can react more appropriately if what you want to convey is clothed in words which give me shortcuts through your forest and byways, and enable me to understand what you mean without having to ask you a dozen more questions. And I will enjoy your participating in a good use of words, reveling in the efficiency and clarity of good speech. We will feel "sociable."

While spoken words work well in small groups, to convey meaning in a larger setting, you must be able to write those words in a way that will not confuse a wide variety of people. You must keep the reader's interest. You can't be boring, redundant, poorly organized, or illogical. A written thought can be widely copied and distributed. Your message may go to a much larger public, and have wide effect.

Since writing is a substitute for more personal conversation, why shouldn't it have some of the elements of conversation, containing a certain amount of humor, not insulting the intelligence of the reader, and allowing for multiple viewpoints?

Because our society gets more complex each day, and people have less knowledge of what anyone else is doing except in the simplest occupations (try to describe teaching and learning as a process sometime), it becomes necessary for us, if we are to advance as a human community to learn to communicate with each other carefully,

succinctly, and with the right emphasis. This makes it very important that the rocket scientist knows how to discuss the town budget, that the computer programmer knows how to handle debits and credits, and that the doctor understands domestic strife. How else can we place thoughts in each other's minds so that we are able to achieve our mutual goals? Any way which leads to a wrong conclusion because of a poor choice of words, or through a lack of words to express the true significance of a thought, can lead to serious consequences, lost opportunities for human betterment, and even tragedy.

Numbers, too, are words. Instead of conveying the emotional side of our thought, they convey the quantitative. Much of what we do in life involves measurement, proportion. We need to know the relative value, the relative humidity, the average, the relative size. We work out trends, rates of change, percents, bottom lines...all to enable our minds to grasp a concept of size and proportion, and point the direction of change. Numbers help us understand when certain limits are reached, and when action is required. Do we like the numerical results of what we do? Do we want to do more of it, less of it, or none of it? It really isn't different from using words. We have just changed the symbols.

In my lifetime I have seen a trend toward using fewer words to cover more complexity. More verbal shorthand. We live in a society where people are readily being given full membership and credibility with few reservations. I am worried that without the tool of good vocabulary and the ability to use it, the good will and social justice that we are building throughout our society and the world can only move haltingly. People will lack the ability to make critical choices on complex ideas if they lack the tools to dissect a thought into its "abstractions." To paraphrase Gresham's law, "poor vocabulary and communication will drive out the good." Used well, words and

numbers convey and organize complexity, and make our responsibilities manageable and our lives "civilized." They also enable us to enjoy fully the community of humankind in our myriad contacts with our fellow creatures.

Naming Our Fears

by

Michael Brien

In the Lifeskills, Jobskills and Relationship Programming that I have developed at the Belknap County Department of Corrections, Laconia, New Hampshire, inmates take the first steps in naming their terrors or addictions by creating word-lists or word associations that contain the hidden patterns of their lives. We may break into small group sessions and speak a lot about domestic violence, or substance abuse, or any number of issues, but until we make a record of our thoughts and goals and strengths and weaknesses, we can turn our backs on all of it. In writing our lists, we confront what T. S. Eliot has called, "the still point in a turning world."

The ages of these inmate students range between eighteen and mid-thirties; they are male and female. In a class of eight, males outnumber females by 3 to 1. If they're lucky, some might have their G.E.D. Most don't. For many of them, abusing alcohol and drugs has obliterated much of the education. They are usually in jail as the direct result of a misdemeanor committed under the influence of substance abuse that began in grammar school and simply became a way of life. They've had to think about their own survival since they were kids. Selfishness guarantees survival. Empathy is a luxury they cannot afford. Living fast, carefree and for-the-moment is as far into the future as most can see.

Getting caught may be a gift. It will force some of them to reconsider where they've been, and where they're headed. It's a long journey.

My job is to present them with options that they may never have considered before. So, slowly, I begin to establish a rapport, and because writing is such an important part of my life, I introduce it into theirs. I ask each of them to begin the transformation of their world with the scratching of a single word onto paper. It becomes their act of commitment. Very much like the first lines of the Gospel of John, where the creation of a new world begins with the uttering of a single word made flesh: "Before anything else existed, there was the Word..."

One twenty-year-old man, when asked to compile a list of the influences on him as a child, wrote only three words:

picked-on
drinking
working

Another inmate, a thirty-year-old mother forced to give-up custody of her daughter because she was addicted to pain-killers, wrote why she used drugs:

No worries
Feels good
Warm
Didn't have to think about nothing
I like it

These kinds of lists offer the inmates the opportunity to ask, "Who am I?" Carol Pearson, in *The Hero Within*, writes that "wanderers do not learn their lessons all at once..." Later in the book she adds that "first choices are crude and clumsy." But she reiterates that none of us can skip our journey toward individuation. Ultimately, Ms. Pearson tells us that "there is no way to avoid the hero's quest."

So I begin by telling my "students" that they are on a hero's journey and, in the end, the lists that they develop will become maps of where they've been and, more importantly, where they're headed.

In a Values and Decision-making class, these inmates and I look in a hand-held mirror and record what we find there. For thirty seconds, each of us, in our turn, stares back at the face staring back at us. Then we try to pass on that face. It never works. As soon as the light in the mirror is reflected away from our face, the visage of a stranger takes its place. So we let it go. But hurriedly, we begin our list of the features that we saw in the mirror when the face was ours: Stubble, acne, red eyes, loneliness, fear, a chip on the shoulder... The list is that short and varied. But it begins the process of exploration. That list becomes a reference point for each writer to expand on, if not in that class, then in others that will follow.

From this list exercise, we have created "community pieces." These are shared experience word lists that sometimes become magic. Through discussion, individual lists are gingerly threaded into fragments of a similar idea that are shared by all of the group members. Then these ideas are edited into a theme piece and composed into a poetic format. When fleshed out, it becomes a vision statement, a momentary reflection on a way of life:

As a child I played on the tracks
because I enjoyed picking up the warm rocks
that tickled my palm

Spreading my legs wide
I reached from tie to tie
It felt good

The train might come
But surely it would come later

It's always a struggle to complete a "community piece." Some inmates are not ready yet to get their act together. They're not at their bottom. But there are times, when all the connections are just right, that a silence enters the room and heads nod in agreement. Sneers are wiped away. For the first time, for some, the idea of looking at something from somebody else's point of view becomes clear.

When I first started this job at the Department of Corrections, I tried to explain to an inmate why his wife might be throwing fits every time he came home late, and drunk to boot. "Look at it from her point of view," I said. "She had supper ready at five because you said you'd be home at five. The kids waited up until eleven to see Dad. But by then they were tired and cranky. Your supper was cold and your wife had had it. Tell me you wouldn't be in a bitchy mood." But he didn't get it. He could only see it from his perspective. The guys at work asked him out, he said "sure," had a few beers, shot some pool, and before you know it it's one in the morning. He gets home and the bitch is yelling at him. Why shouldn't he hit her to shut her up?

I realized then that he didn't really understand who he was yet, and here I was asking him to try to understand his wife. So I began my listing exercises. The lists that begin with the characteristics of their role models when they were children become greater acts of discovery as I ask them to expand them into reflections on their own strengths and weaknesses as adults. These lists become foundations for constructing their own education.

That twenty-year-old man who created a three-word list about the influences on him as a child? He didn't elaborate on it then, but near the end of his term, he wrote me a one-page essay. It was single-spaced, misspunctuated, misspelled, but full of punches. It was about his mother dying from cancer and the numbness that he experienced

during her illness and the subsequent falling apart of the family after her death. She had left him to grow up too fast and too alone.

By writing it down, he confronted it. Now it is possible that he can be transformed by it. He became his own best teacher. He is the only one who can make a choice to overcome his trauma. I remind each of these inmates that there was nothing on that sheet of paper before they put down the first word. They are gods. They are creators. They tried. They did it. They own it.

I have taught first-year composition classes to better understand the concept of pace and direction in a short story by scanning a page and writing down only the action verbs that appear three or more times on that page. Follow the chain of verbs and you can trace the framework of the story.

In an Introductory Sociology class, I gathered single word responses to the term "society" and from there began to explore the concept. Mathematics and Business courses might smooth the way for wary, undeclared majors by having these students list their fears in approaching what they believe to be interminable subjects. These lists can then become strings of words that become thought processes that become formulas that become statements of purpose.

Writing Across the Curriculum can be the key to unlocking chests laden with painful and confused memories. How many of our students may be living with terrors too fearful or too trivial to name? But until they do name them, they cannot own them. They cannot begin to face them down.

As a kid, I remember being afraid for my Dad the first morning I saw him off at the train station. I was probably five or six years old and I didn't know what was

going to happen to him on that train. All day I thought about him. Would I ever see him again? It was dark when my mother drove me and my sisters down to the train station to pick my father up. We waited on the platform until a single headlight broke the darkness at the far end of the track and the people on the platform with us surged forward. I too took a hesitant step forward. When the train stopped, there was my Dad, the first one off the train, a smile on his face, a newspaper in his hand, and I knew, it had been OK.

It's essential to realize that Writing Across the Curriculum does not just happen here in our classrooms, on this campus. Its ramifications go far beyond the simple boundaries I have set here. I see it in the correctional setting. You will see it elsewhere. Inhibitions wear many monstrous disguises.

For my inmates, my students and me, the train is waiting to pull away from the station. Its powerful headlamp cuts the darkness. The conductor is calling, "All aboard." It's time to take that first step. We must give up our tickets and take our seats.

Collaborative Writing Assignments

by

Jane E. Babin

Explain to students that part of their grade in a course will be based upon successful completion of a collaborative writing assignment and one can assuredly expect to elicit rolled eyes and grimaces, if not audible groans. Yet, collaborative writing can be both a rewarding academic experience for the student and an effective educational tool for the academician.

In business courses, faculty teach students that a business organization consists of individuals of various socio-economic, educational, and cultural backgrounds who come together to achieve the organization's goals. These individuals bring to the company their own skills, knowledge, values and expertise which, in many instances, are widely diverse. Still, employees are able to accomplish the corporate objective through cooperation, coordination, and a willingness to arrive at a common goal, i.e. the "bottom line."

Students required to complete a collaborative writing assignment are, in many respects, analogous to members of a business organization who work together to achieve the company objective. They each bring to the assignment their own level of writing skills, their knowledge of the subject matter, their particular composition styles, and their individual methods of research. Students assigned a group writing exercise must learn to harmonize each other's individual creative strengths and weaknesses to produce the final work product.

The collaborative writing approach is being used more and more in virtually every aspect of American business, from interdepartmental committee reports to peer and subordinate performance appraisals, employee manuals, intercompany communications, etc. Students who understand and who have experienced the teamwork writing dynamic may find that they more easily learn their jobs once out of school.

Moreover, there is a call for educators to recognize, "the dichotomy between current models of teaching writing, almost all of which assume single authorship, and the actual writing situations students will face upon graduation, many of which require co- or group authorship." (Ede and Lunsford 1985, 69-70). The reality faculty must face is that students need exposure to collaborative writing *before* they go into the workplace so that they will be adequately and competitively prepared for the challenges and demands that they will face.

Example: Labor-Management Relations Negotiation Exercise

I have implemented collaborative writing assignments with measurable success in my Labor-Management Relations course. This course lends itself well to the collaborative writing experience for a couple of reasons.

First, it is a 300 level course, which means that the students most likely have already had some exposure to group projects in other courses. This exposure is significant because it would be difficult to toss someone into a lake and expect them to swim to shore without first giving them a few swimming lessons in a shallow pool. I have discovered that prior exposure makes the more complicated collaborative assignments faced later in a curriculum more easily (and willingly!) accepted. Second, the group-negotiating activities which culminate in the final written work product have real life applications. In this writing

exercise, students are required to research, negotiate, and draft a new labor contract as though they were the actual members of a company or union contract negotiating team.

The Labor-Management Relations collaborative writing project is assigned in conjunction with an oral negotiation exercise in which two groups of students--one playing a management negotiation team, and one acting as union representatives--renegotiate an expiring labor contract. Each group is expected to produce a 15+ page paper which must include the following information:

- mandatory bargaining issues presented at the negotiating table by each team
- roles played by each group member (e.g., CEO, department head, staff attorney, chief negotiator for the union local, national union representative)
- the actual negotiation process which includes negotiating strategies, impasse resolution techniques, etc.
- terms of the final negotiated contract

Appendices to the paper include the costing figures for each of the bargaining demands, the entire renegotiated labor agreement in contract language, and a "bargaining book" which contains a company comparison of historical gains and concessions made by either management or union and its relation to current key contract issues. Students also include a list of optimistic and realistic bargaining objectives they brought to the negotiating table, and discuss in the paper whether or not any of these goals were realized.

The research component of the project requires the students to discover industry standards for such bargaining issues as wages, comprehensive benefits, retirement and pension plans, safety procedures, grievance processes, etc. The final work product is a culmination of the group's total negotiating experience.

Cooperation, Coordination, and Collaboration

I refer to cooperation, coordination, and collaboration as the three C's of any joint writing effort. All three are necessary not only to produce quality collaborative writing which reflects the harmonized intellectual diversity of each group member, but also to make the experience stimulating, enjoyable, and less stressful for the students.

Interestingly, cooperation may be the most difficult of the three C's for students to achieve. This problem occurs even when students are allowed to choose their fellow teammates, usually friends. Some group members are likely to be more opinionated than others. Usually, a natural leader will emerge who "caretakes" the entire project, telling the others how the assignment should be approached, the different tasks which need to be accomplished, and so on. More passive group members may make little noise, opting to go along with the leader and accepting the responsibilities assigned them. Others may feel resentment and challenge the new-found leader's perceived power.

In a perfect world, everyone would come to the collaborative writing experience sans ego; everyone would agree with and cooperate fully with each other. But this is not a perfect world, and part of the instructor's job when monitoring collaborative writing projects is to mediate conflicts that arise due to team members' inability to cooperate with each other, if indeed the individuals cannot work out their differences on their own.

Coordination involves the ordering of tasks and responsibilities so that each individual group member's contributions are not lost or duplicated. Coordination is a lot more difficult when there is more than one author, because some students find it very difficult to delegate any portion of a project, on which they will receive a collective grade, to anyone but themselves. The outcome is obvious; less motivated students are inclined to use this student as the

project "workhorse," the compulsive student ends up angry and exhausted, and even though the grade may be an "A," the whole purpose of the assignment has failed. The student log, which I will refer to in the "quality control" section of this paper, will be examined as one method of avoiding this problem.

Those using the collaborative approach must emphasize that the coordination of a collective effort becomes the objective of the assignment as much as the final product itself. That does not mean that group members must do everything as a unit. This is not feasible or practical. What the group members are responsible for doing as a unit is to agree on the division of tasks, to control the product, both in quality and content, and to coordinate each member's contribution so that the writing is a reflection of all those involved in its creation.

Lastly, there is collaboration. The ability to work together is the focal point of the collaborative writing assignment. Frequently, students find that their communication of ideas stimulates others; it gets the group's "creative juices" flowing. Consequently, there must be a commitment by each student to actively listen to the other group members' ideas and opinions. The ability to compromise, to communicate, and to consult will make or break this learning experience.

It must be kept in mind that the goal of a collaborative writing assignment is to stimulate creative co-authorship no matter whether the result is a business document, a short story, a research paper, or so on. The vehicle for achieving this goal is to stimulate discussion, compromise differences, order and assign tasks, and to process the culmination of these group activities down to a written product.

Quality Control

One question I am invariably asked when assigning a collaborative writing exercise is, "I really want a good grade on this paper, yet I am just as busy as everyone else. How can I make sure that my fellow group members will pull their own weight on this project?" A follow-up question which I receive some time after the writing has been assigned is, "I seem to be doing all of the work. My teammates don't show up for meetings; they always have an excuse. Is it fair to give them the same grade when I'm the one who researched, negotiated, and drafted the final labor contract?"

Quality control is always an important factor to consider when assigning projects to be worked on collaboratively. It is preferable to define rules and procedures for the students regarding your expectations of the group and its individual members than to be barraged later with questions and complaints when it is too late to reach a group compromise or to dole out sanctions. Students should be made aware of these expectations up front when the project is assigned, in writing, so that there is no mistake as to their responsibilities.

Consequently, the first thing I do when assigning the negotiation exercise is to provide each student with a handout, detailing the objectives, procedures, and expectations that must be met in order to successfully complete the assignment. This includes a list of issues that the work product must address, many of them posed as interrogatories.

