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# The Teaching of Writing at Evergreen:

## A Collection of Strategies

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*by Leo Daugherty*

*September 1984*

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THE TEACHING OF WRITING AT EVERGREEN: A COLLECTION OF STRATEGIES

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## Foreword

This is a monograph commissioned by Evergreen under the auspices of the Writing Across the Liberal Arts Curriculum grant, awarded to the Pacific Northwest Writing Consortium, of which this college is a member. (The grantor is the National Endowment for the Humanities.) What the monograph is -- a collection of teaching-of-writing strategies employed by Evergreen professors -- was predetermined by local grant directors. Evergreen faculty members were invited to compete by way of written application in 1983 to do the compendium on a compensated basis, and my application was chosen.

How I Began. I began the project nearly a year ago by sending a letter to the whole faculty (as well as to staff members known to be engaged in the teaching of writing). In that letter, I announced what I was doing and asked my colleagues to tell me if they had strategies they wished to share. Soon afterward, I sent personal "booster" letters to quite a few specific teachers known by me to employ isolated (or at least somewhat isolated) strategies locally rumored to be interesting and workable.

Even considering the factor of the individual notes, I expected a fairly low return-rate (only because return-rates for such requests in busy seasons are almost always low -- 10% or thereabouts), but instead got a high return-rate of about 25% of the faculty. At that point, I figured things had a good chance of going well. For at what other college would 25% of the

faculty, or a percentage even close to that one, be actively teaching writing? This rhetorical question becomes even more interesting if it is granted that the 25% figure, as a return-rate figure only, is doubtless lower than the percentage of faculty actually teaching writing here, and if it is also agreed that such a percentage of teachers employing special strategies believed by them noteworthy for their efficacy is of greater significance than would be an equal percentage of professors who were merely "teaching writing," period. In other words, more than 25% of the Evergreen faculty is teaching writing; but 25%, at the very least, is teaching it with sufficient enthusiasm to have developed individual methods and strategies believed interesting enough to be shared. This fact struck me at the outset as remarkable. It led me to believe that the reality, with respect to cross-curricular writing instruction here, was very a good one -- at least in contrast to the reality at other colleges. I therefore figured that a report which reflected and described that reality would have a more-than-decent chance of being good, too -- as well as being fun to compile. (Others will decide if the report is in fact any good, but it did turn out to be fun to do.)

My next step was to contact the faculty members who had indicated an interest in participating, in order to set up interviews with them. I also went on to push contact with one or two faculty members who had not responded, for one reason or another, to my written requests, but who were known by me to be doing interesting things, and I set up interviews with them, too.

The only real difficulty I encountered in this job was that of actually getting together with such a large number of Evergreen faculty for individual interviews. The scheduling, rescheduling, and actually sitting down across from each other at the same table -- these were difficult matters to arrange. (Anyone who knows the Evergreen faculty well will readily understand that the scheduling was far more difficult than either the interviewing or the subsequent writing. It was in one or two cases impossible ever to schedule interviews, regrettably, in spite of the fact that the faculty members much wanted to take part: They could simply not find the time before the monograph had to be done. (As often noted, the faculty here is overscheduled, overcommitted, and overworked. It is also probably even over-responsible.) The surprise for me was that this part of the work went as well as it did, and the sole reason is that faculty members were generous with their schedules and even near-saintly in their willingness to give the interviews priority when conflicts of time and place came up for them.

The work of scheduling and holding the interviews took almost a year. The interviews themselves took, on average, about two hours each. Extreme cases ran from five or six hours right down to no hours at all. In the latter case, one or two faculty members simply sent brief but specific written materials and said, in effect, "That's all I do, but it works, and I couldn't tell you any more if we met for all the time in the world to discuss it." Several others referred me to their published and unpublished writings, which I duly consulted; and in a couple of

other cases I collected and synopsized previous Evergreen NEH/PNWC monographs, just for the purpose of getting as much usable material as possible between two simple covers.\*

There was not one single interview which failed to be instructive, not one which failed to be interesting, not one which failed to be useful, not one which did not get included. Some were highly innovative, and some were not. Some were extremely complex, and others were extremely simple. Some were based on theories of learning or on composition research, some were based on experience in the classroom, and some were based on no more than teacherly enjoyment.

A Note on Audiences. I need to explain that the included strategies are necessarily apples and oranges, to say the very least. This is the case because the monograph itself is necessarily both a collection of individual strategies and a report (which can lay no claim to being "representative") on what is going on at Evergreen in terms of its faculty's efforts to teach writing across the liberal arts curriculum. The monograph is such a two-sort gathering because of its likely two-sort audience: (1) teachers who will be looking for something to use with their students; (2) people (teachers or not) who will be

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\*I do not summarize the monograph Using Workshops to Teach Writing Across the Curriculum, which is itself a collection of short reports on workshops developed along the lines of a Piagetian model created by Donald Finkel (Member of the Faculty in Psychology at Evergreen) and G. Stephen Monk (Professor of Mathematics at the University of Washington). I do, however, present a section on one of Finkel's strategies herein.

mainly interested in a catalogish descriptive overview of what writing-teaching strategies are being used here.

Among the first sort will be both experienced connoisseurs/users of writing-teaching strategies and absolute beginners at teaching writing -- as well as teachers at all points in between. Some of these strategies will thus not be terribly interesting in themselves to readers who know a lot about the teaching of writing; what is interesting about these strategies is that they have been found by, and are being used by, professors whose disciplinary counterparts at most other colleges do not teach writing at all (although some of them require it of their students). At Evergreen, mathematics teachers and chemistry teachers and painting teachers and psychology teachers actively teach writing, and this seems the important thing -- not whether their methods constitute any sort of theoretical or methodological advance. (And, lest I seem too self-congratulatory in the college's behalf for the extent to which its professors teach writing, I should say again that the back-patting is only comparative, not absolute. In fact, it is clear to me that we are not yet teaching writing nearly as much as we should be teaching it, given the needs of our students as assessed by the personnel at the Learning Services Center and by others. Still, our comparative level of activity in the teaching of writing is inarguably commendable.)

At any rate, there are strategies included here which ought to be of interest to the experienced (and even the jaded) connoisseur of writing-teaching strategies, and these strategies

will be easily viewed as "exportable." And there are others at which that experienced connoisseur will not see fit to give a passing glance (he or she will have read all about them, or about something very like them, back in 1959 or thereabouts); but these are the very ones which, because they are simple, or because they are reported here as being employed successfully by a professor in the sort of classroom or laboratory in which writing is not usually taught, might end in having the greater impact -- precisely because they may be non-threatening to the professor inexperienced in the teaching of writing, and because they may strike him or her as being of some potential help to students.

With respect to audiences, it also bears mentioning that among both main sorts of readers (those looking for individually useful strategies and those looking for a college-wide report), and among both main sorts of those looking for individually useful strategies (the experienced teacher and the inexperienced teacher), there will be people who know all about Evergreen (all of us insiders) and people who know next-to-nothing about it ("external audiences"). I have taken a few pains to provide contexts for readers who are not from Evergreen; for example, I have in some cases identified faculty members by field, explained some special Evergreen educational practices, and translated some of the college's nomenclature. To inside readers, examples of this context-providing will probably seem jarringly silly when stumbled upon.

How I Did the Interviews. When I began the interviewing work, I did not know precisely what to ask, because I had not yet

found the words for what I really wanted to know about. After the first two or three interviews, the words came: "I'd like for you to tell me in detail about the one writing-teaching strategy (or ploy, or gimmick, or behavioral modification device, or con, or creative group dynamics segment, or feat of legerdemain, or archetype-seeking missile, or skills-building module, or whatever) which you either believe in the most or are most enthusiastic about at this time." Soon, I had to add the words: "You can give me two instead of one, if two are in an irresolvable tie." And then, last, I had to add: "Don't give me a strategy (or whatever) if something else is more pressingly on your mind regarding the teaching of writing; for example, maybe you have some heuristic principles which you'd rather share, or a story or two."

My main principle, once I found it, was to encourage the sharing of the main thing on the interviewees' minds.

I treated the interviewees as experts throughout, because I believed it. It is rare that college professors in contemporary America talk about what works in the teaching of writing -- unless they are trying to get a grant, a publication-credit, or both, in which case their motives for the claim of success (and, by extension, for their own expertise) is at least somewhat suspect. These interviewees were successful writing teachers. Some were a little bit successful for a short time, others were enormously successful over an entire career, and there were of course all degrees of success between those extremes. But the important thing is that what I was hearing were reports of success, and that those reports had no motive but

the desire to share something that worked. I thus refrained at all times (or almost all times, anyway) from arguing with interviewees about their controlling ideologies, their psychological or pedagogical assumptions about how people learn, their philosophical or linguistic theories, their implicit or explicit arguments from personal experience (i.e., classroom experience, for the most part), their specific teaching goals, their "lifelong learner" goals for their students, or whatever. I have a good bit of expertise and experience in the teaching of writing, and I have some strong opinions about it, but I wanted to play collector (and in some cases clarifier) in this work, not debater, and I did.

In two cases (Richard Alexander's and Charles Teske's) I have appended teachers' materials. And in some cases I have included brief remarks about the theoretical underpinnings of particular strategies, as explained by the interviewees. At the end of the monograph is a list of those teachers who took part, with brief biographical annotations to the entries.

A Note on Organization. I was unable to find any smart organizational device which did not have the drawback of leaving over fifty per cent of the sections in some sort of "miscellaneous" category, so I finally gave up and organized the monograph alphabetically.

Acknowledgments. I should like to thank all those who consented to be interviewed. (And I hope it is some consolation,

in view of the fact that I got paid and you did not, that the wining and dining of some of you that I eagerly volunteered to do, in order to sweeten the pain of perpetrating yet another x'd-out block of time in your appointment books, took a hefty chunk out of my all-too-modest net. I think it was worth it.) It is a foregone conclusion that I have made some errors in the work of trying to carry what the interviewees told me to these pages, and I merely hope that none of these gaffes turns out to be too awful. If individual interviewees will point out mistakes in their respective sections to me as they find them, I shall be glad to make corrections in notes to the faculty (if need be) and in any future edition(s).

I should particularly like to thank Barbara Leigh Smith, Academic Dean at Evergreen and director of the NEH Writing Across the Liberal Arts Curriculum grant on this campus, for her enthusiasm and support throughout: From the original Evergreen catalogue (1971-72) and on down through the years, there has been included a very idealistic section called "Lots of Writing." This section has always stated, in what I believe have been the very same words, that Evergreen has a top-priority commitment to the teaching of writing in its academic programs straight across the curricular boards. The faculty and students have worked hard over the years to keep that priority high, and their work has been essential to our success in maintaining our level of commitment; but it is simply a fact of life that institutional priorities fluctuate with the changing priorities of administrative leaders as those leaders come and go (here and elsewhere, but ~~more~~ more here than elsewhere because of our rotating-

dean system). It has thus been of significant benefit to Evergreen that Barbara has chosen, as one of her deanship's missions, the strong advocacy of the continuing educational ideals summed up by our "Lots of Writing" section -- which first began appearing in those earliest public announcements of what we would be about as a college. We are more about writing than any other college I know of, and that fact is a pleasure to report.

Richard Alexander: Punctuation and Meaning

[Special Note: Reading, understanding, and using this strategy requires your referring to some teaching materials supplied in Appendix I of this monograph.]

Richard Alexander's teaching-of-writing strategy was one of the few which were specifically solicited for this monograph. The reason for its getting singled out as a request is that Alexander had voiced enthusiasm for it for a good while and had shared it with some colleagues in programs, but that it had apparently not been written up by him or anyone else for wider distribution.

Alexander's method of teaching punctuation, he is quick to stress, presumes the student's understanding of three larger, "macro-" issues and problems in rhetoric, logic, and writing:

1. What is a thesis? (Including: What is my thesis?)
2. How do you go about thinking about a thesis?
3. What is an outline?

After the student has been taught how to answer these questions through instruction in logic and critical thinking (or if the student miraculously already knows how), any specific question that comes up for that student will be answered (either by the teacher or by the student) in direct reference to one of those three larger questions and its answer. After the student gets that answer, he or she will be able to answer the specific

question which is presently posing a problem -- e.g., a question on a specific of punctuation.

In Alexander's own teaching, all such questions are fed back into the subsuming principles contained in his handout sheaf of teaching materials which themselves refer to principles and resulting strategies previously taught. (Necessary examples of these are included in Appendix I. Their separate titles are: "Working with the Vague Question Thesis to Get Us to A Workable One"; "Outline"; "Making of America: Writing Workshop #1"; "Punctuation"; "From Paul & Percival Goodman, *Communitas*." One of them, as you can see, is specifically tied to Alexander's 1983-84 Core-level coordinated studies program *The Making of America*, but it is easily adapted to any content-based teaching situation.)