For example, such inquiries may include: On what bargaining issues did the two negotiating teams finally agree? Does your group feel as though it "won" in negotiating any issue or issues? How did the teams ultimately reach a settlement? What negotiating strategies did your group employ? Were they successful or unsuccessful? In order to incorporate answers to these questions into the

group's written work product, the students are forced to come to a consensus on the answers to the questions, something that is many times more difficult than it appears.

For example, students will often agree that their team either won a better wage, hour, or working condition issue, yet disagree on which strategy was used to obtain that issue. This exercise helps students to learn how to analyze oral negotiations as a unit, compromising individual perspectives for the collective viewpoint.

Another quality control technique which I have just developed for use in courses which use collaborative writing assignments is the log. The log addresses the problem of the absent team member whose only contribution to the group exercise is to show up the day I hand out the project grades. The objective of the log is to motivate individuals to work as a team and to make individual students accountable for their lack of participation. It "keeps everyone honest."

The way it works is analogous to a time clock. The group members designate a "timekeeper" who is responsible for recording meeting times and dates. Each time the group meets to discuss, research, negotiate, etc., the timekeeper records the date and the hours worked. Each participating member signs his or her name under that date. This log is attached to the finished work product and becomes evidence of each group member's level of participation in the assignment.

One advantage of the log is the virtual elimination of *ex parte* hearings where angry students rush to your office to complain about a "deadbeat" team member who refuses to do any of the work (recognizing that it is a *group* grade), tempting you to compromise your own principles and impose the ultimate sanction (an "F" grade) on the person who is not even present to defend himself or herself. You can now ask the students to produce the log, which will either verify their story or demonstrate perhaps an

exaggeration of the individual's lack of cooperation. It gives you a better basis to communicate with a student who may be failing to participate adequately without having to rely on "he said/she said" testimony.

Additionally, with any collaborative writing exercise it is crucial to keep the size of the groups as small as possible. Depending upon the average class size for the course, this may or may not be realistic. I usually expect to have between 40 to 50 students enrolled in a typical Labor-Management Relations class, so therefore I usually place a four-person limit on group size. Those faculty with considerably smaller class sizes may be able to set limits of two or three. Small group size is certainly no guarantee of group cohesiveness; however, it does make coordination of the exercise more manageable for the students.

I usually try to set aside one class period where the students may get together outside of the classroom to work on their projects. During that time I am available in my office to answer any questions or address any problems the groups may be having. The complaint most often heard about group assignments is that it is difficult for students to get together because "so and so" commutes, or "whatshis-name" plays sports, etc. This one-time class period gives the groups a chance to coordinate activities and divide up tasks.

The collaborative writing experience, to be valid, must truly be collaborative. Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford, in their book on collaborative writing, *Singular Texts/Plural Authors*, address this issue by stating that "poor collaborative writing assignments are artificial in the sense that one person could really complete the assignment alone: such assignments lead only to busy work and frustration" (2). Coupled with unclear objectives and inadequate instructions, the collaborative exercise teaches students nothing about the creative group process.

Consequently, in the labor negotiations exercise, the quality of the collaborative aspect of the assignment is controlled through the roles each student assumes as a member of either the union or management negotiation team. Each role is an integral part of the negotiations process; each role carries specific functions that are directly linked to the others. For example, one student might assume the role of chief spokesperson for the company's negotiating team; another might assume the role of an outside expert in the area of benefits costing; another, the chief executive officer, etc. It is impossible to assume more than one role, or to complete the written assignment without input from all of the roles.

Conclusion

One of the "advantages" of my labor relations course that students mention orally and in course evaluation is the negotiations exercise. Students generally come away from this collaborative writing exercise with positive impressions. I have had students make comments such as, "I wasn't too psyched when you gave us this assignment, but I have really learned a lot about working with others in a team and about the process of negotiating with other groups."

Students have also commented on the expectations they had of the project, and how their expectations were met or not met upon completion of the exercise. Many students have expressed the fact that they thought their fellow group members would not "get into" the assignment, yet, later found out that "John" was really an aggressive negotiator, or that "Sue" was able to persuade the other group to concede a compensation issue because of her powerful presentation of costing figures. Their perceptions of the collaborative assignment and of each other change as they assume their union or management roles, become embroiled in the negotiation of a new labor contract, and

attempt to relate the experience in the form of a collectively written paper.

Finally, I find that students who take this type of exercise seriously come away with an understanding of the broader purpose of the collaborative writing assignment. They realize that someday a job may require them to work with a fellow employee to produce a document, write a manual, draw-up a performance appraisal, or maybe even draft a new labor contract. We as faculty should provide them with that collaborative experience while they are still students.

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Where The Faculty Are With WAC

by

**Robert Miller with Sally Boland and Mary-Lou
Hinman**

After eight years, Plymouth's Writing Across the Curriculum program may have reached a dangerous age; it may be just old enough to be taken for granted. Those of us who have become actively involved in the program only in the last few years may be unaware of the origins of the program in the collective concern of the faculty about the quality of student writing. The program has been successful enough to achieve institutional legitimacy in the form of administrative support and funding. But we, the faculty, must not lose sight of the fact that our concerns and energy not only created the program, but drive it as well.

This is the most important conclusion I've drawn during my first semester as WAC coordinator. I based the conclusion on interviews I conducted with my two predecessors, Mary-Lou Hinman and Sally Boland. I was not a part of WAC at the beginning, and I asked them to clarify the history and development of the program for me.

Several people had mentioned to me that Sally was responsible for bringing the idea of WAC to PSC. When I talked to her, the first question I asked was how she had first learned of Writing Across the Curriculum.

Sally: I began to hear about it in journals like *College English* in the late 70s and the early 80s. But what really got me interested was a friend of mine from graduate school who had gone to teach at Hawaii. She opened one of the first university reading/writing centers and trained

tutors for it, and as part of that she learned about WAC theory and pedagogy. So I talked to her a lot about it and got interested in it that way. And, of course, more and more articles appeared in the journals.

Robert: You mentioned WAC pedagogy and WAC theory. I know something about WAC pedagogy from the workshops we've had. Tell me what I don't know about WAC theory.

Sally: The whole idea behind the pedagogy is that we don't know what we think till we hear what we say, as the lady says in the play. And that it's through speech and through writing and through language activities that we are able to synthesize, to formulate our thoughts, to really learn what we know, and to say things to ourselves in a form we understand. It recognizes a basic fit between thinking and language--that we can't do one without the other--and between learning and language. When you use language in the service of learning a content area or a discipline, you are going to learn more efficiently and you are going to learn better. Is that theory?

Robert: That sounds like theory to me. I'm told you were instrumental in bringing WAC to Plymouth. How did that come about?

Sally: Back in '83, '84, '85 we were revising the general education program, and as part of that there was the question of what we would do with the skills component, particularly composition. Some people said we ought to have two semesters of composition. Or we ought to have eight semesters of composition. Basically, people thought it was the English Department's problem and that if we just had more and more and more composition courses, people would get to be better writers, which I think has yet to be proven. But at any rate even if it had been proven, we were not in any position financially at that time to offer more than one semester of composition. WAC offered what I considered to be a better alternative. So I kept

banging away on that concept in the General Education Committee.

Finally we modeled the requirement in writing skills after existing programs elsewhere that have a required composition course for everybody followed by writing courses in the discipline, so that students would learn the conventions and the kinds of writing their own particular disciplines would require. We call that the W course model. It became part of the new general education program.

I had heard that the WAC Task Force was created at the same time as the W course model, and I knew that Mary-Lou Hinman had been its first chair or coordinator. Mary-Lou, in fact, had told me that her own introduction to WAC had come when Sally called her and invited her to be a part of that group. She also told me that the Task Force had been given two initial charges: 1) to read the literature and learn what the Writing Across the Curriculum movement was all about and, 2) to survey the faculty. I asked Mary-Lou to tell me what the survey revealed.

Mary-Lou: It revealed a real faculty interest in the writing of their students. Over half the faculty returned the survey even though we sent it out at the worst possible time, near the end of the fall semester. We asked faculty, "What role does writing play in your classes?" Almost every person circled "important" or "very important." And for "You view writing as?" everybody checked "a method of testing knowledge," but they also checked "a learning process." When we asked them what kinds of writing assignments they used, however, the assignments didn't match their view of writing as a learning process.

Robert: I see. Did they include just very formal things?

Mary-Lou: Yes, mostly essays, examinations, reports, and research papers. A few listed other interesting writing

assignments, but by-and-large faculty listed standard writing requirements. And when we asked them what kinds of writing assignments had been successful in their courses, essays or research papers were the ones they listed most, although many acknowledged there weren't many that had been very successful. Hardly anyone used ungraded writing assignments. When we asked about problems in student writing, they focused on spelling.

Robert: Why spelling?

Mary-Lou: I've discovered through my involvement in the WAC program, that instructors who are frustrated with student writing notice obvious things. For example, students don't use possessives anymore; they misspell; "women" is used both for the singular and the plural. Those obvious mistakes everyone notices and can address. They also know students aren't writing very well, but it's harder to identify structural problems so they focus on mechanics and spelling.

In the beginning the Task Force had lots of discussions about mechanics. Some people thought the Writing Across the Curriculum Program was meant to insure that students could spell and punctuate. In response we did what in hindsight was counterproductive. We started talking about the Reading/Writing Lab as a place where people could send students who had mechanical problems, so that they didn't have to deal with them themselves. We essentially were saying, "Here's the solution to those problems, now let's move on to other things." Now we understand that the Reading/Writing Center got labeled as a place for remedial students only, and it has taken a long time to change that perception.

Robert: Tell me more about the survey.

Mary-Lou: The answers to all of the questions were obviously the answers of a teaching faculty who were interested in their students, which was heartening to us all, but there was also an underlying despair there. I remember one

response vividly, "Why are you even bothering with this survey? Plymouth is a Burger King kind of institution. We're here to flip hamburgers. So why don't you just give up and pass the ketchup." Others voiced their frustrations more nicely, but an attitude existed that not much could be done, that it was too big a job to ever be accomplished.

We knew we had to reeducate faculty to view writing differently, but we also knew we had to pay attention to the despair. We hoped that Toby Fulwiler would show us the way.

Mary-Lou emphasized that although there was that despair among some faculty, it was faculty concern that was the motivation behind the whole WAC program. Just as the new General Education program came from the faculty, so had the WAC Task Force. I began to see as I talked to her that a key element to the success of the program had always been that it developed in response to what the faculty wanted.

And WAC succeeded at Plymouth, I learned, only because Mary-Lou, Sally, and other faculty fought for it. Mary-Lou told of the difficulty she had persuading then Dean George Bates to pay the fee Toby Fulwiler was commanding to run workshops back in 1986. "I had a terrible time getting the money," she said. "Dean Bates said he was sure we could get someone cheaper, and I talked long and hard before he finally said, 'Okay, but just this once.' We planned to run our own workshops after this anyway, so I agreed."

She also told me that after the first Fulwiler visit she and other Task Force members took the workshop evaluations to President Farrell and argued the program be given its own funding. They found him to be supportive, but I heard what Mary-Lou was telling me. This program came from the faculty; it responds to the faculty.

It was obvious that the first Fulwiler workshop had been extremely successful, and had propelled the program's early development. I asked Mary-Lou to tell me why.

Mary-Lou: We had a very interesting and interested group of respected faculty that first time. When they got through with the three-day workshop and said, "This experience is worthwhile; for the first time faculty sat down and talked together about teaching, learning, and writing," we knew other people would come.

And Fulwiler showed us exactly how to set up a workshop. I have said this over and over again, if I had been left to my own devices, I would have done everything wrong. I never would have done what he did.

Robert: What did he do that you would have done wrong?

Mary-Lou: I would never have developed the kind of hands-on workshop Toby presented, where participants completed freewriting activities which examined the writing process. Faculty answered questions like "What makes writing hard?" and "What makes writing easier?" I would have instead tried to lay the foundation for WAC theory. I would have had a much more structured kind of program, and, of course, it would have bombed.

His model workshop also placed people in group activities where they brainstormed, composed, and edited each other's work and where they could talk to one another. It became possible to know people from other disciplines. For me that was rewarding. I was new and I listened to the participants and thought, "God, they are wonderful."

Robert: And did Fulwiler help alleviate that despair you described?

Mary-Lou: Yes. Some people came because they thought they *should* come to the first workshop, and then they were converted. I don't know if we ever got the person who wrote the Burger King entry to come, and I know some despair about student writing still exists. But, on the whole, people who have come to the faculty training workshops

have been enthusiastic about what they've learned. They have successfully incorporated freewriting and brainstorming activities and process writing into their classrooms. Many have commented that they have better classroom discussions and receive better essays as a result.

Using the workshop format Toby Fulwiler had modeled, members of the Task Force began offering faculty training workshops once or twice a year. Presently over 60 percent of the faculty have attended one of these. The Task Force has also sponsored brown-bag discussions, follow-up workshops, and reading/writing meetings for those who have already been trained. Fulwiler has returned every third year to lead follow-up sessions and advise the Task Force on the next steps for the program. When Fulwiler returned the first time, Mary-Lou told me, "He listened to people describe writing activities and assignments they had successfully incorporated into their course, and he said, 'Share your experiences. Let people know what you're doing,'" and this journal was born. I asked Sally how she accounted for all this success.

Sally: Well, I think a lot of it was Toby Fulwiler's charisma. Going through that workshop for the first time, as one colleague says, is a conversion experience. I think that has a lot to do with it. And really we shouldn't sell our faculty short. I think we've got a faculty who really wants to make writing work for students.

Mary-Lou, too, has been impressed with the faculty commitment to the program and told me that people from other institutions, whom she meets at conferences, are often amazed by the level of participation we've had on this campus. The program, of course, will succeed only with faculty support. It became apparent that even the charisma of Toby Fulwiler would take us only so far. To maintain

faculty support, the program would have to produce results.

Toby, of course, knew this too. When he made his first return visit to Plymouth--this would be spring of 1989--he told the Task Force it was time to assess how the program was working. Mary-Lou and Dennise Bartelo, assisted by the rest of the Task Force, sent questionnaires to all faculty members who had been trained one or more years earlier. They followed up the questionnaire with individual interviews with all 88 respondents. I asked Mary-Lou to tell me some of what was learned from that assessment.

Mary-Lou: Well, again with some exceptions--I remember one person saying, "You know, you didn't invent writing"--mostly people who had used the techniques had found their classrooms were much better places because of it. They especially liked using freewriting and journals, although in the early going they objected to the fact that lots of students had many journals to do. They had real enthusiasm for the program because they saw it as a way of faculty getting together and talking about teaching and ways of allowing students to learn more and better.

We also heard that a number of faculty had redesigned workshop activities to their own purposes: journals, logs, peer groups, collaborative writing, and process-oriented assignments had taken discipline-specific form in biology, psychology, history, marketing, and math classes. We discovered we had to work much harder at promoting the Reading/Writing Center, at reminding faculty about its possibilities. The people we talked to liked the publications, particularly the articles in *The Clock* written by people from the Reading/Writing Center.

Most importantly we saw a shift in how faculty viewed writing. Whereas before they said they saw writing as a learning process, yet didn't give process assignments,

now they saw the connection between process writing and student learning in their classes. That was the biggest shift of all.

Robert: The initial survey you took revealed considerable concern about student writing. When you surveyed this group a few years later you must have asked them whether they had seen an improvement. What did they say?

Mary-Lou: It ranged from "Yes, student writing is getting much better," to "I don't see any difference." We discovered, however, that most faculty don't include any questions about writing on their course evaluations, so they have no idea how students see this part of the course unless students walk in and say something about it.

In part because of that discovery, the next year the Task Force decided it was time to assess students' attitudes toward writing. To accomplish this Mary-Lou and Dennise developed an integrative course in which they taught a group of students WAC theory and ethnographic research and then set them to work interviewing other students. The eight students in the course developed their own inventory of questions and interviewed 100 seniors chosen to represent all the different majors. Mary-Lou summarized what the seniors had to say.

Mary-Lou: We asked whether their attitude toward writing had changed and got some interesting information. A number of students said yes, their attitude toward writing had changed. They thought they were better at it, and the more they wrote the better they seemed to feel about it. Other students were terrified to leave Plymouth; they were scared about their writing skills.

One theme that emerged from the interviews, Mary-Lou told me, was that many students wanted more writing assignments. Some of those interviewed claimed to have

done very little writing in their major courses. Mary-Lou and Dennise felt in some cases the students may have been thinking only of formal writing and have disregarded the kinds of informal writing WAC also encourages. Mary-Lou continued.

Mary-Lou: When we asked the seniors what makes writing hard and what makes it easier, they mentioned predictable obstacles. They didn't know what the faculty person wanted. The assignment wasn't written down. Oftentimes the person just said, "Write a paper." It was difficult to get started, to get motivated, and to find a quiet place to work. When we asked them about giving advice to professors, they asked for clear guidelines, for their work to be read in draft, for comments on their papers negative or positive, for relevant topics and materials; they also asked to see their professors' writing.

Then we asked what piece of writing they were most proud of, and mostly they were proud of work that had stretched them. It was usually something that they had worked hard at, a particularly long or difficult assignment.

So out of this interviewing process the two things that astounded us were first, that students wanted more writing and second, that they really liked to be pushed.

At the time I interviewed Mary-Lou, I had just visited Bob Garlitz's Composition class and discussed with that group, most of whom were first-year students, the writing experiences they were having in all their courses. I was struck by how similar the kinds of things they said were to what the seniors in the student assessment had said. The first-year students, too, seemed to welcome writing assignments, wanted more, and wanted their instructors to respond to their writing in ways that would help them improve.

By now I had a pretty good grasp of the history of the program. I also asked each of my predecessors to comment on where we are now and where we are going. Mary-Lou gave me some specific advice. She told me to make sure we keep evaluating everything we do; assessment becomes important in convincing new administrators to continue funding the program. But she advised that even more important is to remind the faculty that although administrative support is helpful, ownership of this program continues to reside with the faculty.

Sally answered the question in a more general way.

Sally: I guess if we were just going to say what we've got right now, what we've got is a group of maybe 40 deeply committed faculty who show up for workshops and are really interested in it. It sounds as if a lot of writing is happening in general education courses, and every department has at least one W course. Fulwiler tells us that we're way out front compared with just about anybody in the country, in terms of the writing courses we require, faculty participation, and administrative support.

What does WAC do for people? Well, I would observe that I think it eliminates fear if it's used properly. People begin to see that writing is really their friend. It used to be that writing was used to punish people. If you did something bad you had to write an essay about it or you had to write a thousand times that you wouldn't do this anymore. That was a terrible thing. It just reinforced a lot of insecurities that people had about writing anyway. I think that WAC can get people away from those feelings and make them more confident as writers and as learners.

Whether you're just doing routine writing, or whether you're doing formal writing, or writing poetry, you have to feel that what's inside you is worth expressing. You need to learn that it's even worthwhile looking at what's inside and that it's important to look at it and keep it

straight in a journal or whatever. Faculty and students are much more willing to see that now, much more willing to learn that.

Mary-Lou and Sally helped me understand where the WAC program came from and where it is. They each gave me a bit of advice about where to go from here. Try to keep the program funded. Provide more support for part-time people. Get new people involved in the program as soon as possible. Give faculty who teach W courses support and attention. But neither of them could tell me just where the program is going. I think I know why. I think it is because that is going to depend on where we, the faculty, want it to go, just as it has every step the past eight years. I learned that as WAC coordinator the best thing I can do is to listen, listen to the faculty and also to the students—they seem to have some interest in all of this, too, and some interesting things to say.

Aphorisms for a Writer

by

Joe Monninger

The following aphorisms have two sources, one noble, the other less so. On the noble side, I have modeled these Writing Tips, as I call them, on *The Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius. *The Meditations* has long been a favorite book of mine. I consult it often and, apart from the wisdom I invariably receive, I marvel at the simplicity of its form and style. It is short and to the point. If the following aphorisms are successful, it is in no small measure due to the voice I borrowed from *The Meditations*.

The less noble source has to do with age and the rather overwhelming parade of students I face as an instructor. Each year twenty to fifty students pass through my classes, many of them eager to find out how to get an agent, where to send a story, an essay, or an article. They also need to know how to construct dialogue, where to break for exposition, how to avoid clichés. These aphorisms are, on one hand, a way to head them off at the pass. I hand out this list at the beginning of each class, knowing full well that few students will refer to them. Over the course of the semester, however, many of them find that the list is more useful than they first thought. It provides a "how-to" in some instances, and in other instances simply points them in a new, more serious direction. It reminds them that people have struggled with writing for centuries, and, I hope, makes them feel less alone at the computer keyboard.

Finally, the list has provided me with an opportunity to write down, in a haphazard way, notes and ideas I

have about writing. It prevents me from forgetting to mention something that might be useful to a student. It deliberately employs a shotgun approach, because it's impossible for me to know what will strike one student and help her or him in writing a short story, or even in contemplating a writing career. Originally the list included eighty items. Now, after two years, the list is approaching three hundred bits of advice, suggestions, and admonitions. Here are one hundred.

The rest of the list is included on the R:½ file in Frost House under my name. Students are free to go and see any revisions or additions whenever they like.

1. Write regularly. Write every day, if possible. You wouldn't expect to improve on the piano without practicing. The more you write, the better you become.
2. Learn to count words, especially in the beginning. Hold yourself to a certain number of words per day. Jack London was said to have written 1,000 a day. Stephen King writes 2,000. Don't fool yourself by writing letters, postcards, and shopping lists. Words count only if applied to stories, novels, or essays.
3. Don't pretend you must be inspired to write. Inspiration, Muses, et. al., are the inventions of people who have never written. You can be inspired, it's true, but the inspiration will probably come from what you are writing that day. For example, you may be stuck in a story when, presto, the inspiration comes. You suddenly know how to solve the problem. Entire story ideas do not generally come in flashes. Indeed, you may need to mistrust story ideas that come too quickly.
4. Write fiction and non-fiction if you are able to do both. One is not a higher calling. Non-fiction, in almost all cases, pays better.

5. Writing regularly will inform you what your voice might be--you will know your range and pitch. It will also allow you to switch voices, much like an actor switching something deliberately for a new role. In short, you will come to be in writing shape.
6. Read everything you can get your hands on. Read the classics, read your contemporaries, read non-fiction, read books about bees, dogs, whales. Become a magpie for small bits of information.
7. Decide whether you want to mention current products in your fiction. It seems to be in vogue at present to mention, for instance, the girl going to a prom wore a Laura Ashley gown. Fair enough. But does everyone know what a Laura Ashley gown looks like? What it represents? What comment it makes about the character? How about in ten years? Twenty years?
8. Ask yourself what you like to read and then ask yourself if you'd like to read what you're writing. Be honest.
9. "The contemporary American writer is in no way a part of the social and political scene. He is therefore not muzzled, for no one fears his bite; nor is he called upon to compose. Whatever work he does must proceed from a reckless inner need. The world does not beckon, nor does it greatly reward. This is not a boast or complaint. It is a fact. Serious writing must nowadays be written for the sake of the art. The condition I describe is not extraordinary. Certain scientists, philosophers, historians, and many mathematicians do the same, advancing their causes as they can. One must be satisfied with that."
--William Gass
10. Decide, as Mr. Gass has apparently decided, what you intend to do about the non-specific third person pronoun. Him, her, one?

11. Ask yourself as you read a writer you admire: how did she or he do that? How did he or she handle time? Point of view? Take the pieces apart and learn the tricks inside.
12. Be prepared to have some of the oddest reactions to your work come from those closest to you. I don't know why this is true, but it is.
13. When writing a dramatic scene, do not, under most circumstances, go into exposition to explain something that happened in the past. Stay with the scene. Pick another place for exposition.
14. Be careful of adverbial endings when writing dialogue. "Give me my ring!" she said pleadingly. "I shall not!" he answered unbendingly. In general, dialogue should be written with simple he said/she saids. A friend who writes says the "he said/she saids in a narrative should be like the white lines at the side of a country road. You notice them only when you need them."
15. Another point about using adverbial endings in dialogue. Ask yourself if you aren't using the -ly endings in attempt to add character to a character. If you have a fellow in jodhpurs replying "jauntily," then he better be jaunty in a hundred ways besides how he speaks. Don't rely on adverbial endings to make the reader see the mood of the conversation. The mood should be clear from tone, implication, and precise wording.
16. When writing dialogue, be sure to give movement to the speakers. "Business" is the theater term for it. Don't have them standing or sitting woodenly speaking to one another. Movement while speaking can be an excellent way to give depth to a character.
17. Good people write bad things. The reverse is also true.

18. If you can find one person who will give you an honest and frank reaction to your writing, you are a lucky duck.
19. Ask yourself repeatedly how do things look, how do they smell, how do they feel?
20. You do not have to know how a story will end in order to begin one. More often than not, writers write to find out what's going on themselves. If you're not intrigued by the story's ending, why should anyone else be?
21. Truman Capote wrote the end of his novels and stories, then figured out how the characters arrived there.
22. I find it helpful, when trying to begin a new work, to write as many as three hundred first paragraphs. That may sound like an exaggeration, but I assure you it isn't. The initial sentences of a novel, for example, establish tone, narration, point of view, sex and age of narrator, geographical location, and so on. You cannot spend too much time making a solid beginning.
23. A short anecdote: A man sat with his female lover on his lap when his wife entered the room. His wife said, "Jeffery, I'm surprised at you!" Whereupon, Jeffery answered: "No, my dear, I am surprised, you are amazed." I use this story to illustrate the various nuances of words. (If you don't get the point of the example above, or if you don't know the genuine meaning of "surprise," you should.) Know what a word means, then be precise in your wording. In the simplest sense, ask yourself: Did the character step, creep, hop, skip, or jump across the braided carpet? On a more complex note, study words to discover their true meanings. To use "since" as a coordinating conjunction, when you actually mean "because," is laziness. ("Since" infers a time consideration, not a

- causality.) Understand that words have meanings, implied and otherwise, which you must take into account if your prose is to be powerful.
24. Be precise, also, in your description and understanding of a technique or function. For instance, I once wrote that a character fixed his arrow to the bow string, then let it go. In describing the action in such a manner, I proved myself an amateur and lost authority with the reader. Properly described, the character should have "knocked" his arrow--the correct way to fix an arrow to a bow string, as every archer (and less lazy writers) know.
 25. Make yourself finish the projects you begin. It's important to learn how to end something as well as to begin it.
 26. Remember Dickens when describing a character. He frequently exaggerated one feature of the character, which made it easier for the reader to recall the character when he was reintroduced later in the narrative. Although you may not wish to exaggerate to the degree Dickens did, it's nevertheless something to keep in mind.
 27. Action scenes generally require shorter sentences, choppiest paragraphs.
 28. Be generous to other writers. Every writer faces criticism and, more painful, indifference. Why gossip or grind someone's writing into the mud? If you don't like his or her writing, fine. Remember, however, that somewhere someone might like it a great deal. If it gives that reader a few hours satisfaction, is that such a deplorable thing?
 29. The same thing goes for commercial writing. Be very careful about looking down your nose at commercial writing. First, ask yourself if you can do better. Second, ask yourself where is the harm in it? Remember, commercial writing, along with

- calendars, Garfield books, and so on, provides the money for some publishing houses to publish serious fiction.
30. Always show your work in as near perfect form as you can get it. Don't expect to be allowed to look over the shoulder of the reader and say, "Oh, I intended to change that." It won't fly.
 31. If you confuse a reader, he or she is lost and will have to back up to figure out what is going on. Once that occurs, you no longer have the reader's confidence. Once you no longer have the reader's confidence, you no longer have a reader.
 32. "Write a dream, lose a reader."--Doris Lessing. Dreams are seldom interesting to anyone but the dreamer.
 33. Read your work aloud. You'll hear things you can't see by simply reading your work silently. If you can get someone to listen, all the better.
 34. Just a word on an American myth. Drinking, drugs, etc. will not enhance your prose style. It may be romantic to think it, but it just isn't so.
 35. On the same point: If you think Poe was a drunk and Lewis Carroll a drug addict, you never spent much time at a writing table. It's a wonderful protective device to fashion yourself too drunk, too pained, too sensitive to write. Stop trying to build a romance around yourself and write.
 36. In some respects, at least, treat writing as a job. If you intend to do it seriously, you must punch in on time, get to the table, allow yourself few vacations. Time is your ally or enemy, depending on how you treat it.
 37. The average published writer in America earns less than \$5,000 a year.
 38. Do you buy books? How do you expect authors to live if you don't? When you take a book out of a

- library, at least a book written by a living author, you've deprived that writer of his or her livelihood.
39. Pay attention to your manuscripts. Do they look as clean and neat as possible? They represent all your work and labor. Make them presentable, perhaps even things of beauty in and of themselves.
40. "Style is the man himself."--George-Louis De Buffon 1707-1788.
41. When someone gives you a piece of writing, be prompt and even-handed in your response. Remember what it is like to wait for a reaction from someone else. If you don't have the time to read a manuscript, say so before you receive it. Do not accept it, then allow it to sit around untouched. If you begin to read it and hate it...tough luck. You must read it once you accept it.
42. Pay yourself first. Write your own material first. Write it before balancing the checkbook, before writing a letter to a friend, before shoveling snow.
43. Some people find it helpful to listen to music before, during, or after they write. Steinbeck apparently listened to a washing machine for certain cadences of *The Grapes of Wrath*.
44. Get rid of your TV. It consumes enormous blocks of time better devoted to writing or reading.
45. Examine your own writing preferences--time of day, with coffee, without coffee, with chewing gum, etc.--then be constant in your efforts.
46. Train yourself, as a journalist must, to write under various conditions. The world is hardly ever quiet and calm. People slam doors, children cry, and spouses shout and want you to join them for dinner. You have to write through it and around it.
47. Remember the writing life is exactly that: a life. It will go on a long time. Pace yourself. Be patient with yourself. Judge your success in small

- increments, and only occasionally in an overall assessment.
48. Putting the conversation within the paragraph, as Joseph Conrad was fond of doing, makes it difficult for a reader to plow through the text. You may want that effect. It worked for Conrad.
 49. Conversation, when handled properly, can be an effective way to introduce exposition. One character can say to another, "Is that why you returned from France so soon?" It clues the reader in that one character returned from France early, without the author having to tell his audience directly. Watch for this technique. Poor writers are clumsy at it; good writers are smooth.
 50. If you are inclined to cut something from your work, chances are you should.
 51. Learn the rules of punctuation and grammar. A carpenter must know how to use a hammer in order to build a house.
 52. Is there a part of your day which is exclusively yours? Morning? Night? If it doesn't already exist, you may have to make a time of your own.
 53. You will probably want to stay up with several publications. *Writer's Market*, *Writer's Digest*, *AWP*, *LMP*, and so on. All these publications remind you of contests, places to contribute, and will keep you involved in your profession.
 54. Subscriptions to magazines are usually tax deductible. If you're serious about writing for money, learn the tax rules. Keep a record of your purchases and expenses. Be regular in this and you will save yourself hassles with the IRS.
 55. If you write and keep your manuscripts in your desk drawer, don't be astonished if you don't get published.

56. What do you owe a writer whose book you've enjoyed? Isn't it fair to write him or her a letter in response? Write it care of the publisher. You would be amazed how even big name authors enjoy hearing an honest, warm reaction to their novels.
57. The *Paris Review* interviews are often inspiring. Writers talking about writing.
58. Don't be afraid to be playful. Describe a stomach ache as the feeling one gets from swallowing a cat covered in Crisco. Loosen up. Trust your inventiveness.
59. Provide images in your writing.
60. Think of what you are asking a reader to do when you ask him or her to read your work. Reading your work means he or she will ignore his or her own pleasure, his or her own work, his or her own relatives, in order to spend time with your book or story. The simple fact is that many working adults will not spend time with a book if it is about a depressed bag lady living in the sewers of Brooklyn. They don't want to read about that stuff, which is not to say you shouldn't write about it if you feel it's what you have to contribute to the world. Understand, however, how difficult it might be to get such a work published.
61. It is sometimes necessary to remind authors that publishing houses attempt to be a "for-profit" business.
62. Point of view is a never ending source of interest to writers. How do you tell a story? What's the best way inside it? How does a first person narrator describe him or herself? Point of view also seems to have national implications. (I know that sounds odd.) Think, for example, how naturally the Russians write in omniscient, while Americans seem to concentrate on closely observed third person.