Thus (and to repeat), any student questions on, or voiced problems with, punctuation will be answered through immediate referral back to the three "macro-" questions and their answers. When students are in possession of those answers (which, also to repeat, presupposes their knowledge of elementary logic), Alexander is ready to present his punctuation ideas to them as an argument. (This argument is given in the handout "Punctuation," but is implied in all the handouts.) He is trying, via this argument (as with all arguments) to persuade, and he thus refers to this particular strategy as a "suasive exercise." The specifics he is trying to get the students to accept are five:

1. Present-day punctuation is the result of evolutionary change, and all present-day punctuation is therefore best

understood in terms of its history.

2. Our present-day punctuation system is the result of the slow shift from a system based on pauses to one based on logic; and, in fact, today's punctuation is based almost entirely on logic.

3. Teaching punctuation by a system of rules is absurd, because there are always too many exceptions.

4. Punctuation practice (usage) varies with writing situations (contexts).

5. The student can therefore choose his or her punctuation practice, and that practice will have a meaning -- the student's own meaning.

After Richard Alexander has taught "the whole thing" -- i.e., after he has taught everything that to be found on the handouts contained in Appendix I -- he does a classroom exercise in which he demonstrates his system's efficacy. He does this by using exemplary sentences. His favorite such sentence is:

I hate people who go to college because they think they  
are so damned smart.

Through modifying this sentence by inserting various pieces, and combinations of pieces, of punctuation, Alexander teaches that meaning is to a significant degree determined by the punctuation one chooses. Obviously, for example, the sentence's meaning changes if a comma is placed between college and because. It

also changes if a comma is placed between people and who (and many students would so place it); and here, because the resulting meaning would be absurd (the speaker would be saying that he or she hated all people, because all people go to college because they think they are so damned smart), the student can easily be taught that a comma could under no circumstances go in that position.

The message students get from Alexander's "suasive exercise" is that punctuation always affects, and sometimes controls, meaning itself. He says that they can be brought to see that "any punctuation usage is correct unless no possible thought could take that form." He believes that few beginning students have ever realized that particular fact -- that, instead, most beginning students have spent their lives in seeing punctuation as an irrelevancy to meaning.

Alexander believes that his students, through both their exposure to this teaching and their subsequent practice with it, come to see the teaching's value, in terms of their being able to get their own meanings across in the future.

After his students have learned this lesson, he passes out a one-page text from which he has removed all punctuation. (This is the section of Communitas by Paul and Percival Goodman, referred to above and included in Appendix I.) He uses it in his seminars and workshops as a focal point for an exercise. Of each of its sentences he asks individual students or groups of students, "What do you think it means?" -- instead of asking them, "What do you think the Goodmans thought it meant when they

wrote it?" Their reasons all have to be reasons of content: no grammatical answers are allowed. After the group has gone through the handout in this manner, Alexander reads out what the Goodmans wrote, indicating their punctuation.

\* \* \*

Richard Alexander notes that his entire process takes about three weeks, in order for a seminar or writing class to achieve the understanding he is after -- to be persuaded. He believes it to be an excellent investment of time and energy.

## Gordon Beck: A Workshop in Logic and Rhetoric

Gordon Beck, Nancy Taylor, and Leo Daugherty have run writing workshops as regular courses in the two Great Books of the Western World Core Programs (1980-81; 1983-84). These courses meet once a week and require an essay a week from students. The only kind of writing which is taught in these workshops is expository writing. In most structural ways, they are based on the structure and methods given in Daugherty's section, although Beck and Taylor modify that strategy to fit more exactly their own priorities and their own feelings of what is pedagogically comfortable. (The basic "givens" are that the workshop requires one essay per week of each student -- an analytical piece or a personal response relating to the text, art-work, or topic/question/issue/theme of the week. The essay must be in final-draft shape. The workshop will follow a common syllabus -- common, that is, to all three workshops in the program -- which includes basic grammar and rhetoric handbooks, vocabulary-building aids, and so on.) In 1980-81, the students were placed in one of the program's three writing groups as based on what some composition researchers rather scientistically continue to call an "initial diagnostic essay"; there were three groups and three levels. In 1983-84, we jettisoned the "bottom" level and merely ran one "fast" level and two homogeneous "regular" levels, having found that running a "bottom" level is too enervating for everybody involved. During fall quarter, groups work on grammar, vocabulary-building,

spelling, elementary paragraphing, and rhetoric principles; during winter quarter, groups work on paragraphing, rhetoric principles, and elementary critical reasoning and logic; during spring quarter, groups [and/or individual students in tutorials] work on research papers.

\* \* \*

The particular workshop variant described here is the one Gordon Beck led in winter quarter, 1984.

He first starts with the whole group. (Given the current student-faculty ratio, the size of the group is about twenty -- or one-third of the total program enrollment.) Before turning back a set of essays, turned in the previous week, which he has critiqued in writing, he picks out one essay that is illustrative of points he wants to cover for the day. In terms of content, he also finds it useful if the paper is one which presents an opposing point of view to, or a different aspect of, a position taken the previous week by the analogous paper discussed by the whole group. He asks the student who wrote it to read it aloud. When the reading is finished, Gordon Beck first explains to the group why he chose it -- taking particular pains to point out how it presents a different side of the position taken in the previous week's paper. He then comments on those aspects of the paper which he thinks are especially instructive to the critical mass of the students in the group, in terms of what that critical mass needs to be working on at that particular time in its skills-development work.

When this part of the session is completed, about thirty or forty minutes will have elapsed.

The whole group then divides into its two ongoing subgroups (again, see Daugherty's section for specific details of subgroup organization and operation). In each of the two subgroups, one student will have brought ten xeroxed copies of his or her essay to be turned in that day to Gordon Beck. The student writer will read his or her essay to the subgroup aloud. Following the reading, the student writer cannot talk any more during the session; the essay either speaks for itself or doesn't. The other members of the subgroup then discuss the essay in detail from the point of view of its employment of effective rhetoric (or its lack of same), seeking out hypotheses, organizing principles, argument strategies, and so forth. As the present group is following a syllabus containing an elementary logic text (Cederblom and Paulsen, *Critical Reasoning*), its student critics try to read the essay in terms of the chapter in that text most recently completed. (In *Critical Reasoning*, all the chapters are eminently exploitable for this work, but especially so are those chapters featuring common fallacies and confusions.)

Sometimes while students are engaged in the critiquing work of their subgroups, Gordon Beck will meet in individual tutorial sessions with students needing special help. Usually, these tutorials are in written "ESL" -- instruction in English as a second language -- and Gordon Beck offers them to students whose written English is not yet at the level attained by most native speakers who are in their first year of college. Sometimes, of

course, he meets with the sub-groups, perhaps spending the whole period with one of the two (going to the other group in the following week) or perhaps going back and forth between the two groups during the same session.

In any event, whether he is sitting with a sub-group or not, Gordon Beck finds that letting the students run the groups, with minimum participation from him (because all such participation amounts to leadership in student eyes), encourages them to work seriously and conscientiously at the art of teaching. In fact, one major payoff of the method is its instilling the workshop members with a sense of that art -- and of the responsibility that goes with it to create criticism which is truly constructive.

This second segment of the workshop period takes nearly an hour to do at all well with one short paper.

## Craig Carlson: God and Grammar

The starting place is Nietzsche, and I fear we are not getting rid of God, because we still believe in grammar. But I believe in God and grammar both. And I believe that God and grammar are equal.

-- Craig Carlson

Craig Carlson's teaching strategy was developed at Webster University in Webster Groves, Missouri, where he taught in the academic year 1982-83 while on leave from Evergreen (where he has been on the faculty since 1973). This teaching strategy was developed for, and used with, foreign students (mostly non-Western), who possessed little or no understanding of English, in an international student center. But Carlson believes that it can be used, with common-sense adaptations, with a wide variety of students in need of basic-skills help. "It is good for any beginning students in the writing of English," he says. It is in large part a test-based strategy at the level of the word and the sentence, although the testing is necessarily phased out when the students get to larger written elements (from paragraphs on up). It is presented here in the form of a typical weekly schedule, although this schedule would probably be more typical of an early week in the quarter or semester than a late one.

### MONDAY

Monday is "Vocabulary Day." The students have been given a list (on the previous Friday) of twenty words to study for today. These words have been carefully chosen for their usefulness in

introducing students to college-level work. (Some typical words would be "dialectic," "heuristic," "precis," and so on. If need be, the words could easily be keyed to various special disciplines: sociology, library science, management, whatever.)

These words are tested on Monday, both orally and in writing. Students are expected to define them precisely and to be able to use them in conversation. The written part of the test is done with mimeos. The teacher asks for three definitions of a given word -- "dialectic," say. He may then ask for the spelled-out pronunciation of that same word -- with accents, syllabic breaks, and so on. The test would typically contain ten written questions based on their dictionary assignment from Friday. When the students were finished taking the test, they would pass it to the student on their left. The teacher would then give out the answers, and the students would mark one another's tests and give them back. Thus, all students would immediately know "how they did." Any student who flunked would take a remedial exam; this second-try exam would be bolstered by an individual conference, individual tutoring, and so on. Any student who flunked the remedial exam would be told he or she was flunking the course. They would then have to do better, and they would know it. (Carlson stresses that almost nobody actually flunked the course, as passing it was almost totally a matter of demonstrated effort. But at the same time he worked hard to instill in his students the understanding that they had to get by this course in order to continue their educations at Webster College -- to be sure that they understood the consequences of

not meeting Webster's English-language requirement.)

As for the oral exam, its special purpose is the motivational one of helping the students see that the words are of personal value to them -- to help them take the step of making these words their friends, their allies. Carlson might begin the oral exam by saying, "Abdul [one of his students at Webster]," would you begin by giving us a word you feel comfortable in using?" Abdul would then use the word -- "precis," say -- in a sentence. Carlson would then write that word on the blackboard. Other students would then ask him about the word -- asking anything they wanted to know about it and its use. For example, Abdul might be asked: "Can you give me an example of "precis"? The class would then move on to other words, each of which Carlson would write on the blackboard. There would then be an ensuing conversation -- one in which the students would try to use as many of the words on the blackboard as possible -- and Carlson would draw a line through a word only when he would be certain that the students all understood it and how to use it. When only four words are left -- the four which have for some reason proved to be the four hardest words -- the group has a narrowed task. It tries hard to use those four words. "At the end of the ninety-minute session, just about all of the original twenty words will have been used and will have been understood by all members of the class," Carlson says. He stresses that he does hardly any talking at all during the ninety minutes.

"I wanted them to read the dictionary as if it were the Bible," Carlson says. "Part of the strategy is reverence for the

dictionary: to get them to take it as a sacred text." To this end, he does some preliminary set-up work on the dictionary, introducing the students to what dictionaries are, how they are made, how to use them, and so on; and he notes that he tries to get beginning students to use Webster's Third International regularly.

When they leave at the end of Monday's session, they take with them a take-home examination in sentence grammar which they will do "on honor." ("On honor" in this case means that the student can consult any text he or she wishes, but must do his or her own work.) At Webster, students got the examinations from a student assistant and turned them in to that assistant for assessment when they had completed them; at Evergreen, the exams would be picked up from the faculty member's program secretary, but the faculty member would personally have to mark them, as we have no such marking assistance here. The faculty member determines, from diagnostic work and from initial impressions of the students' skills-levels, the number of examinations each student must take.

#### WEDNESDAY

When the students come to Wednesday's session, their exams have already been marked. You know how they have done, both collectively and individually, although they do not as yet know.

During the first half of the ninety-minute session, the faculty member emphasizes one and only one specific aspect of grammar. This aspect of grammar is one with which the critical

mass of the students has demonstrated, on the exam just completed, that it has problems. This aspect of grammar must also be one which is clearly and adequately dealt with in the students' textbooks, as such instruction, in order to be most effective, should be text-based. (But readers should note that students do not have any purchased textbooks at all for this class, instead using texts in a central learning services center; the matter of texts is taken up in detail below.)

After this period of instruction, the teacher gives back the corrected exams, and the remainder of the class-time is given over to discussion of any and all problems experienced in doing the exam.

Carlson stresses that he is trying to teach his students, beyond the level of the individual skills and repertoire-segments themselves, the following two facts: first, that there is an objective measure of achievement in basic sentence grammar; second, that the rules of basic sentence grammar are for the most part cut-and-dried and inflexible. "It is this two-part idea that you really teach," he says. "You teach that grammar is a rigorous, mostly inflexible discipline which must be studied and learned as such, rule by rule."

As for the examinations themselves, Carlson believes that their importance to the enterprise cannot be overemphasized. "They are important," he says, "because they make students think about grammar all week: it's easy to ace these tests, but it is worrying not to, and aceing them makes the students feel good, while the worrying is productively nervous-making."

The students retain their exams and make a file of them. The teacher is keeping a record of the students' scores and individual areas of success and difficulty; and it is important that the students keep the same record, along with the individual exams which are, cumulatively, the source of the record.

"If the students get hooked on, or by, this whole strategy," Carlson says, "they will have gained an inestimable reward." The crucial parts of that payoff for them are:

1. A sense of scholarly procedures;
2. A respect for the rules of grammar, and, by extension, for other rules-based disciplines and areas of knowledge;
3. A sense (mostly from the Friday sessions, which are discussed below) of being able to see and to avoid, in other people's work and increasingly in their own, verbal cliches -- a learned ability to stay away from them in both thinking and writing. ("Learning to demolish cliches in thinking and writing is the best epistemological training for beginning writers," Carlson states firmly.)