63. You save yourself time if you learn to use a word processor. Read the "Merchandise Mart" section in your local newspaper. Ask at local schools for second hand computers. You can often get a deal on a used word processor. It doesn't need to be fancy. If you don't use one be prepared, in some cases, to spend as much as two or three months simply re-typing material.
64. Be careful, as you write, about reading authors whose style influences you. If you don't want Hemingway creeping into your prose, keep away from Hemingway.
65. If you are ever stuck in a serious fashion, feel you can't approach the keyboard, can't bring yourself to write, lower your expectations.
66. "A first draft is a discovery draft."--Donald Murray
67. Although shorter novels are currently in vogue, 60,000 words is generally the minimum length for a novel.
68. With the exception of the little magazines, the short story market is not nearly what it once was in this country. *The New Yorker*, *Atlantic Monthly*, *Playboy*, *Penthouse*, *Harper's*, *Yankee*, the ladies magazines, and a few more still publish short stories. Short stories are a noble form, and one that may be undergoing a revival right now, but they are difficult to publish. Little magazines, though they talk about respect for writers, often take months to respond. Slicks, big magazines, and international journals can take even longer. This is not meant to dissuade you from writing short stories. I am simply pointing out the difficulty of having a satisfactory relationship with a magazine.
69. My advice to all writers starting out: find an agent. If you've ever had anything published, xerox it, clip it to a cover letter, and approach agents in the same

manner you approach a job search. Hundreds of agents do business in New York and elsewhere and many of them are willing to take on a young writer. They don't have anything to lose except the time it takes to read your manuscript. Agents are, however, far more interested in novel manuscripts and non-fiction book length manuscripts than they are in short stories. Most agents represent authors' short stories only as a courtesy.

70. More words of advice about agents. 1) Not all agents are good or honest. Be careful. Remember, while a potential agent has many books to represent, you have only one novel every year or two. Check an agent with an established writer, ask to see a client list, find out if the agent is represented in London, California, etc. Most agents ask for a ten to fifteen percent cut on everything. If an agent wants more, something is fishy. 2) Out of courtesy to the agents who, in most cases are hard working, honest people with a genuine love of literature, don't approach them if you aren't serious about writing. You should have a good start on a manuscript or two, be writing regularly, have had at least some positive reactions to your work, before you approach an agent.
71. Beware if you go into writing to make money. Chances are you won't make much. It is easy to become infested with notions of the big kill--a book contract, movie contract, TV mini series and low-cal lunches at the Polo Club. Wonderful things happen, of course, but it is the rare occurrence. Also, you may start thinking your books are less than successful unless they earn a godzillion dollars. Accept your post at the keyboard. The rest is largely out of your control.

72. Most national magazines pay a dollar a word for non-fiction. Most national magazine non-fiction pieces are approximately 1,500 words.
73. Don't tell other people your story ideas. Keep them to yourself.
74. Don't ask people to read things unless you are sure you are willing to hear criticism. Also, be certain that a negative reaction will not kill your enthusiasm for the project.
75. "When one finds a natural style, one is amazed and delighted, for where one expected to see an author, one discovers a man."--Blaise Pascal 1623-1662
76. Occasionally it is better to stop short on a day's writing so you can pick up the next day that much easier. Your subconscious will work on the material overnight, or during the course of the day, so that when you return you have a different perspective.
77. I like to take a manuscript with me to a bar, or a park bench, and read it in unfamiliar surroundings. I don't know why this works, but it often allows me to "see" my own novel as something new.
78. If you are writing 1,000 words a day, you can write a novel in two months. Be steady and you'll be astonished at what you can accomplish.
79. Don't trick yourself into believing you'll write in the summer when you're at the beach house, or when you have a month's vacation at a ski resort...any future time when supposedly you will have peace and quiet. More often than not you arrive at the beach house, try to settle down to work, and find you're flabby and out of writing shape. Write all the time. Don't think someday everything is going to be perfect. Faulkner wrote *As I Lay Dying* in six weeks while working as a night watchman.
80. Be extremely conscious of time. You want to go to a dinner party, the movies, a ball game? Fine, but it is

- time you're not writing. Make any choices you like, but be aware you are making choices.
81. Is writing fun? I find it fun. Many people don't. The old line is that it's easy to find "having written" fun. If you write regularly, however, you may find it very much like jogging. If you don't do it, you miss it. Perhaps that's as close to fun as it gets.
82. Don't be amazed if you can't read your published work, or if your published work looks good in places, terrible in others, and generally disgusts you. Many authors find it painful to pick up one of their books after it's published. It's ironic that you can't appreciate your own books, but it seems to be a writer's fate.
83. Work to encourage literacy, library programs, book mobiles. If writing is a gift, and reading is a gift, work to share the wealth.
84. Consider recording your stories on a tape and exchanging them with a fellow writer or trusted critic. It can make a long drive pass quickly for the listener, and you will learn a great deal about your stories from recording them and playing them back.
85. Take some solace in this: If you love to write, you cannot not write. In other words, whether successful or not, the process is an abiding benefit. Writing can reveal a great deal to you about your own life.
86. Most writers must choose a second career. I read somewhere that the two secondary careers that produce the most novelists are journalism and homemaking--whatever homemaking means today.
87. Cliches are a scourge to any good writer. Recognize them in your own work and abolish them.
88. Be aware, too, that "cliched situations" also exist. The mid-life crisis executive who buys a motorcycle and runs off with his twenty-two-year-old paramour is an example.

89. "Three hours a day will produce as much as man ought to write." --Anthony Trollope 1815-1882
90. Many writers have this experience: He or she receives a rave review in the *Washington Post*, but then is guillotined in the *New York Times*. What does that say about the book, about criticism in general? A book means something to you, and that's as much as you can win in this world. Remember that only you had the pleasure of writing the novel.
91. It makes sense to keep yourself in fairly good physical shape if possible. Clean body, clean mind, etc.
92. Be current. Don't write about Johnny Carson on television late at night. Use Letterman or Whoopie Goldberg or whomever holds the late night throne. It is dangerously easy to get trapped in your past. For a long time I described women as wearing "Peter Pan" collars, when, in fact, no one had seen a genuine "Peter Pan" collar since the 1950s.
93. Along the same lines, learn the price of things. Don't say a gallon of gasoline costs seventy-three cents when the cost is much higher. Mucking up prices is an extremely rapid way to lose credibility with the reader.
94. Many writers stick to familiar occupations for their characters. As a result, we have a plethora of teachers, unemployed people attending funerals, and so on. Mark how rarely you read a novel wherein the character is solidly employed and employment solidly described. That's an unfortunate situation in American fiction.
95. Don't be afraid to trick yourself into sitting down at the writing table. For years I kept tropical fish for the sole purpose of getting me to the desk. I made certain I only fed them once a day, immediately after dinner. I sat in my chair and watched them eat, then figured, what the heck, I'm here, why don't I write? I

- got rid of the fish when I bought a computer. Now I play chess or some sort of space war, then gradually slip into writing.
96. "It's dogged as does it. It ain't thinking about it."--Anthony Trollop 1815-1882
 97. Get into the habit of thinking of stories. What makes a good story? Why might it be interesting? Whatever the new novelists pretend about the plot (hating it, discarding it, etc.), most of us read to see a story revealed. Tolstoy, I think, said literature is like peeping through a key hole.
 98. When describing a meal, describe it!
 99. Invent. Take a stab at it. Trust your instinct. If there is anything inspirational about writing, it is that sometimes you are better than you thought you could be.
 100. Rejection of your work is not rejection of you.

The Loneliness of the Long Distance Writer

or

Are There Pitfalls to Well-Designed Encouragement?

by

Leland E. Modesitt, Jr.

Which writing skills do students need? How effectively does the Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) program address those needs? In implementing the WAC program, to what degree are instructors responsible? As the philosopher Alfred North Whitehead observed, the questions overlooked most frequently are those fundamental assumptions behind our actions, the assumptions so basic that few if any have ever examined them. What are the "less examined" propositions tacitly assumed by the WAC program?

In this case, the first assumption might rest on asking what kind of writing students will be required to employ after their undergraduate experience, i.e., will they need a "professional" level of writing skill? Is the WAC program designed to provide such skills?

In addressing the effectiveness of WAC, perhaps we should not only address WAC techniques, but a basic assumption behind its implementation--that, if writing instructors find the "right" approach, they can provide virtually all of their students with considerably improved writing skills and the tools necessary for their post-graduate careers.

The Need for Writing Skills

Why do students need to learn writing skills? Forget the business about being better human beings or better communicators. Let's get down to basics. According to my colleagues who have been involved with the Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) program from the beginning, WAC consists of two basic and complementary approaches: (1) writing to learn and (2) learning to write.

These two approaches are interlinked. Certainly one cannot write even passably without learning, and the process of writing enhances learning. It's also been said that an idea does not exist unless it has been written down. Because words are logical tools, the mere process of attempting to codify an idea in ink requires logic, and the more clearly an idea is written, the greater the logic required.

As an instructor, I definitely use writing as a technique for enhancing learning, from the use of factsheets to the assignment of provocative journal topics in composition--or the use of freewriting and provocative essay topics in literature.

Unfortunately, however, even the use of writing to learn is greatly hampered by an inability or deficiency in writing skills. Yes, a student can begin to explore an idea, but a fuzzily expressed concept or proposition may not be a significant improvement over total ignorance--a little learning remains a dangerous thing, particularly if the writing to learn process inadvertently conveys to a student an exaggerated view of his actual abilities.

While, on the academic level, instructors may use WAC techniques for either writing to learn or learning to write--or both--once students leave their undergraduate studies, the vast majority of their writing requirements will be "professional." In its broadest sense, for the purposes of this article, I define "professional" as the ability to communicate with others in inked symbols for purposes beyond

our personal pleasures, gains in knowledge, desires, or emotional or spiritual releases.

Although what we or students do with our personal writing may grant us pleasure, joy, or release, presumably the ultimate goal of teaching writing (i.e., "learning to write") at a college or university is to enhance the professional writing abilities of our students. While language itself is a bridge between people, everyday speech does not rely merely on grammar, word choice, and word position, but also upon facial expression, intonation, inflection, body language, and immediate feedback. By comparison, writing must rely solely on the cold basics of word meanings, structure, and grammar, and therefore demands greater precision.

In the loose professional sense, writing is:

- a method for conveying information accurately and succinctly.
- an organizational or analytical tool.
- a basis for entertainment, such as scripts, screenplays, stories, or novels.

Therefore, by its nature, professional writing must meet the needs of its target audience. A fiction writer must entertain, provoke, or satisfy. Most fiction is purchased because the buyers seek pleasure and/or escape from their own world or life. An economist must convey economic information clearly. An accountant must explain the footnotes and the meaning of the numbers in the annual report.

Few if any target audiences care about the mental, physical, emotional, or spiritual state of the writer unless it detracts from the work, but they do care whether the writer has accomplished the goals of the work. Thus, in teaching writing we should continually get students to ask questions such as these: Does this paper convey information

accurately? Does this essay fully analyze the proposition? Does this description enlighten or entertain the reader?

Recently, the PSC WAC project and others across the country have suggested the need for improvement in writing techniques, and in adopting new processes, such as collaborative and cooperative learning, to interest students in the writing process. This "new wind" in writing instruction is based on a *de facto* assumption that older critical and confrontational methods--the sea of red ink turning a student's paper into a spider web of arcane notations--had failed in producing the writing skills necessary for a truly educated individual and in motivating students to improve their writing.

As part of its evaluations, the PSC WAC project even undertook a survey of student voices, which summarized and evaluated student concerns thus:

"Students advise their professors to recognize the value of journals, the collegiality of collaborative writing, and the benefits of presentations and research. They want to be presented with more interesting topics and need to have a clear understanding of what is expected of them."¹

At least some members of the PSC faculty seem to have adopted a similar set of values:

"Until then, there are plenty of other ways to make science fun and at the same time get students to become better writers."²

"As students build on and react to each other's ideas, they enter into a collaborative conversation

¹ "Student Voices on Writing at Plymouth State College," *PSC Journal on Writing Across the Curriculum*, 1992, Volume III, Number 2, page 34.

² Spencer, Larry, "The Inveterate Invertebrate Reporter," *PSC Journal of Writing Across the Curriculum*, 1992, Volume III, Number 2, page 46.

with other minds."³

The unwritten thesis underlying these comments appears to be "if we encourage these students through positive means and do whatever is necessary to keep them from being threatened and bored, then they will be motivated to improve their writing."

Fear has been defined as a poor pedagogical tool, but then so is bribery. Fear, at least, has the dubiously redeeming quality of being true-to-life. Seldom will a well-written presentation get the writer an immediate raise or bonus, but a poorly written one will result in definite negatives--from poor grades to poor evaluations or loss of job. Good written skills are *expected*, not rewarded, in the professional community.

One implication of the WAC project and the student concerns is an effort to avoid student boredom. I was bored in learning Latin grammar, and in writing and re-writing essays as a student. I also learned math and grammar through usage and repetition. Certain aspects of learning may always be boring, but boring or not, I am tired of students who were and are so bored that they still will not understand that you cannot join two sentences with a comma (without a conjunction). When I have attempted to explain any number of basic grammatical and structural problems, ranging from faulty subject-verb agreement, lack of parallelism, unreferenced or misreferenced pronouns, usage of words or concepts in improper context, or even the problem of comma-splicing sentences, I often run into the problem that many students do not know the basic building blocks of language--verbs, nouns, pronouns, prepositions, possessives, subjunctives, or even what either a sentence or a conjunction happens to be. It is difficult to

³ Peterson-González, Meg, "The Circle,": *PSC Journal on Writing Across the Curriculum*, 1992, Volume III, Number 2, page 55.

inject interest into basic grammar, and it is even more difficult to improve the writing of a student who does not understand the need for it. As do all my colleagues, I try. And although I have always attempted to make assignments interesting, the basic focus of my instruction has been on the need for students to master a particular point or skill, not primarily on entertaining them, nor on focusing on ways to make life and learning less threatening.

All learning is a threat. If we learn something, it must either add to or displace previous knowledge and opinions, thus modifying or threatening them. For this reason alone, scholars have been persecuted throughout history. As instructors, our job is to open new venues of knowledge and ways of thinking, and that means threatening some student values. Should we back away from such threats, or attempt to smooth them over?

For what purpose? Will such educational politicking teach better writing? Non-threatening techniques such as collaborative learning or circle discussions appear to improve student understanding and certainly increase student interest, but... the question remains. How useful are such tools in providing students with long-term skills? Personally, I have found the level of "skills transference" obtained by such practices low. That is, even after a discussion succeeds in improving logical understanding and knowledge of the subject at hand, when the same students are presented with an apparently different problem, which can be analyzed or handled by the same tools illustrated and discussed in an earlier collaborative exercise, few, if any, of the students seem able to either analyze the subject matter or improve their writing without, once again, being led through the process.

I use journals in teaching writing courses and find they are effective in encouraging most students to write. Only in a handful of cases, if that, however, are such journals useful in improving the quality of student writing.

The vast majority of journal entries fall far short of the goals of professional writing. Techniques such as circle discussions may well encourage students to share what they have written, but how does that sharing improve logic and writing?

A more senior faculty member suggested that I should allow a "greater diversity of opinion" in my classes. Exactly what will greater diversity of opinion accomplish? As indicated in an earlier *Journal* article,⁴ an informal survey revealed that one of the problems facing writing instructors, indeed most professors at the introductory level, is students' equation of opinion with fact.

The value of any opinion must be supported, by fact, example, or logic. Most students are just that--students who are presumably here to learn. While professors can always learn something from a class, any professor worth his or her salt should be able to provide knowledge and learning skills far more effectively than virtually any student, and since time is limited, students presumably should either be learning from the professor, working on some activity which is instructional, or putting what they have learned into practice to hone skills, in this case, writing.

Talking about writing, and even reading one's written works, is not the same as writing. As a professional writer, I love to talk about my writing, but talking doesn't get more writing done. For the most part, talking by either the instructor or the students doesn't get writing done, either.

A second problem with the adoption of less formal, less "threatening" classroom techniques and configurations is the message they can convey. As a colleague stated, "All this informality and student input give students the idea

⁴ "The Factsheet as a Device for Teaching Logical Writing," *PSC Journal of Writing Across the Curriculum*, 1991, Volume III, Number 1, page 20.

that their ideas are of equal value to mine." But are student ideas of equal value? Will treating them as such lead to better writing? Or merely an inflated opinion of inadequate writing?