These three rewards are much more important than the simple business of having cranked out an acceptable theme per week for an academic quarter or semester, Carlson believes. He claims that his students are simply not ready to write an acceptable theme when they begin, and that, moreover, they will not be able

to do so when they end the course. He says that practically no basic-level (or, in Evergreen's case, Core-level) student will be. [This sentiment is also a crucial element in Sandra Simon's teaching, and the reader is referred to the section devoted to her teaching strategy in this monograph.] But Carlson says that at the end of his course, his students will be "poised" to write a good theme; i.e., that they will then stand a chance of being able to do so.

#### FRIDAY

Friday is "Writing Day." At the end of the previous Wednesday's session, the teacher gave the students a writing assignment, and that assignment is due on Friday -- today. The formal requirement is that the writing assignment be typed. The first such assignment is to bring in a thesis statement, and this is all the students are required to bring for the first Friday. The second such assignment is to bring "hook" -- the introductory first sentence of an as-yet-nonexistent first paragraph. (So, yes, for each of the first two Fridays, the students are asked to bring only one sentence.)

The first two ninety-minute sessions are discussions of these two sentences. ("Unacceptable" ones have to be done over -- with the standards of unacceptability being strictly normative and not in any way subject to the teacher's personal stylistic dislikes.) Thus, the first two weeks of Fridays pass.

For the third Friday, the students must bring in an introductory paragraph (which contains, as its first sentence,

the second week's "hook"). This paragraph must be made of five sentences, no more and no less. These five sentences are written according to the following formula and cannot depart from it:

S1: Hook

S2: Transition/Developer/Pivot I

S3: Transition/Developer/Pivot II

S4: Transition/Developer/Pivot III

S5: Thesis Statement

For the fourth Friday, the students write what Carlson terms a "demonstration paragraph." This is the paragraph which follows the introductory one dealt with in the previous week. The demonstration paragraph must be compatible with the introductory paragraph. It, too, is made up of a formulaic five sentences from which the writer cannot vary:

S1: Transition from introductory paragraph which gives the reader the most important reason he or she should accept the thesis statement

S2: Developer/Amplifier I

S3: Developer/Amplifier II

S4: Developer/Amplifier III

S5: Conclusion/Pivot (for this paragraph solely)

The fifth Friday is given over to a concluding paragraph.

On the sixth Friday, the students bring in a second essay, repeating the above method for a whole three-paragraph essay, as opposed to only one paragraph.

On the seventh Friday, the students bring in a third essay.

On the eighth Friday, the students bring in a fourth essay.

On the ninth Friday, the students bring in a fifth essay.

On the tenth Friday, the students bring in a sixth essay.

Carlson stresses that all the essays are argumentative, but that part of the assignment each week will be to employ different standard rhetorical strategies in making arguments. (For example, the comparison/contrast strategy would be assigned for one week, while an elementary syllogistic strategy would be assigned for another week, and so on.)

What about the assessment of these essays by the teacher?

Carlson provides the following guidelines, which are based on the model he developed at Webster and on his own practice:

1. "Positive feedback" is the main rule-of-the-day.
2. Violating the formula produces an immediate flunk.
3. Writing cliches elicits criticism, detailed explanation, and help. (When cliches are present in writing, Carlson says he would typically respond with something like: "This isn't what you believe. Who are you? Say what you believe in your own words." In this work, he says, the teacher must be rigorous and unrelenting, because this is the hardest part of it all with

beginning students. He notes that he troubles to do it because, "I wanted to teach them that writing is personal expression."

4. "Grammar and spelling mistakes are not dealt with harshly, but are dealt with -- helpfully.

Making the same mistake twice elicits harsher criticism. (One major error -- or error-type -- is pointed out per paper.)

Is Craig Carlson's model and method for teaching basic-level expository writing skills based on any body of theory -- Nietzsche and God aside? In answer to this question, Carlson simply replied, "Orwell, period." When pressed, he added that people who have never read Orwell should probably begin with the essays in his *Inside the Whale*. When further pressed, he said that he had been particularly influenced in his teaching by Joseph M. Williams, *Style: Ten Lessons in Clarity and Grace* (Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman, and Co., 1981), as well as by the classic *Elements of Style* (William Strunk and E.B. White, *The Elements of Style*, 3rd. Ed. [New York and London: Macmillan, 1981]).

Does Carlson adhere to a particular philosophy in his teaching of writing? "Style is about telling the truth in your own way," he says, "and grace is doing it beautifully."

What rewards come to the teacher from Carlson's method? "Doing it this way took two things away from me," he replied. "The first was my obsession with getting students to write a good

theme in ten weeks, and the second was my burden of therapy in connection with the teaching of writing."

#### A Note on Texts

As mentioned above, students need buy no books for this course at all. Instead, a central learning services center had a selection of texts on reserve for the students to consult. On the exams handed out by the teacher, detailed instruction is given as to what sections of what texts to read in connection with that particular exam and in preparation for the upcoming class discussion. "Administratively, the way to do it is to have the Learning Services Center at Evergreen buy these books and put them on reserve for your class -- if you were going to experiment with my teaching strategy," Carlson says, adding that "Two or three copies of each text is fine." He suggests the following as very basic texts: Betty Azar, Understanding and Using English Grammar; Barbara Seale, Writing Efficiently Step-by-Step; McKay and Rosenthal, Writing for A Specific Purpose. As intermediate texts, he recommends Robert Krohm, English Sentence Structure.

#### A Note on the Exams

Carlson believes that the exams he and his team developed at Webster are maximally free (although doubtless not totally free) from cultural bias. They were designed specifically for international students from a wide variety of cultural backgrounds (and primarily non-Western students) by a team which took as its top priority the achievement of fair testing.

Postscript

Craig Carlson especially invites any interested readers to write him for further information.

## Richard Cellarius' Guide to Writing Papers and Reports

Richard Cellarius is a faculty chemist at Evergreen who is interested in writing and who has, over the years, amassed a sizeable body of techniques for the teaching of writing. "Nothing I do is original," he says, cheerfully admitting that he is a pack-rat of other people's writing-teaching strategies. (He especially credits his colleagues Craig Carlson and Matt Smith for having given him good ideas, although he notes that they are but two influences among many.) "What I do best -- in writing and in other things in life -- is taking other people's stuff and making something new out of it -- a new whole -- which is useful, which works," he says.

As the reader might imagine, Richard Cellarius has collected a goodly amount of strategies which are easily and naturally shareable, and some of these are written up and ready to be mailed off to whoever might want to try them. Of these, I have seen "Ten Steps to Writing a Final Project Report (After You Have Your Research Done"; "The Notebook"; "Notebooks and Journals"; and "Laboratory Notes and Reports." No one should jump to the conclusion (just from looking at the titles) that these are merely technical writing guides for student scientists; they are that, of course, but they also possess the virtue of wider applicability -- of "writing-across-the curriculum" applicability. People interested in looking at these materials should contact Richard Cellarius via his Evergreen mail-stop.

I am here going to reprint "Richard Cellarius' Guide to Writing Papers and Reports," which will be followed by some

postscripts and addenda gathered during my interview with Cellarius.

\* \* \*

## I. Maxims

### 1. Relax

Explore

Relate

Expound

### 2. Whatever is worth doing is worth doing well.

-- Earl of Chesterfield, 1746

### 3. Anything worth doing is worth doing badly.

-- Attributed to Kenneth Boulding, c. 1968

### 4. Don't let anybody tell you it will be easy.

## II. Tools

A writer needs more than paper and pen or typewriter. The most important tools beyond those essentials are guides to proper use of the language and advice on style. I recommend you purchase all of the following; they will serve you for the remainder of your writing career:

### 1. A good collegiate dictionary such as The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language

### 2. A thesaurus

### 3. A handbook of English, e.g., Hodges and Whitten, eds., The Harbrace College Handbook, 9th ed.

4. Strunk and White, *The Elements of Style*, 3rd. ed.
5. Sheridan Baker, *The Practical Stylist*, 5th ed. (or Baker, *The Complete Stylist and Handbook*, 2nd ed.)
6. Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 4th ed.
7. A stapler
8. A typewriter

You should also become acquainted with:

1. Peter Elbow, *Writing Without Teachers*
2. Peter Elbow, *Writing With Power*
3. Leo Daugherty, *Grammatical Writing* (TESC SPLU)
4. H.W. Fowler, *A Dictionary of Modern English Usage*, 2nd ed.
5. Bergen Evans and Cornelia Evans, *A Dictionary of Contemporary American Usage*; Wilson Follett, *Modern American Usage*; and/or any other guides to American usage
6. A standard style manual for the area that is of major interest to you (*A Manual of Style*, 13th ed., published by the University of Chicago Press, seems to cover most areas well and is one of the best general manuals available)

### III. On Drafts

1. Write everything down; don't trust your memory to recall five days (or five minutes) later the neat idea

you just had.

2. Date every piece of paper; number/title each page.
3. Don't throw anything away . . . at least until you're sure you are not going to have to make any more revisions -- i.e., until your paper is turned in and accepted as final.
4. Don't fill up pages single-spaced, top-to-bottom, edge-to-edge. Write double-spaced with reasonable margins; you'll need room to edit and still be able to read your editing.
5. Write on only one side of the page; you can't cut up pages and move paragraphs around when something important is on the back. (This doesn't mean you can't use the backs of old dittos or other throwaways; they're great for drafts. Just write your draft on one side.) If you do end up "cutting and pasting," label or number every section indicating the new order. A stapler is very useful for attaching sections together; it's also quicker and cheaper in the long run.

#### IV. On Writing

1. Write directly to a particular individual, a colleague whom you know will be interested in what you have to say and will want to hear it. Don't write for me or for a generalized faceless and mindless audience.
2. Scribble out your ideas as fast as you can to start with. Let them flow from your brain onto the paper.

Peter Elbow says scribble out your paper three times (yes, three) and then go back and polish it up for final, fourth draft.

". . . I have as much difficulty as ever in expressing myself clearly and concisely; and this difficulty has caused me a very great loss of time; but it has had the compensating advantage of forcing me to think long and intently about every sentence, and thus I have been often led to see errors in reasoning and in my own observations of those of others.

"There seems to be a sort of fatality in my mind leading me to put at first my statement and proposition in a wrong or awkward form. Formerly I used to think about my sentences before writing them down; but for several years I have found that it saves time to scribble down in a vile hand whole pages as quickly as I possibly can, contracting half the words; and then correct deliberately. Sentences thus scribbled down are often better than I could have written deliberately."

-- *The Autobiography of Charles Darwin* (1876)

3. Pick one important idea, state it clearly in the beginning, and develop it, rather than writing a laundry list and leaving the reader to fill in the gaps. Sheridan Baker stresses the importance of a

thesis statement and has good advice on the overall organization of a paper and on paragraphing. Read it. Follow it. In dealing with seminar books, you should relate your idea to a major theme of the book and, whenever possible, to other books you've read for your program or course. Try not to deal with trivial issues in isolation. Development can include: (a) argument against; (b) supporting evidence for; (c) relationship to your own personal experience; (d) description of new insights and/or connections gained. Document your claims ("Slater says . . ." or "Darwin says . . .") with short quotes, or, preferably, summaries and specific page references with footnotes or notes in proper bibliographical form. Support your generalizations with specific examples.

4. Be conscious of your writing style. Read Strunk and White for the third time, if necessary. Use it, Baker, and/or a handbook of English to be sure you are using such things as commas, semicolons, and the various parts of speech (nouns, verbs, participles, *etc.*) correctly. Participles and gerunds are especially troublesome.
5. Watch how you use words. If you have any doubt that a word means what you want it to mean, look it up in a dictionary. A thesaurus also helps in the finding of the proper word. Try not to invent words; *alot* is not a word; neither is *how-ever*. And don't use big words

because they sound more impressive, when a little one will do the job easier and better. (Analysis, not Analyzation.) Remember the goal is communication.

6. Spell correctly. Here are some words that I continually see misspelled in the contexts in which they are used (Baker, pp. 168-69, has a more complete list):

its, it's (It's is a contraction for it is;

its is a personal pronoun like his and

hers. You don't write hi's, do you?)

there, their, they're

where, were

weather, whether

develop (NOT develope), tomato (NOT tomatoe)

And be sure to put in an apostrophe (') when writing the possessive: Richard's seminar.

7. Consult Turabian and/or Baker on the overall form and organization of your paper, especially on the proper form for bibliographical citations. For more advanced technical work you may need to refer to the style manual for the specific discipline in which you're working. Most journals indicate in their "Instructions to Authors" which style manuals they follow.

#### V. The Final Paper

Please treat the following as instructions, not just suggestions. They may seem stringent and formal. They serve

two important purposes, however: (1) they indicate to readers that you are taking your writing seriously and that you would like them to take it seriously; (2) they make it easier for me to deal promptly with the many papers I have to read.

1. Every paper should have a title to tell the reader what it is about.
2. Put your name and the exact date the paper is completed on the first page.
3. Number the pages.
4. Every paper should be typed, and the typographical errors should be corrected. It's OK to correct them by hand with a pen for seminar essays; for important papers and reports that you'll want to keep in your portfolio forever, make the page as picture-perfect as possible.
5. Leave one-inch margins (at least) on all four edges of the page. Use 1 and 1/2- or 2-line spacing. (It's easier to read, and it provides room for comments.)
6. Don't waste a page as a title page for a seminar essay. Longer papers and research reports often justify the importance and finished look a separate title page provides. To repeat: be sure your name and the date are on the title page. It's sometimes useful for future reference to note on the title page what class it was prepared for (e.g., Introduction to Underwater Basket Weaving).

7. Longer papers should be broken up into sections, the sections should be titled, and a table of contents should be prepared which indicates both the titles and the page on which each section begins.
8. Don't waste your money on plastic or paper report folders. I particularly detest those plastic things that always fall apart. Invest the money in a box of paper clips or a stapler. I like papers that are simply stapled together. I think people who turn down the corners and tear them a bit to make the pages stick together don't have much respect for what they have written.
9. Please turn in the original, not a Xerox copy. If corrections need to be made, I'll mark it up. If good things need to be said, I'll put them on the cover page or attach a note. I will not mark up extensively a good final term paper or major report.

\* \* \*

Richard Cellarius made a point of saying to me two or three times, once in a note and twice in his interview, "I do not deal specifically with creative writing"; yet he also stresses his very strong agreement with Enrico Fermi's maxim that if you don't do something creative in your notebook every day, you aren't doing your job: "one must, Fermi taught, do one's creative thinking ~~in writing~~, in order to imprint it in the mind." "All I'm trying to do," Cellarius says, "is to find ways, appropriate

to particular learning situations, to get folks to write about what they're working on."

Doranne Crable-Sundmacher:  
Teaching Writing with Learning Partners

I. Background

Doranne Crable-Sundmacher is a writing teacher of wide experience, and she says that the main thing her experience has taught her is that "the only thing that matters is expressing yourself -- which is just a 1980s way of writing what you know." She adds: "It doesn't matter what the President might think about your writing, or your father, or whoever -- it's what you think of it that counts. You must express yourself and then feel that you did it." Still, she recognizes the importance of the conventions of standard English: "I'm a stickler for the rules of grammar, as well as for clarity of expression," she notes. "Writers need that structure, no matter what genre they're writing in. It's like playing jazz flute -- you'll do better if you learn the scales." [Playing jazz flute is only one of Crable-Sundmacher's several abilities in the arts.] With regard to the importance of clarity, she strongly believes that "anybody who can think clearly can write clearly."

The job of the teacher is to let the students know that they can indeed produce writing which is self-expressive, clear, and satisfactorily conventional: "They'll produce in writing what a teacher convinces them they can say."

Crable-Sundmacher's teaching-of-writing experience includes just about every sort of writing imaginable (she lists "poetry

writing, letter writing, report writing, fiction writing, just for openers"), and she declares that this breadth of experience has taught her the important lesson that "all writing is creative writing!"

She has, moreover, taught writing at many levels of instruction, including junior high school, high school, and college. She underscores her belief that working with junior high and high school students has served her in especially good stead, because it taught her about the powers of imagination possessed by people in their 'teens -- power which, she believes, "has not been socialized into the hypocritical thinking that they must write for a desired response from authority figures." Most important of all, this teaching taught Crable-Sundmacher that "we all have this power in us, and it is available to us if we can just unblock."

One teaching-of-writing strategy which Crable-Sundmacher employs for the development of her students' imaginative powers -- including the abilities to write clearly, conventionally, and self-expressively -- is called **Learning Partners**.

## II: The Learning Partners Strategy

Crable-Sundmacher tells her students at their first class meeting that they should choose one (or sometimes two) people by the end of the week with whom they'll meet regularly -- with whom they will be a Learning Partner.

There are eight basic purposes for the students' meeting together:

1. To share copies of everything they write for the class. (Crable-Sundmacher notes that these students should make four copies of everything they write -- one for the teacher, one for the portfolio, and one each for the two learning partners.)

2. To exchange written critiques of what they read.

3. To establish a regular-basis peer discourse about the issues of the program and the techniques of writing, and, hopefully, to carry that discourse forward in a way that causes the two to blend. This discourse is talked.

4. To cause the students to lose their self-consciousness as writers by working apart from professors.

5. To cause the students to make practical use of journals, as opposed to theoretical use. (Crable-Sundmacher notes that she requires journals -- of the sort which she calls "conversations with the self" -- in all that she teaches, even movement and dance.) She uses the term "practical use" because the peer Learning Pairs are working through the practical writing problems mentioned above, and working through them at the same time, even if the work and the problems are themselves but tacitly understood. "The journal also helps them to help each other relate their writing to the alking -- the dialoging -- they do with each other in #3 [above]," she says. "It helps them, for

example to ask each other: 'Why didn't you write it as you talked it to me last Wednesday?'"

6. To cause more honest and open critical response than is usually elicited. "People are much franker with peers than with teachers; we know that," Crable-Sundmacher observes. "But it is also true that people assimilate stuff -- use stuff -- more from peers than from teachers," she adds, "and that's a crucially important factor." She goes on: "I find that the end result is that students make steadier and more lasting progress when they're working in tandem than when they're working alone or with teachers. This is because they can pick up developmental hints from each other in ways that they can't get from teachers. They don't feel that they can criticize their teachers' writing (they all think their teachers are master-writers); but they can dare to help each other; they can presume to; and they can allow a peer to similarly presume. It's a great confidence-builder!"

7. To encourage listening. "Listening is important," Crable-Sundmacher stresses, "because you cannot write in a vacuum: you have to be aware."

8. To "help teachers maximize results while minimizing their own sweat -- the principle of 'more with less'."

### III: How the Strategy is Carried to the Writing Class

The Learning Partners present each other's work in class. Each person's task is to present his or her partner's works to

the whole class in any two-week period. "They can read it, they can opaque-project it, they can present a summary or analysis of it, whatever," Crable-Sundmacher says, "with the only requirement being that they have to present it exactly as they perceived it." ("They can't ~~edit~~ their perception of their partner's work, either; thus, it is either ~~there~~ or ~~not there~~," she adds.) Then, they each have to present their critiques of their partner's work. (She notes that the teacher will of necessity have to set a time-limit for all of this activity, and he or she should do it early in the quarter. If at all possible, the allowed time should be specified ~~on the syllabus~~, accompanied by an explanatory note which says that only so many presentations can be done during any single period, during any single week, and during the quarter itself. The point of setting the time-limit early on, and of making it a matter of record that one has done so, is to encourage ~~brevity and conciseness~~ -- and to be able, when the going gets tough on this score [as it sometimes can threaten to do], to hold the line.)

Next, there comes a general, class-wide response to the presentations which have been given for the day. During this stage, the partner whose work was being performed and then critiqued can take part as well. This general response period is done as a seminar. According to Crable-Sundmacher, it is:

1. A response to the presenter -- a critique of what he or she did.
2. A forum in which the partner whose original work was

performed can hear and see that work presented and get immediate feedback to it -- and in which, moreover, that same person can, if he or she wishes, make a "defense" -- and in which, most important of all, that same person can feel pride.

#### IV: Nuts and Bolts

How much time are we talking about devoting to these activities? Crable-Sundmacher says that in a three-hour session she can cover from five to seven of these presentations/critiques, including the classroom-wide response period.

During a single quarter, each student will do roughly thirty pieces of writing.

Out of these thirty pieces, the Learning Partner will pick only three to perform.

The Learning Partner also determines, in picking these three, a progression of some significant sort -- creating a sequence which will show development over the quarter in the person who made the work. (An example might be a progression of three papers which showed development simply from the roughest of the thirty to the most polished of the thirty.)

The teacher reads those three. "He or she sits down with these papers and enters into a conversation -- a dialog -- with each student. The teacher writes each student a letter, plus responding [via marginal and interlinear notes] on the papers themselves. To repeat, the important thing is . . . the dialog."

The teacher allows himself or herself two weeks for this

work, in order that the work may be fully enjoyed, Crable-Sundmacher says. (But this time allowance would be appropriate for a class of fifteen at most, she adds.)

The teacher then returns the papers.

Then, the writer continues the dialog by responding to what the teacher has written. *And it is this last formal stage which brings about the strategy's payoff for the student in clarity and self-expression*, according to Crable-Sundmacher. The reason is that in the response to what the teacher has written, the writer will almost invariably say, "What I *meant* to say was . . . ." And, in saying precisely *that*, the student will finally make himself or herself clear -- taking things to the point toward which the teacher has been leading for eight or nine weeks.

\* \* \*

Noting that her Learning Pairs teaching-of-writing strategy is "only one of the nine or ten strategies that I have on hand and regularly use," Doranne Crable-Sundmacher indicated that she would be happy to discuss this strategy or any of her others with interested teachers from Evergreen and elsewhere.

## Beryl L. Crowe: One-Act Plays on Program Themes

This teaching strategy, used by Beryl Crowe and his team in the Coordinated Studies Program called *The Making of America* (1981-82), is one which calls upon students to transform their program's theme into the theme of a one-act play which they must write and produce. (Readers unfamiliar with Evergreen programs will need to know that Coordinated Studies Programs usually have major themes which lie at the heart of all reading, writing, seminar-ing, and so on. They also usually have at least one faculty member who possesses expertise in the teaching of writing -- particularly if they are Core Programs -- and the writing specialist in this particular program was Sandra Simon.)

The theme of *The Making of America* was Trust and Mistrust -- as articulated by Erik Erikson in his *Childhood and Society*, and as amplified by the theory of the epigenetic cycle in his *Insight and Responsibility and Youth, Identity, and Crisis*. The program's students read at least one of these Erikson texts and received lectures and other presentations on the ideas in the others.

A crucial part of the students' work was their interviewing of local citizens on four local issues known to be characterized by a degree of community mistrust: (1) the relocation of Southeast Asians in the Olympia area; (2) the Satsop nuclear power installation; (3) The Evergreen State College; (4) the regional salmon-fishing rights of Indians. Part of the purpose of the interviewing was to help the students test the faculty's working hypothesis that if people are socialized to mistrust

the world, this mistrust will get expressed in their mistrust of all things unfamiliar to them (or in conflict with their provincialism). The students were asked to look for this particular sort of mistrust in their interviewing work, and they were also specifically asked to check out the additional hypothesis that they and others are more mistrustful of things about which they possess the least evidence upon which to base a sound, reasoned judgment of mistrust.

In a typical set of interviews, program students spoke at length with local managers of apartment houses in which Southeast Asian families were living. They found that the basic conflict of these managers was between their liberal wanting to like these families and their finding that desire to be in conflict with their prejudices (literally, their pre-judgments, or judgments based on no good evidence), as well as with their culture-binding (which expressed itself in the managers' finding Southeast Asian persons' behavior difficult to empathize with because it was so different from their own or from any with which they had direct experience).

As The Making of America was a classic Evergreen three-quarter program, the students' work could divide itself into three very logical quarter-long segments. During Fall Quarter, each student wrote an essay on the Trust/Mistrust theme. During Winter Quarter, the students converted their essays into first-draft one-act play scenarios (or outlines of such scenarios), as based on their interviewing work). During Spring Quarter, the students wrote and produced final drafts of their one-act plays.

The student plays were all produced toward the end of Spring Quarter as a sort of ritual-of-closure; the audience was made up of the entire program, plus its invitees and people simply responding to campus advertisements. Although the lion's share of the faculty critiquing and editing of play-texts was done by Sandra Simon, each of the three faculty members gave a five-minute oral critique of each play following its production. (The third faculty member in the program was York Wong.)

"The aim," said Crowe, "was to translate a small set of important theoretical postulates into day-to-day observations, in order that the students could hear Erickson in their interviewing -- and in order that they could then make an audience hear him through their plays."

Was the strategy a success? Crowe answered: "There was only one play out of the total of sixty that I wouldn't call a significant tragic drama. (And it would have made an acceptable television movie or 'special': It was a good liberal melodrama, you know, in which everybody came out feeling good, with all problems solved.)"

Thad Curtz: "I Think I'll Talk About Technique"

I began my interview with Thad Curtz on teaching-of-writing strategies just as I began almost all the others. After I had done my two-minute setup, Curtz was silent for about five minutes as he decided on what to say and prepared to say it.

Finally, he said: "I think I'll talk about technique." And he began his talk about technique by telling a story.

He said that when he was on professional leave from Evergreen he taught writing one day a week in a third-grade class. One day, he asked the students to write about a memory. After five minutes, he saw a student staring into space. He asked the student what he had written, and the student showed him: "Last summer I went to Disneyland. I had a great time."

Curtz asked the student: "What happened at Disneyland?"

The student answered: "We went up the Matterhorn. It's all creepy and groany. At the top it's blue sky. And then the bottom falls out."

Curtz then asked the student: "Why don't you write some of that down?"