Moreover, some aspects of writing are not matters of opinion. Rules of grammar exist as a necessity for standardization and clarity. Dangling modifiers, of which I see far too many, are not a matter of individual opinion or style, but of meaning. Unreferenced pronouns sow confusion, as do sentences without verbs. Writing by accepted standards is not a matter of opinion.

Nor is learning the craft of writing usually enjoyable or easy. And it is definitely not fun, especially for those students with deficient skills in grammar and organization or with various learning disabilities. Learning effective writing may be rewarding, useful, or interesting, but it is *work*. All the collaborative and collegial exercises will not change that.

While there is great talk these days about the "collaborative" workplace, there is also great confusion about what that really means. As a former government official responsible for producing collaborative written products (legislation, legislative reports, and testimony for a large federal agency), and as a former senior manager of the environmental team of a consulting firm, I understand and have been personally responsible for innumerable such collaborative efforts. The elements of such work are not *produced* collaboratively. Each section is the responsibility of an individual. The final work may be edited and critiqued by others, but at each stage responsibility falls on designated individuals. The final responsibility, of course, falls on the office director or team manager.

With this experience as a background, I have great concern that too great a focus on group support and sympathetic learning atmospheres may remove the understanding by students that each individual is responsible for his or her

written work. In the end virtually all good or great written work is the product of a single individual. While some authors have solicited and/or accepted input and criticism, the choice of words and the responsibility for those words was theirs.

Students taught to write primarily through positive reinforcement and collaborative methods, when faced with critical comments or accurate assessments of their work, may well respond as did one young student of mine--"But you didn't say anything nice about my paper."

I often receive, directly or indirectly, the message that faculty should be more encouraging and supportive. While I believe that I do encourage students, generally, for all the lip service paid by students and administrators to it, "encouragement" by itself leaves a great deal to be desired. What works, at least for me, is a combination of hard work, knowledge, expertise, personal example, and firm and challenging expectations of students. The encouragement may lift their spirits, but I have yet to see a student "encouraged" into handling a difficult or challenging piece of work. Encouraged to read a book or article perhaps... but not to analyze it or think about it.

Merely extending a "hot-house" protection of students through establishing more collegial or collaborative atmospheres could well delay student understanding of the requirements of professional writing. At what point should students be required to meet those requirements?

If an employer asks one of our former students for a memorandum on the effectiveness of a sales promotion campaign or for an individualized instructional program, the responsibility for such written work--and the rewards and penalties--fall on the individual.

Writing is, like marathon running, a solitary discipline, and unless such methods as collegial or collaborative efforts are clearly approached as *transitional* crutches, students will retain a misleading image of the discipline

necessary for success in writing for either graduate education or the real world.

Am I condemning all collaborative, cooperative, or innovative approaches out of hand? Hardly. I have cheerfully borrowed--or, perhaps more accurately, stolen--as many ideas as I thought useful, and the way I teach composition has changed dramatically over the past three years.

I do evaluate each idea or technique which others have suggested or I have investigated. The questions I pose when confronted with a possible change in my composition course are:

- Exactly how will this improve my course?
- How is it of greater value than what I now do?
- Will it make my students better writers *after* they have left the class?

The first two questions are obvious. The third is necessary because all too many students focus on solving the instructor rather than making permanent changes in their way of writing or even looking at the world. In effect, they look for the easiest way to meet instructional expectations.

Because change comes through stretching one's boundaries and confronting hard truths, I must continue to question whether too much collegiality and too many collaborative processes actually prepare students for life after college, or whether they simply aid students in postponing the inevitable collision with reality.

Behind the Continual Search for "Better" Writing Instruction

There is an overall philosophical question raised by this proliferation of collaborative, collegial, and non-threatening techniques. On whose shoulders' does the primary responsibility for a student's education fall?

suggest publicly that any student's intellectual accomplishments may be limited, or that, in the case of WAC, interest-building and non-confrontational techniques may be no better than older techniques in developing long-term writing skills.

Are new WAC techniques really better? What do we mean by better? Better at making classes easier for overworked professors, or more comforting because they create the illusion of progress? Better for students who want to write or better for those who have a limited desire to write? These questions should not be taken to indicate I believe that some magically predetermined percentage of students can never learn to improve their writing skills or that they are in some way intrinsically deficient, but to raise honestly the issue of what proportion of success we should expect--or perhaps how to define success in a more realistic fashion.

We have assumed almost automatically, not only in undertaking the implementation of Writing Across the Curriculum, but in insisting on composition courses themselves, that virtually all students can and should learn to write professionally, or at least at a "collegiate" level, but have we ever seriously questioned the validity of that unspoken assumption? Or do we continue to look for an ever more perfect system of teaching writing, endlessly seeking the end of the rainbow or the yellow brick road?

Research: The Private Pursuit of a Better Way

by Gerald Zinfon and Amy Warena

In two parts:

I. by Gerald Zinfon

II. by Amy Warena

The research paper comes on quickly in our fifteen week composition courses. Since the term paper will bring together and demonstrate the students' accumulated writing skills, I emphasize the need for the learners to begin phasing in their independence from me at the beginning of our work together. I announce the concept of student independence in my course description/syllabus the first time I meet in the classroom with them. My belief is that early on learners tend to hear more, though I repeat the idea throughout the semester. At first, some need lots of response, encouragement, and attention; they get it. As the course progresses and their practice of composing strategies (Prewriting-Writing-Rewriting-Editing) takes hold, their skills increase, their pride in their growing control becomes evident; student writers grin more and ask me to look less and less at a paper in process (before a completed rough draft). I begin to become happily obsolete to most. When that happens in a course, I feel that I've done my job.

Amy Warena's paper could have been written in any of our composition courses. She wrote the piece in my section, so I'll comment upon a few of the instructional strategies and attitudes that I believe can bring about writing competence and independence in our students a lot of the time. All of my first year composition classes become language communities, by degrees, accepting and

subscribing to two complementary notions: (1) language is at the center of all class activities, and (2) writing is a process of discovering meaning in experience and ideas through engagement in language: reading, speaking, listening, thinking and composing. Writing, engaged in as a process of discovery, enables a learner to explore personal, autobiographical experience, to reflect on that experience, and to place life's experiences into new perspectives. This in itself seems like a worthwhile writing and reflective activity. Socrates is my source. The strategies and competencies gained by the learner apply as well to explorations of the world of ideas. By the time our students arrive in our first year writing classes, they have lived at least eighteen years, and when they're given the opportunity and encouraged to examine those experiences in writing, the results are very often engaging, lively, encouraging, and rich with the details of felt experiences. The subject matter to be mined in the lives of the young through the writing process has produced some of the world's great literature. Some writing instructors are uncomfortable about the value of this, but I think it is the subject with which to begin. Joyce, Dickens, Capote, are just a few of my sources.

In our 90s environment, however, since more than the written expression of life's reflections is expected of individuals in the adult world of "getting and spending," we (students and/or instructors) cannot dwell too long on writing based exclusively on our students' personal pasts, as interesting and fruitful as those reflections may be. Felt experience, remembered, engaged in as a process of discovering, understanding, and of writing one's personal history, begins the semester-long practice of the learner moving out from him or herself as the center. The process that student-writers move through, as they explore some experience from their personal histories, provides the practice in the skills of composing, and it prepares them to move outward increasingly in each subsequent paper. At

the other end of the teaching-learning process of a semester in a composition class, the term paper (or research paper) provides the opportunity for students to strut their accumulated skills.

Amy Warendas's paper is an example of the independence, the quality of mind, and the originality that become evident when the strategies--students' and my own--work. Amy came to my composition section well-prepared, and her work on the bi-weekly, four-page papers, from very early on, needed just little encouraging, editing and rewriting nudges. Based on responses to her process drafts, Amy turned in carefully rewritten, edited, polished, final drafts. By the time I saw her draft-in-process of her term paper, I began seeing it as a potentially fine paper for the WAC Journal. Amy's writing was not only quite competent, but the topic is scholarly, intriguing, fresh and timely: in short, her paper was more than a first year student's well-prepared paper fulfilling a course requirement. Amy had discovered a subject through her research in which she became fully involved. She had begun her research on "Sexism in the English Language," and reflects:

I began researching this topic, and it quickly became evident that the topic was far too broad. The more reading I did, the more narrow my field became. I eventually ended up with "the use of the singular in the English Language." Even this was far larger than I imagined, and I found myself having to cut out a lot of the information I had collected. (From Amy's "Final" writing exercise in which students describe their research processes.)

Amy's written product of her research, along with her mature, writer's attitude, reveals how the procedure is

supposed to work! From the first class assignment to the assignment of the term paper, the drafting of each paper repeats the practice of students' Prewriting-Writing-Rewriting-Editing as stages in the writing process. The emphasis in each new four-page piece encourages a student to develop increased awareness of his or her most efficient engagement in the process (some need more time in the prewriting or rewriting stage, while others may need more time writing or editing). The bi-weekly deadline for drafts is a class standard. While the student piece is in process in and outside of class, moreover, a widely diverse variety of student-composing processes becomes evident. The writers have the process strategy in mind now, but they work within it in their own way at varied paces. The need for instructor flexibility becomes part of that process. The instructor becomes the writing coach! The writing coach looks at a piece and encourages the further development of the positive parts in a paper while it is in process.

The term paper process offers additional practice in developing competencies, and following the excellent, two-session library instruction, provided by our library staff, the students and the instructor discuss the steps in preparing their research papers. We negotiate reasonable time frames and deadlines for each step based upon the degree of complexity and the estimated amount of time that seems required for carrying out the specific step successfully. We begin the term paper process around week eight of the semester. Armed with a calendar, we talk about each stage and the amount of time it will require, and we set a deadline date for the submission of each completed task. For example, an item on the list, such as Preliminary Reading Completed and Topic Declared should require much less time than a task such as Notetaking Completed and Tentative Thesis Declared, so we agree on the amount of time for these and all other steps. All students have a copy of the term paper process schedule of tasks, and all fill in the

deadline dates that we have agreed upon. During the process, I begin each class by asking for questions from the students on any problems they're having, and I instruct them in methods for preparing the currently pertinent task or the one to follow. The work of the researchers is mostly carried on outside of class time, so while the steps are being worked upon, we continue writing, but now the papers are two-page pieces that feature various competencies of organizing or presenting information. For example, this is a perfect time to discuss and have students practice papers that develop by process analysis or are arranged in an inductive or deductive order, comparison-contrast, definition. The papers are short, the subject is still language, and as mentioned, students can--and often do--incorporate the work of these papers into their research papers! From the exploratory reading in the library (Prewriting) to the final touches on the draft (Rewriting and Editing), the instructor responds with suggestions through each stage that is assigned to the students.

Once again, the process-writing instructor is not unlike the athletic coach running drills on the ice rink or the baseball field. The coach insists upon and assists in the practice that will bring about the polished performance. If this coach concept offends, however, try thinking of yourself as a great classical conductor interpreting symphonic musical charts, and, as you respond to the emerging, diverse efforts of the individual instrumentalists in each section of the orchestra as they attempt to perform well on the instrument, remember that your conducting need only facilitate and guide the artist's effort to express his or her part in the piece. The paper is the individual's concerto.

Those concerti are the playing out of the students' chosen topics; the term paper is a long way intellectually from those early, autobiographical topics, though not more important--simply different. The writing process is the same, though students are encouraged to move outward

through the research process and to express increased perceptions and written expression of their emerging view of their inherited world. The topics, as mentioned, always evolve out of language dynamics as the center and informing wisdom of all things thought and expressed in the semester! Following are some of the subjects that other members of Amy's section chose to explore, to think about, and to write about in their final, ten page papers:

Sexism in the English Language
 Slang: Beginnings, Motives, Place
 The Language of Prejudice
 The Aims and Nature of Propaganda
 Sign Language
 Motivational Language

The students choose their topics based upon their semester's engagement with allied topics in our reader and language texts, *Language Awareness*, Eschholz and others, and *Language in Thought and Action*, Hayakawa. For manuscript form, style, and MLA documentation, we use Hacker's *A Writer's Reference*. Our discussions focus on the incredibly varied involvement of the English language in all we do as thinking--and acting--individuals in a human community. The topics from the Eschholz reader, in the section titled, "Language Awareness" in chapter 1, begin with an excerpt from *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* and go to an essay on the history of English (Paul Roberts), an Edwin Newman complaint about misuse of our language, to the *noise* of much contemporary language (Hall & Hall). In addition, there is a grouping of essays on the language of advertising, almost all about how not to get taken (defensive analysis of tricky ad language). Other chapters include the essays "Media and Language;" "Jargon, Jargon, Jargon;" "What's In a Name?;" "Prejudice and Language;" "Using Language Responsibly." We also read and discuss the sections from the Hayakawa text, *Language in Thought and Action* as the material becomes pertinent: for

example, we talk about the distinctions among the language of *reports*, *inferences* and *judgments* during the first few writing assignments. The section on various kinds and intentions of *euphemisms* or a discussion of *snarl* words and *purr* words comes a bit later. This text describes and illustrates, as it promises in the book's title, language as we think and act with it. Some sections in Hayakawa's fine book require little or no class discussion or any commentary from me, so I assign those chapters at various times in the semester simply as background, informative reading in language.

Throughout the semester, as we move toward the research paper, I encourage students to take note of topics that are especially interesting as we read and discuss and write about them. A topic that is special to a writer, I suggest, is more likely to involve the writer in the process of further discoveries about the subject, and more likely to produce a stronger piece. Most students find a subject that is especially interesting to them, and by the time we get to the research paper, a student has already written at least one four-page paper on the topic. That paper is not researched, but it is a two-week response-based essay expressing the student's view on the subject. The paper may also be the short, two-page "rhetorical" exercise papers that students write as practice pieces using some organizing or other strategy of composition. The bonus for the student who manages early to choose a subject from the reading or writing or discussions is that I encourage the revised use of that material as part of the assigned term paper. Many take advantage of this. Again, in so doing, some discover new insights in the process: the topic is too broad; the topic needs more; the original thesis needs narrowing, or broadening, or total revision--in short, the writer continues to make discoveries concerning his or her subject and continues to find compositional strategies that help to express it competently. Before we begin to follow the steps in the

preparation of reports on research, I insist that we begin the research process with what I hope is a valid and sensible point of mutual departure. Many first-year students view the term paper as an instructor-devised method of making their lives miserable, and of doing so when there is precious little time left in a semester to study for finals in other courses. I try to address this problem in two ways: the first is by discussing the concept of progress through research; the second is to establish a time schedule, agreed upon by both my students and myself. The discussion of the value of research is my effort to convince students that there is value to be gained for the time spent upon careful, well-motivated exploration of a topic: in science, in medicine, in aerodynamics, in space, and for them, in language! I try to come up with anecdotes that reflect research breakthroughs, the forward march in our human efforts to live our lives in pure, pain-free pleasure. The point is to reveal value received for effort expended. At this point in the semester, I repeat, for instance, that the only difference between any student in this class and a published writer may be that the published writer explores a subject and refines his or her discoveries into a careful, polished, valid, professional expression of the topic. I tell them that they can do as well if they are willing to go to the lengths necessary, and I say it because I believe it!* I tell the students before they embark upon the voyage, that any past padded, vague, puffy platitudes on research projects can be forgiven but cannot be repeated, at least not this semester! But I search for the words that will convince them and motivate the students to try their own breakthroughs! Some do.

At the beginning of this semester, I was going up the stairwell in Hyde, headed for the Computer Center. I heard my name called, quietly. It was Amy, and she was working on a few changes for the proposed publication of her paper. After we greeted each other, Amy smiled and asked, "Are you going to look at this final editing, or, am I

on my own?" I smiled and told her that if she needed me that she could call me. I repeated my number twice. She didn't write it down on anything. And she never called.

*Ken Preston, now a PSC senior, began publishing articles in his first year during the Composition 120 class. During Winterim '93 Poetry Workshop, Ken told us (our class) that his articles on hunting and other interests have helped him with expenses during his college years!