Five minutes passed, after which Curtz came back to the student, and this time the student had written ~~the same thing he'd written before, stopping after the word "Matterhorn."~~

"The moral," Curtz told me, "is that one reason college students don't write well is that at least fifteen years ago something happened that disconnected their pen from their voice."

The teaching strategy that addresses what is learned in the

moral will naturally be one that gets people to do autobiographical writing exercises that connect their lives with texts.

Curtz offered the following pieces of advice for teachers interested in pursuing such a strategy:

1. "Pick a theme that matters in the text the students are reading." (Some examples are:  
A. Being lonely  
B. Making a mistake)
2. "Give students a couple of minutes to make a list for themselves of whatever in their lives is connected to the theme that matters."
3. "Tell them in advance whether you're going to make them let somebody else read what they write or not (including you)."
4. "Don't make them let anybody else read what they write (including you), unless you have a very good reason for it. For them even to think that someone else might read it will get in the way."
5. "Have them write about the incident in the first person, present tense, with as much sensory information as they can put into it."

6. "Have them lie, if they can't remember any or all of the incident. Have them make it up."
7. "Always do the exercise yourself with the students. (And pay attention to what you might have them do next while you're doing the exercise.)"
8. "Give them an opportunity to read their writing out loud afterward if they want to."
9. "Ask them to think or write for a minute about how that piece of experience is like or not like what the text they have read has to say about the same theme."

To these pieces of advice Thad Curtz added one postscript:

- [10.] "If you're going to make them share it, and have told them that ahead of time, be sure and tell them in advance, too, that anybody who wants to may pass."

\* \* \*

When I asked Thad Curtz if particular writers and works had influenced his adoption of the above approach, he said yes and listed the following three references: Ira Progoff, At A Journal Workshop; Richard Boleslavsky, Acting: The First Six Lessons (see the chapter on emotional memory); Patricia Stoll, "You Must

Begin At Zero: Story Workshop," College English, December, 1973,  
pp. 256-269.

## Leo Daugherty: A Workshop in Writing for the Real World

[NOTE: It seemed a boring idea to interview myself; so what follows is a paper I wrote in the spring of 1984 on the teaching of writing. At the Basic Skills DTF's request, it was printed as part of that DTF's report to the Evergreen faculty, but the print quality (mimeo) was not legible. Several faculty asked if it would ever appear in legible form. So I decided to print it here as my contribution to the monograph. (It will also appear in a forthcoming issue of *PN Papers*.) -- L.D.]

### I: The Problem Addressed by the Workshop

For any number of good reasons, the issue of stylistic norms has dropped from some writing teachers' list of concerns. Various specific movements in literature have followed the general movement of Romanticism (and its doctrines affirming the priority of process, creativity, and personal expression) in liberating most literary forms and genres from the constraints of standard norms for written English.

Thus, there are really no longer any specific norms (except perhaps for spelling) governing the construction of poems, plays, or novels -- just as there are no longer such norms for a wide variety of other art forms.

This is not true, however, in the case of the essay.

Here, very tough norms at the levels of the word, the sentence, and the paragraph still obtain. First, the word must be spelled right, and it must be the right word for the right meaning (or at least it can not obviously, noticeably, be a wrong one). Second, the sentence must conform to the norms of standard grammar. Third, the paragraph must be written in such a way as to lead educated readers to believe that the writer has been the

beneficiary of some instruction in the criteria of (a.) unity, (b.) coherence, and (c.) adequate development -- and that he knows that most paragraphs have a better chance of succeeding if they contain topic sentences.

These norms of so-called "Standard English" do not get learned by people who do not get taught them. True, some people learn (or "internalize") most of these norms via the fortunate accident of being born into homes where lots of reading goes on -- if and only if they, too, do lots of reading when they are young. They learn to write by analogy. They are the people who always say, "I usually know how to write things grammatically, but I couldn't tell you any grammar rules, because I don't know any." These people's good fortune certainly qualifies as "getting taught." Other people, however, will usually only be able to learn these norms if they find their ways into classrooms where these norms are taught overtly. And when people get past a certain age -- 17 or 18, in my experience -- that overt teaching must unfortunately be structural, not analogical. That is to say, such students must (a.) study a structural norm; (b.) memorize that norm; (c.) work hard to conform to that norm in their own writing; (d.) work harder, still, to make that conformity a habit.

Does adherence to these norms have anything to do with real grammar? Rarely. These norms amount to a kind of social etiquette and are probably best understood -- especially by students! -- when dissociated from the serious contemporary study of syntax. Some of the norms are functional, but the majority is

probably not. One learns them only to acquire sufficient credibility to be thought by educated readers to have the right to state a serious argument, or to recount one's responses to (or impressions of) something. The learned ability to adhere to them amounts to little other than a social grace. Unfortunately, the learning of that social grace is necessarily prefatory to anything having to do with the successful writing of final-draft essays -- although not, to be sure, with either thinking about or talking about the sorts of things usually written about in essays. (This is so only because the very writing that essays are done in is tightly governed by the norms of Standard English which, when learned, are the social grace -- whereas thinking and talking, especially if the talk is private talk, are governed by no heretofore-codified set of norms.)

Does the ability to write in conformity with these norms have anything to do with Truth, Beauty, or Virtue? Various philosophers and teachers have argued over the years that they do, but it is very difficult today to accept those arguments, and it is equally difficult to find or construct new ones to replace them.

Does conformity to these norms advance the cause of Clarity? (I capitalize it because it is a bit of a sacred cow in some compositional/rhetorical ideologies.) Insofar as it helps one's writing to meet the rhetorical expectations of educated readers who have themselves been habituated to these norms, yes. Otherwise, my best guess is, Probably not.

Is working toward adherence to these norms at odds with a

writer's creativity or freedom of expression? If one grants that students should work toward being able to produce final drafts of essays, and if one grants that such final drafts are necessarily under the control of these norms, the answer can only be that the student's general creativity and general potential to express himself or herself freely will be more narrowly channeled and "contained" by these norms than would be the case if the norms did not exist. (It is worth mentioning, however, that this amount of channeling and containment probably amounts to very little in a world in which a piece of writing must be expressed in only one language anyway; the loss of imaginative freedom necessitated by a writer's being held to only one language per piece, even if he or she knows other languages, is undoubtedly immense -- and theoretically perhaps even infinite. Monolingualism curtails more creativity and freedom of expression, in both writing and speech, than any other single factor. Yet even if one knew all all the languages, Frederic Jameson's "Prison-House of Language" would still be an incarcerative fact of human life: humans are tragically both able and unable to "speak their minds" freely.)

Is the teaching of students to conform to these norms in any way at odds with the educational needs of persons of color or other representatives of cultural diversity who have any need at all to communicate in Standard English? I don't see how it could be. When it comes to the writing of essays, Standard English is the only game in town, and one either learns to play or one does not. Some advocates of Black English have claimed that major

differences exist between Black English and Standard English; this is a true claim, insofar as it goes, but it is almost totally a claim relating to speech and to the various genres of imaginative writing. There is no black Expository Writing; there is only the expository writing of Standard English. This is a tragic state of affairs. But it is a true state of affairs. Should persons of color and other American minorities learn the norms of Standard English? Ultimately, it is up to them, but I personally believe that they should learn them, if they plan to live their lives in an English-writing country, because failure to learn them can only exacerbate the disenfranchisement regularly experienced by cultural minorities.

\* \* \*

My main point in saying all of the above is that the question of basic skills -- in any area of expertise -- is a meaningless question unless one is asking that question about one's competence (at least) or mastery (at best) of the norms governing those skills: Skills are always about norms.

Thus, it makes no sense to speak of remedying/building/developing basic skills unless one is talking about helping people learn the norms which define the skills.

If one takes the point of view that there are no norms, then all talk about basic skills is idle: Skills are always about norms.

\* \* \*

It can seem odd that one would need to defend -- or feel

that he or she would need to defend -- the teaching of writing expository final drafts for the "real world." Yet this is strangely the case. The 1960s' emphasis on "process" (instead of "product" or "artifact"), tied in with folkloristic and McLuhanist emphases on the virtues of orality and the evils of print ("linearity"), permeated the writing-teaching profession for a good while (specifically influencing, for example, the National Council of Teachers of English), and the dust has still not settled. Based on any number of conversations with writing teachers over the past thirty years, my belief is that the embracement of McLuhan & Co, coupled with the flight from final-draft expository "product"/"artifact," was caused more by the collective wish to stop correcting mountains of student compositions over lonely weekends than by a mass conversion to any ideological position. (The method described here does not eliminate the need to read, and to marginally comment upon, the students' essays. But I think it does change for the better the way in which one reads them.) Today, the real world is in some places taking matters into its own hands, in reaction against what it sees as the ivory-towerism of the English teachers, by suggesting that writing skills aimed at the real world should be taught not by English teachers but by other people -- people ~~from~~ the real world.

This is an idea with much merit, but also with much hidden difficulty. The main difficulty has to do with nomenclature. The norms of Standard English have names, and English teachers know those names better than others -- even others who are

themselves successful writers. In other words, you will have trouble teaching students to avoid writing problems generally going under such names as the dangling participle, the split infinitive, and the passive voice if you do not know those names and if you can not cite, on very short notice while standing in front of a class, precise examples of the problems to which those names refer. Still, I believe that most college teachers can learn enough about the nomenclature in a one-quarter-long workshop -- or even in the trenches while teaching (without benefit of such a prior workshop) a basic expository writing course for the first time with students -- to be able to teach expository writing successfully to students needing work in the building of basic skills.

## II: Nuts and Bolts

1. A class is divided into continuing groups not to exceed ten students per group. (I explain to the students that ten is about the maximum size for a writing workshop group's effectiveness. I let them do the grouping from start to finish, including the figuring-out of how to do it, and I leave the room while they do it.)

2. At the beginning of the first day, I quickly scribble a chart on the blackboard. Spaces are numbered from 1 to 10 going downward and from 1 to 2 or 3 going right. (The 1-to-10 spaces are for class meetings per quarter; there would of course be 1-to-20 spaces if the class met twice a week for a ten-week

quarter. The 1-to-2-or-3 spaces going right are for the number of workshop groups necessitated by the overall size of the class one teaches; if I have over twenty students in that class -- even if only twenty-two or so -- I make three groups, because it really is true that groups in excess of ten don't work very well.)

The spaces are for students to write their names in. Each space is a date on which a particular student will bring ten xeroxed copies of his required weekly essay for his group to read and respond to. I tell students to go to the board and put their names in the spaces. (They get the space they want on a first-come, first-served basis; thus, it is sometimes a thundering race for the most distant dates. It is a good idea to bring a box of chalk to class on the day you do this, as it is not all that pedagogically useful to have the members of your thundering herd reduced to fighting over a single stub of chalk once they reach the front of the room.)

It is important to make a copy of the filled-in chart on a piece of paper, in order that you will have a permanent record of which students in which groups are supposed to have their xeroxed copies ready on which days. (It is a good idea to give each student a mimeographed copy of the copied chart, so that everybody will know who is to be "up" when.) If you ~~forget~~ to copy your blackboard chart, there is some cause for lamentation: you will probably find that you have to do this whole boring thing over again.

During the remainder of this class session, explain to the

students in detail how the group work will be done. (See #4 et seq. below, in which I explain it to you.)

3. Ideally, you should have as many rooms as you have groups. If you can't get the rooms, try positioning the students around tables in the farthest corners of your classroom. If this does not work, because of the room's being too noisy or otherwise too "busy," you probably cannot use this strategy.

4. At the second class meeting, two (or more) students will have brought ten xeroxed essays each. Divide into your two (or more) groups. Begin work. (In what follows below, I speak of only one group; this is because what happens in both groups (or all three groups) is identical.)

5. The person who wrote the paper passes out the xeroxes to the other students in his or her group. This writer then reads the paper aloud to the group. This is the last time the writer gets to speak. As the other students critique the paper in detail, the writer can say nothing. This rule drives the point home to every student in the group that public expository writing must stand on its own -- that the writer cannot be there when it is read to say, "You aren't understanding me at all," or "What I MEAN by those words is not what you are getting from them." You should stress to your students that expository writing's main purpose in the real world is to get the writer's ideas or impressions across to someone who not only does not love him or her (as a mother does), and who not only is not paid to read his or her essays (as a teacher is), but also does not even know him or her. The writer's ideas and impressions must be in the words

on the page.

6. During the first half of the scheduled period, the students work on the norms of word and sentence. They note spelling errors and vocabulary errors. They also note any grammatical errors. (Each student should have at hand a good paperback dictionary and a very recent grammar handbook.) They also comment on paragraph construction. In the case of the paragraph, however, the students should have received previous instruction to the effect that reader-response is here much more subjective and less norms-based (there being no clear norms, save that of the "requirement" of the topic sentence, itself sometimes breakable or at least bendable) than with words and sentences.

During the part of the work, it is best to proceed sentence by sentence -- with one student having been chosen in advance to read one sentence at a time, from the top. (This reading of course repeats the writer's own reading. It helps the group to have papers read aloud twice, as its members will be confronting each paper for the first time.)