They

by
Amy Warena

If a woman is swept off a ship into the water, the cry is 'Man overboard!' If she is killed by a hit-and-run driver, the charge is 'manslaughter.' If she is injured on the job, the coverage is 'workman's compensation.' But if she arrives at a threshold marked 'Men Only,' she knows the admonition is not intended to bar animals or plants or inanimate objects. It is meant for her.
--Alma Graham

"I corrected a boy for writing 'no one..they' instead of 'no one...he,' explaining that 'no one' was singular. But he said, 'How do you know it was a he?'" --A teacher (Miller 38). Observers have long pointed out the ambiguity of the use of the pronoun *HE* in generic contexts and the advantages of having a true generic singular pronoun, which would be sex-neutral. In the absence of such a sex-neutral pronoun, speakers of English have been expected to utter sentences such as "Everybody should bring his book tomorrow," where the "everybody" referred to includes forty women and just one man. For centuries, speakers and writers of English have been happily getting around this obstacle by using *THEY* in such situations, yielding sentences such as "Everybody should bring their book tomorrow." Unfortunately, since the middle of the eighteenth century, prescriptive grammarians have been prescribing the use of *HE* in these situations and attacking the use of *THEY*, by arguing that the use of *THEY* is a violation of the

rule for pronoun agreement, that is, a singular noun such as "everybody" should not take a plural pronoun such as *THEY* (Frank 72).

Although the prescriptive grammarians have not explained why it is all right for a female person such as "Mary" to be referred to by a masculine pronoun such as *HE*, they have managed to make many people feel guilty about breaking the law when they use *THEY* in such sentences (Frank 73). This is not the way it should be. Because the English language lacks an acceptable singular non-gender-specific pronoun, the singular use of *THEY* to fill this void should be deemed acceptable.

Is 'He' She?

The first grammars of modern English were written in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries at a time when formal schooling was only offered to boys. The male authors of these earliest English grammars wrote for male readers in an age when few women were literate. It is the belief of both Casey Miller and this author that the masculine-gender pronouns grammarians used in grammatical examples and generalizations did not reflect a belief that masculine pronouns could refer to both sexes. They reflected the reality of male cultural dominance and the male-centered world view that resulted. Males were perceived as the standard representatives of the human species, females as something else (Miller 35-36). This was clearly exhibited by the way women were treated as property.

Present-day linguists, tracing the history of the so-called generic *HE*, have found that it was invented and prescribed by the grammarians themselves in an attempt to change long-established English usage. The object of the grammarians' intervention was the widespread acceptance of *THEY* as a singular pronoun, as in Lord Chesterfield's remark (1759), "If a person is born of a gloomy

temper...they cannot help it." Nearly three centuries earlier, England's first printer, William Caxton, had written, "Each of them should...make themself ready," and the invocation "God send everyone their heart's desire" is from Shakespeare. In such usages, grammarians argued, *THEY* lacked the important syntactical feature of agreement in number with a singular antecedent. But in prescribing *HE* as the alternative, they dismissed as unimportant a lack of agreement in gender with a feminine antecedent (Miller 36).

In 1850, the British Parliament passed an actual law concerning the use of *HE* as a generic pronoun. In an attempt to shorten the language in its legislation, the Parliament declared: "in all acts, words importing the masculine gender shall be deemed and taken to include females..." (Frank 73). In simpler days it was certainly acceptable to refer to a genderless noun such as "customer" with masculine pronouns. But *HE* never has and never will call to mind the picture of a woman (Seifert 34).

When a adult sees a hawk riding a thermal updraft and says to a child, "Look at him soar!" the child not only learns something about how hawks fly but also that all hawks are male and, by implication, that maleness is the norm (Miller 44).

As a linguistic device imposed on the language rather than a natural development arising from a broad consensus, "generic" *HE* is fatally flawed. This fact has been demonstrated in several recent systematic investigations of how people of both sexes use and understand personal pronouns. The studies confirm that in spoken usage, from the speech of young children to the conversation of university professors, *HE* is rarely intended or understood to include *SHE*. On the contrary, at all levels of education people whose native tongue is English seem to know that *HE*, *HIM*, and *HIS* are gender-specific and cannot do the double duty asked of them (Miller 38). *HE* brings a male image to

mind, and it does so whether editors, authors, nomads or acrobats are the subject (Miller 38). Yet use of the pronouns *HE*, *HIS*, and *HIM* to refer to any unspecified or hypothetical person who may either be female or male is usually justified on two grounds. First, the practice is said to be an ancient rule of English grammar long and faithfully followed by educated speakers and writers. Second, it is asserted, somewhat paradoxically, that the usage is thought to distinguish the educated from the uneducated--that everybody knows *HE* includes *SHE* in generalizations. Historical and psychological research in the past few years have produced evidence to refute both claims (Miller 35). Feminist scholars maintain that the generic *HE* and similar words "not only reflect a history of male domination" but also "actively encourage its perpetuation." For example, the ostensibly generic use of *HE* has permitted varying legal interpretations that often exclude women but always include men (Gastil 630). In 1879, for example, a move to admit female physicians to the all-male Massachusetts Medical Society was effectively blocked on the grounds that the society's by-laws describing membership used the pronoun *HE* (Miller 37). It seems that even the "educated" individuals are having a difficult time trying to find a standard rule for *HE*. More and more writers and speakers seem to agree with the feeling expressed by psychologist Wendy Martyna, who wrote, "*HE* deserves to live out its days doing what it has always done best--referring to 'he' and not 'she'" (Miller 38).

What's In A Pronoun?

Rather than rely on authority or opinion, some scholars have conducted experiments to determine whether or not today's speakers of English perceive the forms *MAN* and *HE* as generic. In one study, Joseph Schneider and Sally Hacker asked some students to find appropriate illustrations for an anthropology book with chapter headings

like "Man And His Environment," and "Man And His Family"; another group of students was given titles like "Family Life" and "Urban Life." The students who were assigned titles with the word *Man* chose more illustrations of men only, while the second group chose more pictures showing men, women and children. Other studies have confirmed the tendency to interpret *HE* and *MAN* as masculine unless the context clearly indicates they are meant generically, the contrary of what is usually claimed. One experiment conducted by Wendy Martyna that tested the usage and meaning of these words among young people, found that women and men may be using the terms quite differently. The men's usage appears to be based on sex-specific (male) imagery while the women's usage is based instead on the prescription that *HE* should be used when the sex of the person is not specified (Frank 73-74).

Studies conducted by Janet Shibley Hyde, a professor of psychology at the University of Wisconsin, suggest that when people read or hear *HE*, they do not think neuter. They think male. One of Hyde's experiments tested 132 third and fifth graders who were asked to rate how well women and men could do each of several jobs: teacher; doctor; fireman or firefighter (half of the subjects were asked about the former the other half about the latter); and a fourth occupation, "wudgemaker," which was fictitious and presumably gender-neutral. Wudgemaker, of course, was her target. Hyde's results showed that the children formed strong perceptions about a person's ability to make wudges depending on the pronoun that was used in describing what a wudgemaker does. Women were rated as least able to do the job when the description used *HE*; they were rated most able to do the job when *SHE* was used in describing the duties. When neutral words or phrases were used in the description (*THEY*, and *HE* or *SHE*), men and women were both seen as able to do the job. Said Hyde: "It can be concluded that the use of *HE* affects the

stereotyping of occupations, or the schema of an occupation that children form. When children hear *HE*, even in an explicitly gender-neutral sentence, they are overwhelmingly likely to think of a male" (Borgeois 41).

Many investigators have found the male bias of the generic *HE* to be very common among high school and college students (Gastil 230). The impression that has been derived from the writings of older college students has been that many, perhaps most, of those adults use singular *THEY* as their pronoun of choice (Meyers 229). I conducted my own study to confirm this notion and found that it was indeed true. I asked my First-year Composition class to choose between three sentences, one with *HE*, one with *SHE* and one with *THEY*, which one they would most likely use in their writing. The class unanimously chose "Everyone should be sure to bring *THEIR* book to class tomorrow" to refer to a group containing both males and females. The professor opted to decline all three choices and instead make up one of his own: "All should be sure to bring their books tomorrow." This is an example of a common way writers and speakers deal with the lack of a true non-gender-specific pronoun; they avoid entirely the use of sentences that require such pronouns (Frank 72-73).

He, She And Thon?

Among the many gender-related reforms proposed for the English language, the creation of a common-gender pronoun to replace the generic masculine *HE* in a sentence like "Everyone loves his mother" stands out as the one most often advocated and attempted and the one that has most often failed (Baron 190). There have been a series of proposals with the aim of eliminating the "pseudo-generic" use of the pronoun *HE*. Some advocate the introduction of a new sex-neutral third person singular pronoun such as *THON* to replace *HE* in situations where either sex may be meant, as in "A doctor should be careful that thon (he) does

not misdiagnose." Others advocate the use of *HE* or *SHE*, or recasting the sentence in the plural as in "Doctors should be careful that they do not misdiagnose" (Frank 84). In all, more than eighty bisexual pronouns, little words such as *NE*, *TER*, *HEER*, *ET* and *IP* have been proposed since the eighteenth century (Baron 190). None has found overwhelming favor with the public, however, and all have therefore been pushed aside and forgotten.

A number of books have appeared using *SHE* in generic situation, and some writers have compromised with *SHE* or *HE*. The trouble with *HE* or *SHE* form is that it becomes awkward when repeated (Miller 41). *S/HE* is a nice orthographic trick, but it is unusable either in the spoken language or in other grammatical cases: *HER/HIM* and *HER/HIS* do not collapse so neatly (Frank 87). There has also been some support for the extension of *IT* in place of the generic masculine. *A Woman's New World Dictionary* (1973) defines *IT* as a "third person neuter pronoun now acceptable to use when sex of the referent is not known. Examples: The baby was happy with its rattle; the applicant signed its name." Critics of *IT* point to its impersonal nature as their main argument against its adoption (Baron 192).

Another proposal to eliminate the generic use of *HE* is by recognizing the legitimacy of using *THEY* or *THEIR* (Frank 84). Unfortunately, the singular use of *THEY* is still deemed unacceptable for written usage. As might be expected, this solution is widely used in spoken English, even by "educated" speakers (Seifert 35). Some grammarians approve of the singular *THEY*. For example, Alexander Bain, in *A Higher English Grammar* (1879) defends its use: "When both genders are implied, it is allowable to use the plural...Grammarians frequently call this construction an error: not reflecting that it is equally an error to apply 'his' to feminine subjects. The best writers furnish examples of the use of the plural as a mode of getting out of the

difficulty" (Baron 193). In the syntax volume of his *Grammar* (1931), George Curme accepts the literary evidence of singular *THEY*, but he wrongly concludes that it is an obsolescent construction which survives only in "loose colloquial and popular speech." In *A Grammar Of Contemporary English* (1972), Randolph Quirk and his coauthors set forth a more tolerant version of this position. Singular *THEY* is labeled the informal construction, and generic *HE* the formal unmarked one, while coordinate *HE* or *SHE* is rejected as "cumbersome" (Baron 193-194).

They: Only Logical

Singular *THEY* has a long history in Modern English, stretching back to the mid-sixteenth century, and a distinguished one—it occurs in the works of Addison, Austen, Fielding, Chesterfield, Ruskin, and Scott, to cite only a few major English writers, and the *Oxford English Dictionary* notes that the absence of a singular common-gender pronoun renders "this violation of grammatical concord sometimes necessary" (Baron 193). Singular *THEY* is widely used in speech and writing and, despite the stigma of ungrammaticality that has become attached to it since the eighteenth century, the construction shows no signs of dying out. The occurrence of the plural pronoun *THEY* in reference to indefinite nouns such as *PERSON*, *SOMEONE* or *EVERYONE*, which are singular in form but often plural in meaning, is another example of semantic concord in English overriding grammatical concord (Baron 192-193). When we need a non-gender-specific pronoun in speech we say *THEY*. If we speak English that way today, knowing that the usage is "incorrect," we will probably be writing it that way soon. Grammar, after all, both prescribes how we "ought" to use the language and how we *do* use it (Seifert 35).

Once upon a time *YOU* was a plural pronoun only. It assumed its singular function in the days before

prescriptive grammarians were around to inhibit that kind of change. English needs a comparable third person singular pronoun, and for many *THEY* meets the need (Miller 39). Singular *THEY* has held its own against the grammarians and the antifeminists, and there are some writers who remain optimistic that singular *THEY* will one day become acceptable (Baron 196).

The case of sex-indefinite *THEY* versus generic *HE* is a special and complex one. The contest has been long and controversial, and teachers and prescriptivists have invested a great deal of energy in the fight for the "correctness" of *HE*. They have succeeded in modifying our formal written English and in creating a collective guilty conscience among speakers of English with even a few years of schooling. But they have not managed to uproot *THEY* from colloquial usage, and today, some groups of feminists have unburdened themselves of their guilty conscience and are openly advocating this usage. They know that "Everybody must pay *their* taxes" is, unfortunately, more accurate than "Everybody must pay *his* taxes" (Frank 87).

Robert and Roy's Excellent Adventure

by

Robert Miller and Roy Andrews

Robert Tries To Change

I figured out in September that this year's Experimental Psychology class is my fifteenth. Somewhere about halfway through that succession of classes, the General Education Committee bestowed upon the course the designation W, publicly affirming something I had known from the start: this is the course where we are supposed to teach psychology majors to write like psychologists, that is, where we teach them to write research reports in APA (American Psychological Association) format. It's no secret that the students approach this aspect of the course with a dread and apprehension second only to their anticipation of the statistical aspect. Well, I've got news for them: the writing part of this course is no picnic for me either.

Fifteen years ago was long before WAC hit Plymouth. I had no training in teaching people to write. I figured, though, that no one was likely to produce a very good research report without putting it through more than one draft, and that students might not do that unless you made them. So right from the first year, I required submission of first drafts, which I would comment on and return to be revised. (Shouldn't someone have known way back then that I would someday grow up and become WAC coordinator?)

Boy, did I ever comment on those. I'd correct mistakes if that could be done quickly, circle other errors, cross out words, add words, improve format. I'd fill the margins with words like "awkward," "run-on" and (my

personal favorite) "frag." When I got that all done I'd write the kid a letter--here I would explain such things as just how to reorganize the introduction, what was missing from Method or what was in Results that belonged in Discussion. Mostly these letters were rather lovingly written, filled with good advice, oozing nurturance. Occasionally a little sarcasm might slip in when my patience ran thin at the tedium of the task, but not often. We martyrs to the cause of APA format have nothing if not patience. Typically it would take me an hour to write each one. Typically I had 15 students in the class.

In 1987 I went to my first WAC training workshop. The main effect this had on my approach to Experimental Psychology was to cause me to switch to green ink. I figured this WAC stuff was great for my other courses, but I was convinced that for the formal scientific writing I was teaching in Experimental, I had found the one true method. After all, every couple of years a student would write back from graduate school and say she was more familiar with writing in APA format than her fellow students, many of whom had prepared at more prestigious institutions.

When I'm having a flexible day, I will let go of scientific psychology long enough to acknowledge that there might be different levels of consciousness, and on some level, by 1987, I was questioning the method I was using. I'd occasionally worry that the students were too dependent on my comments. I'd make them write their final report without benefit of submitting a draft. Though those weren't awful, they were always disappointing. And every few years a student would come along who would turn in absolutely abysmal first drafts, drafts that were so bad I would suspect he or she had written anything at all just to get the comments and corrections. And then there was Bill, a student I will never forget. In every final report, Bill insisted on putting into quotation marks anything I had changed for him on the draft. I could not discourage him

from doing that--his sense of honesty and integrity wouldn't have it any other way. But most of the time I had myself convinced that this method worked well for the students.

Right there in total consciousness, though, was always the realization that for me it was a nightmare. I mean, really, the method was so time-consuming for the instructor it's only feasible if you have well-developed masochistic tendencies and no social life. I've been accused of both, but even for me it was pretty boring, and I would dread the weeks the drafts came in.

But for 14 years I persevered, because my method got results and I didn't know what else to do. This year I finally figured out there might be a better way.

The Adventurers Meet

Actually, last year some things happened that laid the groundwork for this breakthrough. I was invited to join the WAC Task Force, and I became one of the group who led the Sweat and Learn series in the spring. There were two important effects of this: I heard other faculty members talk about trying to help people learn to write, and I heard Roy Andrews talk about his experiences facilitating writing at the Reading/Writing Center. Slowly I began to realize that there are methods out there to be tried. I heard terms I didn't understand, like "process." I began to realize there were things to learn.

When I was chosen to become WAC coordinator this year, it occurred to me maybe I should learn some of them. I had come to WAC by way of its writing-to-learn theme--as coordinator I needed to know more about its other theme: learning to write. I mentioned this to Roy, and he offered to share articles with me that might help. I also decided that as WAC coordinator I should learn more about the Reading/Writing Center. I asked its director, Barbara Blaha, if I might visit and observe Roy and the

others at work there. She agreed. All that was to change at last my approach in Experimental Psychology.

Several of the articles Roy passed were helpful, but the one that really got to me was "Responding to Student Writing" by Nancy Sommers. I kept coming to statements in this article that caused me to recoil in a horror of recognition. "Teachers' comments can take students' attention away from their own purposes in writing a particular text and focus that attention on the teachers' purpose in commenting," I read. "After the comments of the teacher are imposed on the first or second draft, the student's attention dramatically shifts from 'This is what I want to say,' to 'This is what *you* the teacher are asking me to do.'" The fear I'd harbored all these years that my students were too dependent on my comments welled up, but I read on. "This appropriation of the text by the teacher happens particularly when teachers identify errors in usage, diction, and style in a first draft...such comments give the student an impression of the importance of these errors that is all out of proportion to how they should view the errors at this point in the process."

"Who is this Sommers' woman?" I wondered. "And how did she find out about me?" Maybe she knew Bill.

I wanted to change. But how? "Thoughtful comments create the motive for revising," the article said. Now what would constitute thoughtful comments?

The Excellent Adventure Begins

The next afternoon I made my first observations at the Center. Roy Andrews was working with a young man named Jim. I took an unobtrusive seat and watched. Jim was an impressive student, a little older than most, I decided. I gathered he had been visiting the Center regularly this semester. This had begun with a referral from his Composition instructor, but now, just a few weeks later,

Jim was aspiring to write for *The Clock*. On this day he had brought an article he wanted to submit.

While I watched, they worked their way through the article. Roy focused on content, telling Jim what he thought Jim was saying in particular passages. I realized Roy was focusing selectively on places that weren't quite clear. Sometimes Roy would try to paraphrase a particular sentence, and Jim would interrupt to explain what he really meant. Then Jim would rewrite the sentence. Jim would sometimes ask whether a comma was needed or misplaced. Roy would ask him what he thought. If Jim really didn't know, Roy would refer him to Hacker's handbook and wait while Jim looked up the appropriate rule and made the correction.

I was struck by three aspects of Roy Andrews' behavior during this interaction: his patience, his nondirectiveness, and his genuine interest in Jim and Jim's piece. "Oh my God," I thought, "this guy is Carl Rogers. We heard in psychology that old Carl died a few years back. He didn't die, he transmigrated, took over this younger body, and is working in Plymouth's Reading/Writing Center."

What Carl Rogers had taught us psychologists is that the way to do effective psychotherapy is to treat the client with respect, with genuine interest and positive regard, and to reflect back whatever the client says. "I really hate my boss," the client says to Rogers. "In fact, all week I've been fantasizing about cutting him up into little cubes and mailing him piece by piece to Outer Mongolia." Calm as can be, with that slightly furrowed brow and that gentle but steady eye contact, old Carl says, "I sense you're feeling angry with your boss." This kind of thing has for years led proponents of competing brands of therapy to make parrot jokes about Rogers, but I always thought he was onto something. Sometimes I don't think we quite know what we're saying till we hear someone say it back to us.

Maybe we just don't listen to ourselves as carefully as we do to others.

Anyway, here I am sitting in the Reading/Writing Center trying to decide whether this is really Carl Rogers reincarnated or maybe just his long-lost grandson, when I start imagining how I would be responding. I would need to inhibit, somehow, this overwhelming desire I'm always having to tell people the right answer. "Yes, you need a comma," I would no doubt say. "Here, give me that pen. I'll write it in for you." Instead Carl Jr. says things like, "I'm a little confused, but what I hear you saying is this." Or about the comma, "I'm not sure. I wonder if Hacker has a rule about this." My method has the advantage of efficiency. I could have edited Jim's article in ten minutes. Roy talked to him for an hour, during the course of which Jim figured out which several sentences needed to be re-structured and how to correct his own punctuation. Roy's method seemed to have the advantage of working.

My scientific background trained me to be skeptical and trained me to demand replication. I would have explained away Roy's apparent success with Jim as due to Jim, who seemed to be unusually well-motivated and bright. But no sooner was Jim done than another student arrived who was neither of those, and I watched Roy make the same kind of responding work again. The secret seemed to be to show the student, in a non-evaluative, friendly manner, what experience a reader has with the student's work.

I wondered whether I could use Roy's method of responding in these conferences as a model for my written responses to first drafts in Experimental Psychology. A few days later the drafts were turned in and I got to try. I needed to draw a distinction between revising and editing. In the past I had responded on both levels to the first drafts. Now I decided I wanted only to instill in my students the desire to revise that Sommers had talked about, that Roy

seemed to instill with all those questions and all that reflection.

I decided to role play to get myself started. As I read the first draft, I asked myself, "What would Roy say to this student? What would Carl Rogers say? How about Nancy Sommers?" And maybe more importantly, "What wouldn't they say?" The green pen twitched in my hand as I read the first few drafts and struggled to inhibit the old habit of circling or correcting every little error. If a student had an enormous number of errors of some type--format on the reference page, for example, I would write a gentle marginal suggestion: "You need to review rules of format for reference citations." Otherwise I tried to play the reflective, non-directive facilitator. If the literature review worked backwards in time instead of forwards, I would write after a ways, "I wish you had introduced this idea sooner--it would be easier to appreciate the above knowing this first." If a student had said too little about a past study, I might write, "I would appreciate this study more if I knew what the findings were." If a student had omitted half the Method section, I'd just note, "I'm not sure I would know how to replicate what you did." If another left all the numbers out of the Results section, it would be, "I'd be more sure your conclusion is right if I could see the data for myself."

I decided to continue the practice I had been using for years of supplementing the marginal comments with a kind of overview of the whole draft in the form of a letter. In the past these had read as directives for how to redo it my way. This time I tried to maintain the supportive tone of the marginal comments. Whereas in the past, I might have written, "Until you get your introduction in order there is no chance the rest of the report will make much sense," I now wrote, "You will be amazed how easy it is to revise the rest of the report once you have revised the introduction." I started every letter with some positive

comment about the draft as a whole. In a couple of extreme cases I had to resort to, "You have begun, and that is always the hardest part of writing." I used to end these notes by wishing the student "good luck" with the revision, a comment which I now decided made all of this seem like some sort of game--see if you can guess how to do it my way. This time I ended each with the suggestion, "Have fun with the revision."

I won't say it was easy adopting this new style. Carl Rogers I'm not. There was always the urge to circle the errors and the regressive pull of the old do-it-this-way-next-time comments. But I think I carried it off, and it got easier as I worked my way through the 17 drafts. I noticed to my surprise that this method took considerably less time: an hour per first draft for the old method, about 35 minutes for the new. You can read faster when you're not rewriting every third sentence, and the general comments, being less directive, were shorter.

I decided to share with my students what I had tried to do. When I returned the drafts, I talked to them about the distinction between revision and editing. I warned them I had not edited because I felt they all still needed to revise, and because I was confident they could and would edit the final draft for themselves. I told them I had been visiting the Reading/Writing Center and that Roy Andrews had been advising me how I might better help them learn to write like psychologists. I urged them to visit the Center and seek Roy's help when they were revising. I even told them when I would be there and shared that it might be particularly helpful to me if some of them visited then so I could see Roy work with them. That was a Friday. The following Monday the first of the students, Julie, took my advice.

Roy's Account of Julie's Visit

Two years ago Julie visited the Center a few times. In my capacity as full-time writing consultant at the Center, I would sit and listen while she read a draft of her latest composition paper. I used to respond to the content of her papers, ask questions if I was confused or wanted to know more, tell her what I liked. She would listen to my feedback and from that form her own idea about what revisions were necessary: add a paragraph, adjust the focus. Julie was competent and disciplined. She didn't need our meetings to write adequate papers, but she valued what we were doing, and I always figured she was learning something important about how to write: she was learning to seek feedback on a draft in progress, a habit that would pay off for her throughout her life.

Now, two years later, I am asking questions of a different sort. My questions are about format, discipline expectations, what "availability heuristic" means and what the purpose of the experiment was. My questions are genuine because I have almost no idea what she's doing. It's a little uncomfortable for a moment: What if she realizes how ignorant I am? And how in the world can I help her when I don't yet know the format or the assignment or much of anything? Well, I know not to panic, and I know there's something about this kind of situation that I enjoy. This, I start thinking, is how most students feel: afraid to show how little they know and how confused they are. I will model a better attitude: There's no reason to hide my ignorance; ignorance is nothing for me to be ashamed of; admitting ignorance is the first step of learning.

I keep asking questions, and they all say, in one way or another, "I don't understand yet, teach me." When Julie understands, she teaches me and that gives her confidence. When she doesn't understand, she realizes what she needs to think more about.

The single-spaced letter from Dr. Miller to Julie is calm and friendly; it makes me feel a little more relaxed about not having a clue. And pretty quickly Julie's explanations and Robert's comments give me an understanding. My questions slow down. I observe Julie working with margin notes, end comments, and APA guide. She shows me how she studies the excerpts of sample papers in the APA guide to figure out documentation. I watch her shuttle between margin notes and end comment. Julie ponders a green margin note on her introduction section that says: "I wish you had introduced this idea sooner--it would be easier to appreciate the above knowing this first." She makes a note in the margin: "switch order." "That'll be easy," she says. I nod, though I'm still reading the part of Robert's end comment that says she needs to think more about the purpose of the experiment because once she figures that out and rewrites the introduction, she'll be amazed at how easy it will be to rewrite the discussion section.

I watch Julie try to edit the discussion section. When it comes to figuring out what should be in this section, her method of studying a sample paper doesn't work well. I suggest she look up "Discussion" in the index of the APA guide. She does, turns to the page that explains what should be in the discussion, and makes a note in the margin of her paper--"Hypothesis supported?" Julie stares at her next paragraph, stares and stares, then turns to me and says, "I think I have to rewrite the introduction first."

"Yes," I say.

"I think I have to start over on the introduction and get that right before I can do this."

"Yes," I say.

We shake hands, and she heads back to her dorm room to rewrite her introduction.

Roy's Account of Tom's Visit

Robert has been visiting the Reading/Writing Center, hoping to observe me working with one of his students. He misses Julie by about ten minutes, but he is here when Tom arrives. Tom has been in twice this semester with drafts of papers for assignments that required field work: one about buying condoms, the other about identifying the sexism in children's TV programs. Both of his drafts had awkward sentences, but though the first was basically sound and the paper became quite strong as he cleared up the awkwardness, the second paper did not improve. His revised sentences, though less awkward, were fraught with vagueness. When I questioned him for details, he laughed and said he hadn't really watched the TV programs but that his older brother had watched them for him. After that we worked a little longer, but since he had no TV viewing experience to write about, we both lost interest in straightening out his awkward prose.

Tom does not seem surprised to see Robert sitting in a chair in the corner observing, but he does seem nervous. I ask him who his paper is for and he laughs and says, "Dr. Miller."

"What's he like?" I ask, and he laughs again and says loudly, "Dr. Miller is awesome."

We both laugh at that, and Robert, laughing too, says, "Your grade just went up."

Tom wants to plunge right in on page one and try to clear up awkward sentences. I push a pencil in front of him and listen while he reads his paper, but I stop him when I can't understand something. Just by reading it aloud to me, he notices many awkward phrasings and edits them. When he misses an awkward phrasing, I explain how his wording confuses me, and that both helps him see it and motivates him to edit.

Near the end of his abstract, his phrasing gets vague. He's saying things like "the subjects pick movie

stars" when I know from working with Julie that the experiment had to do with estimating the number of males versus the number of females in a list that was read aloud.

I decide to let him explain. I ask, "What do you mean by 'pick movie stars'?"

He says, "Pick the ones they remember."

"What do you mean by 'pick'?"

He says, "They're supposed to see what they remember."

I ask another question. He answers. There's vagueness in everything he says. I keep asking questions, he keeps answering, and maybe he creeps just a little bit closer to a clear statement of the experiment's purpose. Maybe. Both of us can sense Robert in the corner cringing. Finally Dr. Miller can't stand it anymore. "Tom," he says, "you're not stating what the experiment was really about," and he goes on to explain what availability heuristic means and exactly what the experiment was trying to determine. Tom, red-faced, listens, jots some notes, then flips the page and says, "Let's go on to the introduction."

There are fewer awkward sentences in the introduction, and, surprisingly, he explains the experiment soundly. "Look," I say, "you have it right here." He nods, still tense.

As we move on into the Results section, Robert gets up, leaving his coat, and steps outside. As soon as he leaves, I tell Tom that I feel nervous about being observed, and I ask him how he feels. "Wicked nervous," he says. "I almost got up and walked out. I feel like I can't talk freely with him right here."

"About what?" I ask.

"About the abstract."

"What about it?"

"Well," he says, "Dr. Miller's comments say I'm supposed to be more specific, but my abstract is already 150 words long. I talked with another professor, and he said Dr. Miller is wrong if he wants more words. He said

APA says the abstract should be a maximum of 150 words."

Together, we look at Robert's comments. His end comment says that Tom needs to be more specific about the purpose of the experiment. The green margin comment says Tom should check his APA handbook. He does and reports that it says to use 100 to 150 words. I point out that Dr. Miller said to follow the APA handbook so he must not want more words. We discuss strategies and he decides he will condense some of his abstract so he can be more specific about the purpose of the experiment. He says he thinks he can do that on his own.

Robert Changes Further

Roy had told me about his meeting with Julie in much the way he writes about it here. In fact, it was our mutual enthusiasm about this meeting which led us to write this article. Roy didn't have to tell me about the meeting with Tom. I was there. Don't believe what Roy wrote about my presence making both of them uncomfortable. I'm charm itself; I'd never intimidate anyone. Besides, I'm a little wisp of a thing--sit me in a corner and I blend into the background--you'd never know I was there. And I'm sure I didn't audibly gasp more than once or twice at the things Tom said that revealed how little he understood about his topic.

Actually it was most enlightening for me to observe their conference, and were it not for the very real problem of the inhibiting effect of the presence of the instructor, I would advise other faculty to try to observe their own students at the Center. Perhaps you could disguise yourself as a potted palm.

Watching Roy work with Tom, I was once again impressed with his patience and with his ability to ask the right questions. At the time I thought he was playing dumb. He has since insisted it wasn't playing. Either way,

it works. By simply telling Tom what he didn't understand, Roy got him to talk about the ideas and to think about the words. He pushed Tom to the limits of his understanding.

The lack of clarity in Tom's writing reflected his thinking. In the past, I would have responded to the kind of unclear writing Tom had produced by blaming the student's writing skills. I would have found it easier on the ego to assume that the student fundamentally understood the psychology--how could he not, I had personally taught him that--than to entertain the possibility that he didn't yet understand. It's so much easier to trace all the communication problems to Composition class. But listening to Roy and Tom, I could deny no longer.

Two days later, I began Experimental Psychology with a review of what the experiment we had done was all about. I got the students to talk about heuristics, availability, and the study on which our experiment was based. I got the stronger students like Julie to help the weaker students like Tom understand. As we were winding up this discussion and I was secretly worrying that although they seemed to understand right now, they wouldn't in a week when they got around to revising their drafts, it occurred to me that WAC might be able to help. I asked the students to freewrite what they remembered of what we had said, and when they were done I suggested they refer to this when they sat down to revise.

During the ten days they were working on their revisions, I noticed more students than in past years approached me with questions, specific or general, about their drafts. One arrived at an hour exam with her second draft and asked me if I could read it during the exam. I agreed. I got the feeling that revising was a bit more of an active process than usual. I was disappointed, though, that altogether only three of the students visited the Reading/Writing Center before the final version was due. The third

of these, like Julie and Tom, was someone who had been there before for another course and already knew Roy.

During this period Roy was advising me rather regularly about what was going on in this class. As the due date for the final drafts approached, he suggested I might want to take time in class that day to ask the students what the revision process had been like. He pointed out that students often profit from hearing about others' processes and from simply learning that others have to revise too. "Roy," I said, "rather than my leading that discussion why don't you visit the class and do it?"

Only half my motivation for making this suggestion stemmed from the fact that at this point I still didn't know what the hell this guy meant by this "process" I was supposed to get them to discuss. The other half was that I wanted the students to meet Roy. The three who knew him already had made use of the Center. The 14 who didn't, hadn't. Here was the solution.

Roy's Account of Visiting the Class

In Robert's class, standing at a lectern with final papers in a pile next to it and 17 nervous faces gazing up at me, I explain my respect for individualized writing processes. "We each write in our own way," I say, "but we can all improve our writing by learning techniques or writing stages from others."