Groups have been told in advance to stop this line-by-line work when their time for the session is half over. If the students are doing the work well, they should not have proceeded much beyond a page and a half (assuming typed, double-spaced pages) in 45 minutes. If they are going faster than that, you should work with them for one session to give them an idea of how much they are missing.

7. During the second half of the session, the group will

work on three questions called *What?*, *So What?*, and *Now What?*\*

The *What?* question means "What is the paper's thesis or conclusion?" I tell the students that this thesis or conclusion should be locatable in one sentence (and rarely in two sentences, but never in more). This sentence should be a statement which subsumes most (or, optimally, all) of the other sentences in the essay, but which is itself subsumed by no other sentence in the essay.

I tell the students that if they find such a sentence, then what they have found is called an *explicit thesis* or *explicit conclusion*.

I also tell them, however, that they may find that such a sentence is not locatable on the page, but that such a sentence is clearly and unmistakably *implied* by most (or, optimally, all) of the other sentences in the essay. And I explain that such a not-there sentence is called an *implied thesis*.

I also tell them that a paper may contain neither an explicit thesis nor an implied thesis. In that case, there is nothing more to be done with the paper, because . . . all papers used in these workshops must have theses or conclusions.

8. The *So What?* question asks, "Is the thesis or conclusion of significance, or of interest? Or is it banal, or obvious, or trivial?" (If your class is studying elementary logic, the *So What?* can usefully ask if arguments are valid and sound.

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\*I owe the wording of these questions to my friend and colleague Richard M. Jones of the Evergreen psychology faculty.

Particularly useful within this context is asking if arguments fall prey to such standard logical fallacies as begging the question, presenting false dilemmas, pushing hasty generalizations, and so on.)

Doing So What? (and also Now What?, described in #9, below) demands that students receive a good, clear mini-lecture from you on the meaning of "constructive criticism," as the phrase is used in this work. I tell my students that "constructive criticism" is criticism aimed not at judging an artifact (though it uses the artifact-of-the-day which the student writer brought) but at the betterment of the writer's future writing. I tell them that "constructive criticism" is criticism which always points forward, not backward. I tell them that it can never have as even a tiny part of its purpose the self-aggrandizement of the person making the criticism. It can only have, as its sole rationale, the aim of helping the writer improve his or her writing. There should be as little ego in it as the student critic can manage -- and as much care and concern for the writer's development. Constructive criticism always talks about the future, not the past.

9. Having explained the way in which the phrase "constructive criticism" is understood by people using this teaching method, I need to say very little about the Now What? question here, because the way it works ought to be obvious at this point. Because students-critics have done their line-by-line analysis for at least one page of the student-writer's essay, and because they have worked hard at finding the essay's

thesis/conclusion (i.e., answering What?), and because they have worked hard at answering So What?, their answers to Now What? will simply be their suggestions for making the thesis/conclusion clearer, stronger, and more focused -- and for making the thesis/conclusion, plus all the supporting writing which makes up its context, more interesting.

#### Two Special Notes About Now What?

9-A. I need to mention that although most of this method focuses on rather cut-and-dried real-world norms for expository writing, there are some parts to it which are admittedly, necessarily, and desirably subjective. Two examples among many will suffice.

First, consider the So What? If one is teaching logic while using this method (employing, for examples, such texts as Cedarblom and Paulsen's Critical Reasoning, or Monroe Beardsley's Thinking Straight), the answers to So What? can be fairly cut-and-dried and "objective." But, obviously, if logic is not being explicitly taught, then answers to So What? will be more personal. Some student-critics will talk to the student-writer as a tough editor of a big-city daily would. Others will give ideological responses to the thesis. Others will talk to the student-writer as surrogate loving mother, "trying to help, trying to let you know I care," and so on. Opinions will vary. Subjective aesthetic response can well rule.

Second, consider the simple paragraph. Here, we supposedly possess some norms, and those norms are regularly taught in school; but all good teachers of writing know --

although they are sometimes loath to say to their students -- the norms of the paragraph are so very flexible that they are almost more trouble than they are worth to teachers and students. The usual norms taught are: (a.) Unity; (b.) Coherence; (c.) Adequate Development -- plus the first and foremost one which states that a paragraph should contain a so-called "topic sentence." The way it is supposed to work is as follows: the paragraph should contain a sentence -- usually its first sentence -- which says what it is about; then, all the other sentences in that paragraph should support the topic sentence (and certainly should not stray from it), and this is Unity; moreover, all the other sentences in the paragraph should flow easily and naturally from each other and into each other, and this is Coherence (because the sentences should literally cohere, should "stick together"); moreover, there should be just the right amount of other sentences -- not too many and not too few -- to develop the topic talked about by the topic sentence, and this is Adequate Development.

These paragraph norms were of course made up by a writing teacher -- Alexander Bain by name -- who got sick and tired of trying to teach his students paragraphing by the old "model" method of showing them paragraphs by Bacon, Montaigne, Hobbes, and so on, expecting them to pick up the tacit "rules" by induction. His students couldn't do it -- almost no students before Bain could do it, apparently -- and so he just made up the norms and stuck a nomenclature on them. The paragraph chapter in almost all present grammar/rhetoric texts is the result. (Bain's

in the public domain, as the saying goes.)

But a nomenclature does not a set of real norms make, and so the so-called norms of the paragraph are admittedly, necessarily, and desirably open to subjective compositional application and critical response.

You should openly tell your students all of this. Help them to understand what things, in the real world of Standard English, are cut-and-dried, and which things are open to subjective interpretation (including those which are supposedly, for pedagogical purposes, normative). Tell them, too, that if all the excellent writers of English essays decided tomorrow to follow Bain's paragraph rules completely and absolutely, the state of the English essay as written by masters would decline markedly -- but that if most of the student-writers in writing classes were somehow enabled tomorrow to follow those same rules completely and absolutely, the state of the English essay as written by students would improve by a quantum jump. Ask them if they can understand how and why this could be the case.

9-B. Tell your students that your special role is that of resource person who possesses expert knowledge of the norms of written Standard English. Tell them that most of your Now What? feedback to their work will be normative.

Tell them also, however, that you will be trying at all times to teach them real-world norms, not ivory-tower or grammar-book or hifalutin norms which are adhered to by English teachers but by nobody else. It will be important for them to understand that your normative standards are those of the street

(although admittedly the white-collar street), not of the schoolroom.

Tell them also that you will always make clear to them which of your pieces of feedback are cut-and-dried normative (e.g., spelling, subject-verb agreement, comma-splicing), and which are more subjective.

But, last, explain to them that even your subjective pieces of feedback are based on your expertise regarding the likely receptivity (or lack of same) of educated readers to pieces of text in student essays. Explain that this may vary from what you personally think. Explain that you will be glad, during an office hour or over a cup of coffee, to give them your personal responses to what they have written. But emphasize that the class itself is about the norms of standard written English and that your role is that of an expert on these norms. (They may shout out, "We don't care about the norms! We care about what you think!" You should respond that the real world's expectations of them is likely quite the reverse -- fortunately or unfortunately. And you should respond that once they have upped their skills-levels to the point of meeting the norms, they can then work on the development of their personal writers' voices as a regular part of the classwork, and that you will at that point be glad to give personal and detailed responses to that development as part of the classwork.) In my own classes, this point is reached with the majority of students after about six months of hard work -- granting a good bit of maturity and self-motivation.

10. At the end of the session, each student-critic writes the student-writer a letter which begins on the back of the last page of the student writer's essay. This letter states explicitly (but briefly) the student-critic's feelings about *So What?* and *Now What?* Time permitting, the students can write these letters in class and give them to the writer as a closing ritual. If this is not possible, they can write them overnight and give them to the writer the next time the class meets.

It is important, at the end of each session, for the teacher to thank the student-writer for sitting through the process -- usually, at least at first, with a degree of self-conscious (and silent) fear and trembling. (This feeling abates very quickly). Whenever possible, the teacher should spend a couple of minutes in talking with the student-writer-of-the-day following the process, just to make sure that everything is okay; but this is really only necessary during the first couple of weeks of using the method.

### III: Issues, Questions, Odds & Ends

It remains only to talk about two or three issues and questions (which you should also talk about with your students) and to tell you about a couple of additional things I do while using this method.

First, the idea of behavioral modification. There is no denying that there is a bit of behavioral modification going on here, nor should there be. Norms are best taught through redundancy, whether by culture in general or by a single teacher

or friend in particular, and this method stresses redundancy -- particularly in its teaching of the norms of the word and of the sentence. But it is also true that the response of the student-critics constitutes "feedback," and that this feedback will undoubtedly "modify the behavior" of the student writers. Right now in America, "behavioral modification" is a rather pejorative term to some people in education, but "feedback" is an honorific one to those same people -- particularly with respect to the teaching of writing. (This may be in part because my former colleague Peter Elbow has done such a good job of popularizing "feedback" among writing teachers.) But the point needs to be made that feedback has as its main (sole?) purpose behavioral modification -- always and without exception -- whether it be "peer-feedback" or feedback from Henry VIII or someone like him.

Second, the problem of "peer-feedback" vs. "correctness." Obviously, all of the peer-feedback about norms will not be correct. Bite your tongue and do not correct the erroneous correcters. What is left incorrectly corrected today will be correctly corrected tomorrow -- in my experience, anyway. If you correct the correcters, you will stifle the feedback. It is more important that the feedback go on in an unfettered way (given that it is always "constructive criticism") than that it always be right.

Third, "But what if the student-writer, as a result of getting incorrect normative feedback, is led to believe that cat is spelled kai and that a sentence with a dangling participle is really worthy of Samuel Johnson?" Well, remember that I noted

above somewhere that this method will not eliminate the necessity of reading and marking themes, and it won't. You'll be reading and marking each student's essay each week (optimally) -- again for purposes of redundancy -- and that reading and marking will include the essay of the student-writer-of-the-day. So: you will have given him or her all of the correct normative stuff at the level of the word and the sentence -- or as much as you want to give, or believe desirable to give, to a given student-writer. For you, the two (or more) essays-of-the-day are ordinary essays, to be treated as any others, when it comes to your reading and marking.

Fourth, "Okay, I understand that I'm supposed to function as an expert on the norms of written English, but don't those norms change with time?" Of course they do, and I use the term Contemporary Stylistic Norms (CSN) to describe these norms precisely. They are norms because they are norms. They are stylistic because they have to do with the physical structuring of writing on the page (beginners should note that this is probably an oversimplification and that there is a vast theoretical literature on the form/content dualism in writing -- as there is in any mode of expression in which there is a supposed "style" and a supposed "content" -- with some theorists claiming that the form/content dualism is itself ridiculous, i.e. that form is content and vice-versa). They are contemporary because they are norms of today, not of a hundred years ago or even ten years ago.

The point is that your expertise is taken to include changes

in norms. This expertise is usually gleaned -- given a sound education in literature, language, and the teaching of writing -- by keeping up with the norms through reading the most influential of contemporary periodicals. (By "influential," I do not necessarily mean "the best," because who knows what the best is? I mean, plainly and simply, those periodicals which have clout with educated Americans; examples are *Harper's*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, *Esquire*, *The New Yorker* [usually cited by experts as the best-edited magazine in America, although it has its detractors], *Scientific American*, *National Review*, and even *Rolling Stone*.)

The biggest single cause of norm-change, in my view, is the changing stylistic practices of the American editors of the most influential periodicals. These changes can be "liberal," as in the grudgingly slow acceptance of the ~~case~~ comma-splice sentence or sentence fragment inserted for emphasis into otherwise impeccable writing, or as in the rapid acceptance in the late 1960s and early 1970s of "Ms." But they can also be "conservative," as evidenced by the national editorial retreat on "Ms." which began around 1975 and still continues.

Fifth, "What if a student wants to take an ideological stand in ~~opposition~~ to a national norm? What, for example, if a student insists on such usages as 's/he' and so on?" The answer is that you have a good chance here to disabuse students of the notion that the schoolroom is one place and the real world quite another place. Tell the students that ~~you~~ don't care ~~what~~ they do in such cases. Tell them that your job is to inform them of the norms -- and to inform them that not adhering to them will

bring some consequences to them in the real world, no matter whether the failure to adhere is rooted in ignorance about a norm or informed ideological resistance to a norm. Tell them that, having told them this, your work in the matter is at an end and that you will in no case penalize them for taking an anti-norm ideological stand. You should stress, however, that it is the height of hypocrisy for college students to stage ideological protests in tolerant college classrooms and then to "change into suits and ties" immediately upon graduation: writing 's/he' in the classroom in May and then writing 'he' on the job in the following September (right after graduation, say) is probably not going to have all that much a liberating effect on society's victims. You should try to get the students to practice in the classroom those norms which they honestly believe they will be writing toward in the real world when they get there.

Seventh, what about textbooks? I have my students read a standard syllabus of materials aimed at helping them with norms. At first, I worry about word-level norms (spelling and vocabulary use) and sentence-level norms (grammar and so on). At the level of the word, I currently use Hodges and Whitten's Handbook College Handbook (9th ed.) and Funk and Lewis' Thirty Days to a More Powerful Vocabulary. Both books can be used on a self-paced basis (especially if exercises from the companion Handbook College Workbook are assigned simultaneously with chapters in the Handbook, although I do not mark these exercises and do not think anyone should -- or should have to). Both are tried-and-true favorites. Both have their flaws, of course, and Handbook in

particular does not lack for critics. (It is, however, the most widely used text of its kind.) I also use Harbrace for sentence-grammar and sentence-level rhetoric; I believe it to be excellent for both. Additionally, I use Strunk and White's *Elements of Style* (3rd ed.).

During the second term, I phase some of the above out and phase in Cedarblom and Paulsen's *Critical Thinking*, an excellent new basic text in logic which contains chapter-sections on the materials' application to essay-writing.

Later (if there is a later), I try to get students to concentrate on the development of their personal writers' voices while adhering to CSN and (at times, depending on an individual student's purpose) to the principles of logic. I have found good texts to be Gertrude Stein's *How to Write*, George Orwell's *Politics and the English Language*, Henry Miller's *Henry Miller on Writing* (ed. Thomas Moore), and Peter Elbow's *Writing With Power*. (Stein and Miller should not be ordered or assigned to students until you have read them carefully; they may teach things about the development of personal voice which you do not wish to teach or aid in the teaching of.)

#### IV: How People Learn Skills

Some people have come to believe today that basic skills can be taught to adults who do not know them in a sort of "macro-" way. They believe that you should start with the big stuff and then either work inward with the student toward doing the little stuff right, or else say, "The student may or may not find out how to

do the little stuff right, but I am not going to directly teach it to him or her." Some people see the big stuff as something so big that it even lies outside, or perhaps subsumes, the ostensible art of which the skill is a part. (With writing, examples would be "cognition," "art," "communication," and so on.) Other people see the big stuff as the sort of general shape which is usually achieved when one has made something well. (With writing, an example would be "the over-all organization of the essay.")

Traditionally, however, apprentices have learned to be artists through mastering the segments, pieces, subroutines -- or whatever one chooses to call the little stuff -- out of which a work of art is made.

Today, in the field of composition theory (in plain language, teaching-of-writing theory), quite an argument is taking place between those who want to teach the big stuff first (and the little stuff later, if at all) and those who want to teach the little stuff first (and the big stuff only if the student can work his or her way up, or out, to it). As based on my experience in the classroom, my study of the issues, and what I take to be my common sense, I cannot go very far with those who believe that the unskilled can be made skilled without much redundant overt instruction and much directed repetitious experience in making the segments, pieces, and subroutines -- the "atoms" -- which make up an art. (This view immediately grants that there are many problems with the traditional start-from-small approach for both teacher and student. But it does work.)

As will be obvious, the workshop method presented here assumes the (comparative) wisdom of learning the little things first.

Readers of this essay who would like to read more about the rationale for this method can take a look at my "The English Grapholect and the First-Year Composition Class," which appeared in *College Composition and Communication* (Spring, 1979). That essay ties the method in with the linguistic theories of M.M. Guxman and E.D. Hirsch, Jr., although the method is not necessarily grounded in those theories.

#### V: This Essay's Thesis

The ability to write in adherence to Contemporary Stylistic Norms is almost strictly a class-bound phenomenon. It remains so wherever CSN is not overtly taught to those adults (defined here as anybody old enough to go to college) who did not learn CSN prior to reaching adulthood.

My thesis is that this class-bound phenomenon should not be permitted continued existence. Period.

## George Dimitroff: Some Ideas Susan Told Me About

George Dimitroff is an Evergreen faculty member in mathematics. His wife, Susan, has been a student at the college, and one of her Coordinated Studies programs was *Shakespeare and the Age of Elizabeth* (1978-79), taught by Nancy Taylor (History), Peter Elbow (Literature and Writing), Richard Jones (Psychology), and Leo Daugherty (Literature and Linguistics). In response to my request for strategy-sharing (see Foreword), Dimitroff wrote as follows:

I adapted some ideas Susan told me about from her experience in the Shakespeare program when she had Richard Jones as writing seminar leader.

I have students bring four copies of their three-page essays to class on the day they are due. I keep, correct, and read one copy. Four-person seminar groups exchange the other copies.

The students take the three papers home (from their small seminar groups) to read, correct, and comment on. Students are asked: (1) to correct these papers for [mechanics and other details of style, including grammar and spelling]; (2) to then write (a) one-sentence statements of what the papers are about (their thesis statements, maybe), (b) a one-paragraph summary of what the papers said to them, (c) a favorite sentence (or "Say something positive"), and (d) at least one constructive comment that will help [the student writers] improve their writing.

I am not going to resist the temptation to editorialize (for a minute, anyway) on Dimitroff's strategy and its implications. Who George Dimitroff is, what his area of specialization is, where he got his teaching-of-writing strategy, where his own source got it, what it is, how it works, and what it does for students who are themselves in large part studying mathematics and the sciences -- these things are all indicators of the continuing faculty-wide commitment to teach writing across the liberal arts curriculum at Evergreen. They also indicate the ethos of inter-disciplinary and pan-specialty area cooperation and cross-fertilization which continues to prevail here. For experienced writing teachers -- the "strategy-connoisseurs" referred to in the Foreword -- there will likely be no innovations to be found in Dimitroff's strategy *per se*, although it is doubtless an efficacious strategy. The *innovative* thing is that Dimitroff does it, that he got it from his wife, that his wife was a post-baccalaureate Evergreen student taking an advanced program for her personal enjoyment and learning, that she got it from one of her husband's faculty colleagues, that that colleague is a psychologist who has come by dint of personal choice and interest to teach expository writing as much as he teaches anything else, and -- not to be missed -- that George Dimitroff voluntarily shared it with me for eventual sharing with readers of this monograph, in the hope that they might use it with their students and/or pass it right along.

Judith Espinola: (I.) Writing for the Ear, and (II.) A Writing-  
Based Interpretation Strategy

I: Writing for the Ear

"In order for students to become better writers," says Judith Espinola, "I think it's important for them to be able to do other sorts of communication things." She is interested in teaching those other sorts of things, but she is particularly interested in seeing that such things are taught well, because she believes that they are sometimes not. "Unfortunately," she says, "some of the people who allow for flexibility in the teaching of other communication arts too often lack rigor in their 'alternative' instruction. For example, a teacher who allows a student to write a script instead of an essay often will not, in my experience, critique the script as rigorously as a straight expository writing teacher would critique an essay."

When she speaks of "other sorts of communication things," Judith Espinola primarily means what she calls "non-print" writing -- or "writing for the ear."

Such writing is just what one would think it would be: writing which has the aim of succeeding as something heard, not read, by an audience.

"If we did a better job of teaching 'non-print' writing, then it might be a way of helping students to better understand not only essay writing but also other forms of writing used for communicating theses," Espinola says. "If we could articulate

the difference between the two types of writing -- writing for print media and writing for non-print media -- we could help turn students on to writing: to print media stuff per se," she adds.

But Espinola also believes that it is important in its own right that a high standard of rigor and discipline be developed for the teaching of non-print writing, because such writing is rapidly increasing in importance in the world we live in. It is the sort of writing used in documentary scripts, news broadcasts, radio programs, slide-tape presentations, and many other sound-media contexts. Espinola does not believe that a sufficiently high standard of teaching has been developed for what is essentially an aesthetics of scripted speech -- an aesthetics of the ear.

She sees two fundamental ways to approach the problem: (a.) institutionally; (b.) individually, in the classroom. In the case of the former, "The real key is for us to have training as a faculty -- intensive workshops outside the academic year, in which we get instruction from people who teach writing for the non-print media in excellent ways. We need their expertise, in order to know how to do the exploring we need to do as a faculty." The institutional way, Espinola believes, is the primary way -- the place to start. "It would be," she says, "a realistic solution for faculty interested in learning how." How to do what, specifically? To accomplish (b.): to be good enough at this kind of teaching to help the individual student in the classroom significantly.

## II: A Writing-Based Interpretation Strategy

Judith Espinola chose to share a method she has used successfully in the past for teaching "something that is not an essay." This method is, she says, "a method of teaching oral interpretation." Formally trained in oral interpretation at the graduate level, Espinola had taught it in universities prior to joining the Evergreen faculty and library administration. One problem she kept finding when she taught the upper-division oral interpretation course -- which manifested itself as two problems -- was that students were upset when they learned that they would have to write in the course (they had inferred from the course-title that they would not), and, moreover, that some of them had great trouble in doing analytical interpretations of pieces of literature.

Espinola's solution to the problem was to have the students take a scene from a play -- preferably one with not more than two or three characters -- and to do three things with that scene in writing. Those three things comprise this particular teaching strategy.

First: the students to try to describe in writing the world of the play from one of the characters.

The character writes in a narrative mode, not in a dramatic mode. The character talks in his or her own voice. The character talks to an audience -- a naive audience which has not read or seen the play.

The student has the choice of doing the writing from either the time-perspective of the particular scene or the time-perspective of the end of the play.

A good example to use in thinking about how the strategy might work in the classroom is the character Amanda in Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie*, says Espinola.

Second: the students write about Amanda (or whoever) from the perspective of a second character ("Character B"). Again, they write in the first person. (In *The Glass Menagerie*, B would be Tom.) The task is to describe Amanda and her life from his point of view, talking as much about "himself" in the process as the writer wishes.

Espinola stresses that in neither of these cases can quotes be lifted from the play.

Third: the students write about Amanda from the point of view of Tennessee Williams. (It is important to stress that Williams' biography is irrelevant here; they are not sent, nor should they at this particular time go, to the library to look him up.)

Note: "The third technique," Espinola says, "is really what we ask students to do all the time when we ask them to do an interpretive analysis of a play -- i.e., 'what the play intends itself to be,' 'what is there in the text,' or 'what Williams intends it to be' are all incorporated. The students are, however, doing the work more interestingly, more involvedly."

"This exercise," says Espinola, "forces students to view the

characters, the play, and writing itself from an oral perspective." She adds: "I think this is a very important kind of writing . . . . Teaching students about the oral nature of language is terribly important, and even an excellent college such as Evergreen does not now do enough of it."

How widely applicable is this method?

Espinola answers that it can be used nearly anywhere, with nearly anything: "You could do it with prose fiction, with poetry, with history, and even in a biology class . . . . The push is to use the ear in order to teach students about traditional writing."

## Donald Finkel: Writing Communities

Don Finkel's teaching-of-writing strategy is one he says he learned in the Coordinated Studies program *Unmasking the Social World* (1982-83), which he taught with David Marr. It comes from a discovery having to do with the critical role played by members of communities. He learned that writers write for audiences. He further learned that, in learning communities, the teacher cannot be the audience for the students' writing.

As evidence, Finkel notes that the students in *Unmasking the Social World* maintained a Program Notebook -- a loose-leaf binder left in one of the program's conference rooms, along with a three-hole punch -- and that he saw his students sitting in the room, reading the Program Notebook and making comments in response to writings in it on blank sheets of paper kept there for the sole purpose of receiving such comments. "This convinced me," Finkel says, "that something was happening."

### Procedure

The faculty assigned papers to be written (or rewritten) each week. The faculty only read fifty per cent of these papers. The other half went to small peer groups for responses and criticism -- or just for reading. One student told Finkel that she put more care into those papers he would not read than into the ones she knew he would read. (One possible reason for this phenomenon, Finkel thinks, is that the student may have thought she did not have to be too careful with the writing which he

would read, because of a belief that "my doctor-like reading of it would automatically fix it.")

#### Additional Structural Points

1. Neither Finkel nor David Marr lectured all year long. Instead, they wrote papers -- every two or three weeks -- and put them in the Program Notebook.

2. Finkel and Marr did not write on the same topics as those the students wrote on, but they did write "in a similar spirit and mode." (To have written their papers on the same topics as the students wrote on "would have had psychological effects -- such as intimidation.")

3. Every five or six weeks, the students had a special writing assignment -- to make a response either to a cumulative chunk of the Program Notebook or to their impression of the progress of ideas in the program to that date. These papers were not submitted to the faculty. Instead, a long session was held in which the students read their papers to one another and traded them around for collective reading. Finkel and Marr did write papers on these occasions, and they participated in the long sessions of paper-sharing. All of these papers were then made a part of the Program Notebook.

4. An important incentive for writing, in Finkel's view, was the fact that the students in the program were given unusual

writing assignments. These assignments were those given in Marr's NEH monograph, *Extravagant Interest*. (The monograph is synopsized elsewhere here; one of the assignments is given.)

5. But what really made this teaching strategy work, Finkel thinks, was not any kind of overt attention to the teaching of writing, but rather the establishment within the program of an ethos of community. "This ethos was, of course, the result of a hundred-plus community-building details," says Finkel (noting that faculty interested in those details should consult him or Marr for specifics). One of those details, however, was the fact -- mentioned above -- that the faculty did not lecture: that a spirit was built in the program which stressed that "we were all in it together" to work on program questions. (Finkel stresses that he is doing the same Program Notebook idea this year -- 1983-84 -- in the Coordinated Studies program *Human Health and Behavior*, but that the strategy is not working well this time, because the new program is not doing all the "extraneous" community-building work. Thus, the students are not responding as they did in *Unmasking the Social World*: "It's school," Finkel sighs.)