Working with Julie and Tom, and one other student in Robert's class, I discovered how complicated the writing process is for anyone learning to write a lab paper in the APA format. Students face levels of concern that are similar to other writing projects, but especially difficult because so much is new. There is the challenge of comprehending new concepts such as availability heuristic; there's the challenge of getting all the pieces of an APA manuscript together (title page, introduction, method, results, discussion, and references) with appropriate content (and no other) in

each section; and there's the challenge of writing in the proper style in each section. This is the sort of multi-layered challenge that overwhelms writers, causing frustration and procrastination, unless they have learned to see it as a process, which means they know how to divide the writing into stages and reflect, as they work, on what they're doing at the moment and what they are purposely not doing until a later stage.

I pass out calendars and ask the students to write, on the back, the things they did to revise after they received their rough drafts back from Dr. Miller. I suggest they include the number of times they read over Dr. Miller's responses, and how they wrote. Did they write on the rough draft, on a separate paper, on the computer? Did they start over or edit what they had? Did they find a method that worked particularly well? At what points did they get stuck? (Putting the paper aside until the night before is a form of being stuck.) Did they visit Dr. Miller during his office hours? Did they visit the Reading/Writing Center?

As students finish writing, I start a brainstorming discussion. I ask for a volunteer to share his or her notes, and I encourage everyone to take notes of techniques or methods they might want to try when revising their next paper. A long, awkward silence ensues that I anxiously wait through, wondering all the while if this just isn't going to work.

At last, someone shares a well-developed writing process: she had 1) read over her paper, 2) read over all of Dr. Miller's response, 3) gone back over her paper writing her own margin notes about what was good and what needed changing, 4) worked off her own margin notes while writing, on a separate piece of paper, new and revised passages, and 5) incorporated her changes by word processor into her rough draft. I thank her for sharing her account and reveal to the class that I do something similar when I write: I seek feedback on works in progress, but

don't use it unless I can understand and agree with it and make it my own.

After another silence, someone else shares. And then more people share. The conversation takes off, and just about everyone is contributing. Someone brings up the struggle of figuring out what an availability heuristic is. This sparks much empathy. Someone else brings up the struggle of being concise, as is required in a scientific paper, and yet also being specific and saying enough. This is the liveliest moment of the discussion, because it turns out that everyone (not just Tom) experienced this struggle.

After the discussion, I have students move their notes from the back about what they did to revise onto the appropriate places on the calendar--thus making them further delineate the stages of the processes they used, as well as bringing to mind the issue of time management.

Finally, I pass out new calendars for the days of December when the students will be revising their next Experimental Psychology research reports, and I ask them to list on the back the stages of a writing process they would like to try when revising their second paper: perhaps things that worked well last time, perhaps things they heard others mention during the discussion, perhaps new ideas they had. They then shift their list of writing process stages they want to try onto the December calendars. "Should the new calendar be ideal or what is feasible?" ask several students, and, after a brief discussion, we all decide what is feasible will help most. Robert and I collect all the calendars: he will pass them back when he returns the rough drafts of their next papers with his written comments.

The calendars of what the students did when revising are, in general, what Robert and I expected. Most students looked at Robert's comments immediately and then did nothing until a night or two before the final draft was due. They got stuck getting started. On the proposed new

calendars, many students spaced out the stages and put down visiting Dr. Miller or the Reading/Writing Center as one of the first steps. As for their notes about the different stages of a writing process, they were mostly vague, which is typical for inexperienced writers. Inexperienced writers muddle along, unsure what they're doing, procrastinating because they don't know what to do next. When they finish writing, they're often not sure what they just did. This class exercise was a first step in getting them to think about their writing processes, a step that will lead to more awareness and reflection about writing, thus accelerating their improvement as writers.

Robert Reflects

I was astonished to hear Roy say he thought the discussion he led started slowly and he was worried at first whether it would work. Maybe I've been teaching too long without a sabbatical, but I thought the students were engaged right from the start. I mean, no one was asleep. Everyone did the written exercise as asked. Several of them talked spontaneously. They should be so cooperative with me! He's right, though, that it really took off as it went along. By the end of the hour 16 of the 17 had participated and seemed fully engaged. They seemed to like talking about writing. That's one thing I've learned from them and from Roy: talking about writing even in a psychology course is interesting and useful. I did get a sense they were learning from each other new ways of going about revision next time. And as they talked about how they revised, I finally felt I was understanding what is meant by process.

It turned out that several of the students had not completed the final draft on time, and I think it is telling that two of these visited the Center that very day and got help with the revision. Both were students who had never been to the Center before. Giving them a chance to meet

Roy did work to make them comfortable with this resource. I'm expecting Roy and the others in the Center will see a number of these students when they come to revise their second report. I will be returning the calendars they used to plan how they will do that, and I'm hopeful that will provide any reminder they may need that the Center is there.

But what were those final drafts like? Were they better than those of past years? I think so. At least in the important ways: organization and clarity. There wasn't a single terrible report among them, and that was unique. No F's, no D's. I don't think that's ever happened before. Of course, we didn't have blind grading here. I admit I wanted to see these as good. I did manage to resist the temptation to award them all the grade of A and end this article with the fact that the grades had never been so high. But I can't prove an utter absence of bias. I think the reports were on the whole easier to follow, more complete, better organized than in past years. They weren't better edited, though, and there may have even been more errors of format. But this would not be surprising given that in the past I've personally edited the first drafts. This year's kids got to pretty much the same level of correctness on their own--that may be a real gain.

What I can describe with more confidence is my own experience. I learned from hearing about Julie and observing Tom that I need to make sure they understand the psychology they are writing about. I devoted a whole class period to discussing in much greater detail than usual the theory and concepts involved in the second laboratory. I paused several times and had them freewrite their understanding of crucial ideas, and I pointed out to them these freewrites could be incorporated into their first drafts of this second report.

I can tell you with confidence that I enjoyed reading the first drafts and the final drafts more than usual, and that the new method of making comments takes less time

than the old. I can tell you I'm more excited about teaching writing than I have ever been before.

And I can tell you that this is one of my favorite Experimental Psychology classes ever, that rarely before have I had a class with whom I had such good rapport. I find myself respecting each of the students as individuals, being genuinely interested in their work, regarding them positively...unconditionally positively, in fact. Why, it all feels, if not Rogerian, at least Andrewsian.

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Scenario-Based Writing Assignments

by

Richard M. Chisholm

What Makes Writing Assignments Work Well?

Forty some years ago, when I was a soft-skinned student well on the way to flunking out in my freshman year at Southern Methodist, I read Newman's *Apologia*, where he says that the first building he would erect at a university is a dormitory. I took issue with him then, because I suspected that most of my vices as a student were directly attributable to living in a dormitory. That was the place where students learned to dissipate, not to learn. But I have since changed my mind. Dormitories and fraternity houses and dining halls and sports complexes--these are the settings for most student learning. Students often pick up more things they value in the breaks between classes than in the classes themselves.

What was missing in my own dormitory experience was that nobody conceived of living spaces as adjuncts to the classroom. If anything, it was the other way around: the classroom was an adjunct. The real purpose was to have fun. Nobody had taken the trouble to convince us students how the two could be complementary.

What we professors find before us when we face a group of college-age students is an unparalleled opportunity. Since they were two years old, these students have probably never been so open to new experiences and to new people; never again will they be so open.

We can exploit this opportunity by connecting our subject matter to events in the students' immediate environment. We can't take over and use all elements of the fun

culture: the booze, the sex, the animal energy, the glandular secretions. Nor would we want to. But we can tap into these sources of power. Instead of fighting the fun culture or trying to compete with it, we can subvert a part of it to our aims.

The Problem Of Teaching A Lot Of Content

The ideas I outline here came together when I was teaching the History of the English Language. This is an upper-division course populated mainly by English majors. Studying the History of the English Language presents students with a lot of problems. It deals with linguistic phenomena that students are not prepared to deal with. It deals with minor people they've never heard of. It deals with the long ago and far away. It is remote from the collegiate fun culture. As Lee Modesitt put it, "The History of the English Language does not sound like the most fascinating of subjects, even for English majors."

Teaching English Language of the Renaissance period (1500-1650) poses a special problem. In this period, the language changed rapidly. But after the relative excitement of the tawny Anglo-Saxon invasion, the heroic defense of the Island against the Danes, the Norman Conquest, and the rise and fall of the French language in England--relative excitement, I emphasize--the intellectual battles that occupied literary and scientific men in the Renaissance are apt to seem a bit dull. Students find it hard to relate to the problems that attracted scholarly attention then: recognition of the vernacular, standards of usage, establishment of orthography and enrichment of vocabulary.

The Lure Of The Old Way

The main problem I encounter when I teach The History of the English Language is my own culture lag. The subject is beautifully suited to the old method of teaching. There are a lot of fascinating old bones lying around.

A knowledgeable lecturer can talk indefinitely on any of a thousand abstruse topics. There are so many neat things to say, so many relics to fondle. The problem is that while fondling these old linguistic fossils, the course itself becomes a fossil.

In the old way of teaching this material, I would assign, say, Chapter 8, "The Renaissance, 1500-1650" in Baugh and Cable, *A History of the English Language*, then I would lecture and we would discuss it (or I would). Then I would ask students to answer questions like the following ones from Cable's workbook:

1. Define "Inkhorn terms."
2. What problems did the modern European languages face in the sixteenth century?
3. How did Renaissance scholars deal with the need to enrich the English vocabulary?

These questions and the classroom procedures they imply looked pretty standard to me not too long ago. But while questions like those may lead a diligent student to a systematic and thorough mastery of material, I would expect that few undergraduates would study 25 of them in a one-week survey of English language of the Renaissance. I doubt that many would try. Few would see the point.

The "Commingled Recyclables" Assignment

What I needed was an assignment to replace the study questions and the workbook assignments. I wanted an assignment that would get students to read the chapter and write a paper based on the material in it, or significant portions of it. What I came up with was the assignment I entitled "Commingled Recyclables." This scenario-based assignment on the English language in the Renaissance proved successful. Here's the assignment sheet:

Assignment on Commingled Recyclables

Scenario You and a friend have noticed that the bin outside Rounds Hall 203 is labeled "COMMINGLED RECYCLABLES." Your friend, whom you think of as a language purist and a conservative, has objected to the use of these words on the grounds they are new, unnecessary, and misspelled. Your friend comments as follows: "Those aren't really words in English; somebody just made them up. Besides, they are misspelled. They should be Co-mingled Re-cyclables--if anything."

By referring to the experience of language scholars during the Renaissance, write an essay in reply. Include all of the principles Baugh and Cable discuss (207-234).

Purposes The purposes are for students

- to become aware of how Renaissance language scholars handled the problems of orthography and enrichment.
- to see how the "letter devised by a Lincolnshire man" by Thomas Wilson 1) illustrates the "problems" of orthography and enrichment; 2) shows Wilson's shortsightedness; 3) suggests problems inherent in language reform.
- to find solutions to present-day language problems in the history of the English language.
- to become more habitual and insightful observers of the language.

Sources

Baugh and Cable, Chapter 8 (The Renaissance, 1500-1650), especially the sections on Orthography (207-213) and Enrichment of Vocabulary (213-234); lists of words in Baugh:

Elyot, 213-219, Wilson 218-219, Baugh's list 222-223, and Shakespeare 233; The Oxford English Dictionary.

Background

During the Renaissance, scholars attempted to make the English language more adequate by solving problems of spelling and by enriching its vocabulary. Yet many of the attempts were subject to criticism--some of which still seems valid. The same principles are at work today.

The Elements Of Scenario-Based Assignments

- 1. The Scenario.** The scenario-based assignment works, I believe, because it shows how contemporary linguistic phenomena and issues have been handled during the history of the language. Students use the textbook as a source for the paper they write, not merely as a body of information to be learned and recited; they actually *use* the information they dig up. Students don't merely read, learn, regurgitate.
- 2. Specifications.** The "Commingled Recyclables" assignment provides clear guidelines for students. The assignment demands well-focused work that students are capable of performing.

Specifications spell out my expectations. I tell the students the problem, suggest sources, describe the procedure to follow, and suggest a length. They know the goal they are working for.

- 3. Procedural Directions.** The assignment explains the procedures students are to follow.
- 4. The Library Component.** While students are required to use the text, dictionaries, and additional references, there is nothing in this assignment that smacks of the unproductive scavenger hunt.

Evidence For The Superiority Of This Assignment

When I first used the "Commingled Recyclables" assignment, I observed that students became engaged in classroom activities to a higher degree than usual. They seemed more interested in freewriting, talking, contributing ideas, passing their papers around. Afterward, students commented that they *liked* doing the assignment and got a lot out of it.

One student wrote:

The paper assignments were very useful because they made me realize that the material actually is useful.

Another wrote:

The "Commingle Recyclables" assignment was real world and applicable to *our* environment...A1.
And a third wrote:

Because usually there was no right or wrong answer, we had to be confident of our own personal ability.

These are gratifying comments from students in a course that presents a heavy load of densely-packed historical and linguistic information.

The papers themselves show that the students were engaged and liked what they were doing. This combination of high interest, high satisfaction, and high quality is unbeatable.

What was most interesting to me was to watch the students learning to shift back and forth easily from the present to the past. During the course of the week that we discussed the English language during the Renaissance, they increasingly applied the lessons of the past to present contexts, thought of related issues and parallel examples, and discussed both the issues and the concrete examples. On their own, they brought in articles on recycling and talked about the language problem with outsiders. One student carried on a running conversation with a man who directs a recycling operation.

Developing Scenario-Based Assignments In Other Courses

The scenario-based assignment seems to work well in courses that require students to learn a body of material. When I teach my course in Ancient Literature again, for example, I'm going to apply the scenario principle. As before, I will want students to examine the text of *Genesis* to discover the relation between the people and the land. I used to give students a flatfooted assignment like this:

"Read *Genesis* and explain how people are related to the land."

But now I plan to change the focus and provide them a scenario.

A New Assignment On *Genesis*. My new scenario-based assignment will read something like this:

The government of Israel has claimed for almost fifty years that it has a right to Palestine because of the covenant between the Lord and Israel as recorded in *Genesis*. A friend of yours has commented, "They don't have any more right to the land than the Arabs." Examine *Genesis* to discover the basis for the Israeli claim. Considering the evidence in *Genesis*, what argument could you make to support their claim?

This assignment, I think, will engage the students more clearly in the issues. It might entice them to read beyond *Genesis* to *Exodus* and to search out the history of the Israeli-Arab conflict.

As a second example, when I teach *Deuteronomy*, I have typically asked students to read Deuteronomy 28, Psalm 1, and later works informed by the Deuteronomic Code, then to summarize, analyze, comment, and judge. A scenario-based assignment would likely engage them more, for example:

A friend of yours has said, "I suffered through the earthquake in San Francisco. We lost everything. I no longer believe in God." Respond to this comment. Show how this concept is related to the blessings and curses in the Biblical texts (Deuteronomy 28 and Psalm 1).

I haven't abandoned lecture altogether. I always spend some time in class explaining something or describing something. But the amount of time I talk is less than the time students work, in groups or independently. I also believe that students must memorize certain things, such as the periods in the history of the English language. That

way, they have a hook to place ideas on, and are not so apt to put Alfred and Malory and Johnson and Murray in the same century. I also believe in tests, for the same reason. Those are tried and true methods. But I don't use them nearly as much as I used to.

In completing a scenario-based assignment in the History of the English Language, students have learned a method of inquiry and the habit of asking and answering questions about the English Language. As other questions occur to them--or as they come up in their own thinking in years to come--they will have a method for finding answers.

I have found that these procedures give students a handhold on the problem, tell them what I expect, and coach them while they go at it. They work so well that I am going to continue to use them. There may be nothing new here; I borrowed all of the elements. But they make a powerful combination.

Like any good method, traditional or new-fangled, this new kind of assignment helps students master a body of information. But more than that, it helps students learn to use sources appropriately, ask important questions, become interested in the subject, discover a method they can transfer to other areas, synthesize material from various sources, see the relevance of the past, engage in peer review, practice process writing, and write to learn as well as learn to write.

By channeling some of the energies of the collegiate fun culture, perhaps we can build a community of teachers and learners that more resembles Newman's model of the university and less resembles my experience in 210 Atkins Hall at SMU.