6. (Detail.) The faculty also put xeroxes and articles in the Program Notebook which were related to the program's themes and questions.

\* \* \*

The Program Notebook grew and grew -- into several bound

books, in fact. Nothing was ever thrown out. It became a program totem, says Finkel, and there was much worry in the program's latter days about what would be its fate when the program ended. And what, in fact, happened to it? "It resides in David Mann's office, on a high shelf."

## David Hitchens: The Directed Fantasy Writing Workshop

### I. Problems and Solutions

David Hitchens is quick to tell you that his ideas about writing and how to help students do it are the result of twenty years of trying to write and trying to teach writing.

He has come to believe that blank paper, for most students, is a terrifying enemy. They see a major difference between writing and talking. That difference is one of accountability. Many students see writing as an enemy which will freeze an image of themselves and make them vulnerable.

Vulnerable to what? Hitchens describes such feelings as "the kind of vulnerability people feel in nakedness dreams, in men's castration fears, in women's fears of breast cancer, and so on -- the most primal kind of stuff." People know that pieces of paper upon which they have written can, if shown to the public world, be held up to ridicule. People know that heartbreak -- their own -- can be the result.

Hitchens' solutions are as follows:

1. The kinds of students for whom writing is indeed "sweating blood" need to be shown that blank paper is only a tool and nothing more -- like a piece of canvas for an artist or a block of stone for a sculptor.
2. These students need to be shown that blank

paper "can be written on from right to left, up and down, in circles, anything."

3. These students need to be shown that blank paper is a place "to say thoughts."

4. These students need to be shown that blank paper is also only a place "to record the thoughts they say -- to save them for a future time."

About this blank paper -- this space -- Hitchens says: "Back in grade school, one is taught to compose -- to fill up that space as if it were in a textbook. One carries that little kid into college and often long afterward. So one's thoughts of the requirements are those of a third-grader's perceptions -- and not just about texts, but about the kinds of (elevated!) persons authors are."

So one piece of the trouble, and a major piece is that all the formal training one gets is of a sort aimed at getting one to write books. But they can already write other things very well indeed: letters, for one thing.

In summary: "The important thing is to get students to confront paper not as an enemy but as a tool."

## II. Method

1. Get a whole Coordinated Studies Program (or Group Contract, or course, or whatever) into one room.

2. Give them an introductory set-up on writing anxieties and ideas about fixing them. (One such set-up would simply be a brief explanation very much like Part I, directly above, of this.)
3. Have all of the students stand up. Have them stretch their arms and legs. Have them do brief deep-breathing exercises.
4. Have them all lie down, get comfortable, and close their eyes.
5. Tell them you will set up a scene for them. This scene will be an image -- an image which is a set-up for a story.
6. Tell them simply to take the story from there.
7. Give them two minutes the first time you do it. (Some will think it's forever. Some will think it's not nearly long enough.)
8. At the end of the two minutes, say: "Stop. Everybody up. Now take paper and pencil and describe what happened to you in those two minutes. You've got ten minutes to write it." (Hitchens notes that ten minutes is a little bit of pressure -- "just enough to be good for them.")
9. After the ten minutes have elapsed, ask: "Anybody

need a little more time?" Typically, half will.

Give them a minute or two more.

10. Have them all write the word TIME down at the bottom of the page -- a subtle reminder that they did not stop themselves, but that he stopped them.
11. Then give the students a minute or so of "buzz-time" -- time to talk among themselves about "How'd that feel?" and so on. (Sometimes he draws them out a bit.)
12. Then ask for volunteers to read "what happened."

Hitchens notes that, typically, after the volunteers have read their writing, there is interaction -- applause, comments, laughter, and so forth. He makes it a point to be extremely positive throughout -- about the writing, the reading, and the group response, but mainly about the writing. Often, he will pick out and comment on a particularly excellent phrase, giving "positive feedback" to it. But before there is too much feedback to any one piece, he will ask for another reading volunteer. Soon, he says, many students are volunteering eagerly.

Hitchens stresses that one of the rewards of this teaching strategy is that the students discover as a group that everybody does indeed have some kind of imagination.

"And the funny thing is," he adds, "that even though there are always commonalities in the writing, someone will always have an anomalous, off-the-wall piece."

An important byproduct of these workshops, according to Hitchens, is "the collective discovery that the emotional responses to the read-aloud pieces of writing are often surprisingly deep and profound."

A major key to the workshop's success, he believes, is that, "When they discover that they are not alone in having an imagination, their emotions, feelings, perceptions, responses, and so on, are 'validated.'" This validation, according to Hitchens, stems from the fact that most of the students see that others' writings are in significant ways similar to their own. But even those who do anomalous pieces get validation from "unfailing expressions of resonance, empathy, and appreciation from fellow students -- one of the most important of which is appreciative laughter." (Significantly, even those students who never volunteer to read their writing are also benefitted in terms of validation, just by seeing it occur in such abundance around them, Hitchens observes.)

### III: Three Stock Fantasies

The three fantasies given below are ones which David Hitchens has often used with success as a introductory, first-session "set."

1. *The Door.* You are somewhere in an old European town. You see old stones, masonry. You are walking. You turn into an alley. The smells and sounds of an ancient alley. All of a sudden, you are confronted by a huge, weathered oaken door. It

has huge, rusty hinges. It also has a huge, rusty knocker. You notice that the door is partially open. You feel an urge to push it all the way open. Fantasize on what happens right then.

2. "A Funny Thing Happened on my Way to Class." You've just gotten up and, after dressing and gulping down a quick cup of coffee (or whatever), you're on your way to class. It is very important not to be late today. You are running. As you come out of the dorm (or out of your house), two guys in dark suits -- strangers -- step up and grab you by the arm and hustle you into a waiting black limousine with its windows blacked over. You are taken on a seemingly interminable ride. When the limousine finally stops, you are hustled out and placed in a small plane with its engines already warmed up. You're handed a drink and told by the pilot that you've been chosen to visit the one place you've always wanted to visit. You've only got to instruct the pilot, and he will take you. Fantasize on what happens.

[Note: Hitchens allows three minutes for the fantasizing this time -- giving one additional minute for them to decide on where they have always wanted to go. After those three minutes, if they're still quiet -- still actively fantasizing -- he gives them two or three more minutes still.

He then gives them fifteen minutes in which to do their writing.

For this second one, in his experience, even more people will want to read aloud than the first time.]

\* \* \*

At this point, Hitchens asks the students if they want a break before doing one more or if they want to do one more immediately. Invariably, he says, it's one more, and that one is:

3. The Stump. Imagine an old tree stump standing right next to a brook in a little sunny glade in the woods. (The teacher should embellish this scene however he or she wishes -- as with any or all of these fantasy scenes.) But here's the hook: Imagine that you are the stump, and imagine one day in the life of that stump -- that stump which is yourself.

[This time, he allows the students about five minutes in which to do the fantasizing. Their writing-time is fifteen minutes, as before.]

\* \* \*

After all three images have been fantasized about and written about, and after all three groups of elicited writing have been responded to, he makes a little speech which goes something like this: "You will never, after this point, have to worry about getting started again. You've got a technique now. There is nothing you could ever be asked about which will not yield to this technique."

He believes that this technique will work all across the liberal arts curriculum -- in the sciences, in literature, in history, in the fine arts, in anything. Some examples:

(1) Visualize how you felt when you first read the poem you're now to write on; (2.) Visualize what it would be like to live in a particular place and time in history -- in 1605 London at the Globe Theatre, for example.

Of the pieces of writing they have just completed for the Directed Fantasy Writing Workshop, Hitchens tells the students that he will read them if they really want him to, but that those pieces basically exist as artifacts to remind them of their own proven ability to use paper as a tool. (Most he is not asked to look at.)

He completes the session by telling the students that they might later "submit" such works to the "editor persona" within themselves -- ". . . but that that, as they say, is another story for another day."

## Steve Herman: The Teaching of Field-Journal Writing

Several years ago, Steve Herman, an Evergreen faculty member in Biology, developed a method of teaching students how to keep good field journals. Subsequently, he wrote the monograph *The Naturalist's Field Journal: A Manual of Instruction Based on A System Established by Joseph Grinnell* (1980) for use as a text with his students. The monograph has rapidly gone on to receive a great deal of use by other teachers at Evergreen and elsewhere. (It is, for example, one of the acknowledged bases of L.R. "Pete" Sinclair's writing-teaching strategy, to be found elsewhere in this monograph.)

Herman has tried to find the original genesis of the method laid out in his book, but he has not succeeded. "A good guess," he says, "would be the journals kept in voyages of exploration." But, in addition to Joseph Grinnell's work, he believes he has found one extremely important antecedent in Francis Galton's *The Art of Travel* (London: John Murray, 1872), which provides an alternative method to that of Grinnell. Herman believes that the Galton book is the oldest description of the system he has seen, and he is especially pleased to have learned of it from one of his Evergreen students, who found a copy of it in her great-grandfather's attic.

One of the reasons for Herman's monograph's influence is that its method can, with only the simplest kinds of common-sense modifications, be used by any writing teacher in any field (or in no particular field) who wants to emphasize the art of

description, as based in turn on the art of observation.

But Herman stressed in his interview that the writing professor must do more than merely give the students the book. The book works best, he says, if the teacher is very much involved in all stages of the enterprise with which the students are engaged -- including the doing of the same journal-writing. "You must sit down in the field and write up your notes at the same time they're doing theirs," he says. (It is not necessary for his students to read the notes he writes while working alongside them, he explains, as they can read examples of his note-taking in his monograph. But for those teachers who do not have samples of their own work readily available to their students, sharing what one has just written with the students is doubtless a good idea.)

He says that The Naturalist's Field Journal, when taken alone, is a recipe at best -- a mere structure-giver. With his students, he emphasizes, in person, the importance of describing landscapes well. Especially, he gives over lots of time to talking with them about the importance of beauty. He stresses to them, for example, a passage in his book which quotes Robert MacArthur to the effect that accurate observation and precise description have absolutely no power to take anything away from the beauty of nature. Moreover, he sat his interviewer down and read the passage to him, too, ". . . whether you want to hear it or not" (the interviewer, needless to say, much wanted to hear it):

To do science is to search for repeated patterns, not simply to accumulate facts, and to do the science of geographical ecology is to search for patterns of plant and animal life that can be put on a map. The person best equipped to do this is the naturalist who loves to note changes in bird life up a mountainside, or changes in plant life from main land to island, or changes in butterflies from temperate to tropics . . . . Doing science is not such a barrier to feeling or such a dehumanizing influence as it often made out. It does not take the beauty from nature. The only rules of scientific method are honest observations and accurate logic . . . . No one should feel that honest and accuracy guided by imagination have any power to take away nature's beauty.\*

Herman notes that he carefully reads the students' journals, and that he thinks anyone employing his method (or something like it) should also do so. His students hand their journals in according to a prearranged schedule. Each journal must have a certain number of blank pages at the beginning for the professor's critical comments. (Herman always provides journal page-numbers alongside his comments, in order to provide clear and ready reference for the students to their own texts.) After making these detailed comments, he returns the journals to the students.

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\*The quote is from Robert H. MacArthur, *Geographical Ecology* (1972), and is quoted in Herman's monograph, p. 182.

Herman sees each student three times a quarter for a tutorial session given over to a critique of his or her journal-writing. He then has a journal-based evaluation session with each student at or near the end of the quarter.

Herman notes, however, that he deliberately does not tout this method to his students as a writing "betterer"; "It works best covertly," he says, "but we normally do get students to write more with this method, and often quite possibly better with this method, than some programs manage with comparable overt methods." He admits, though, that he is by no means certain that this method causes writing to improve over a ten-week quarter or even over an academic year. "I'd like to see some of our faculty writing specialists look at the writing at the ends of the journals and compare it to the writing at the beginnings of those same journals to see if it does get better," he says, adding: "I think it does, but I couldn't prove it."

Perhaps the "smallest" thing Herman requires of his student journal writers is their adherence to complete sentences, mechanical correctness, and correct spelling throughout."

But the main thing he requires is that they understand the importance of their writing's accuracy, clarity, and elegance to their readers. He tells them: "You want your readers to be able to touch, to feel, to smell, to taste, to hear -- simply through your physical descriptions. To this end, he always reads them one specific passage from the writings of Elliott Coues, whom Herman describes as "the most brilliant and accomplished American ornithologist in the last half of the nineteenth century,"

telling them that this passage "should be read, reread, and heeded by all." (Coes was also Joseph Grinnell's primary mentor, although the two men apparently never met.) The quote from Coes, which Herman also insisted that his interviewer hear aloud, runs as follows:

Now you know these things [the things you have just observed in nature -- ed.], but very likely no one else does; and you know them at the time, but you will not recollect a tithe of them in a few weeks or months, to say nothing of years. Don't trust your memory; it will trip you up; what is clear now will grow obscure; what is found will be lost. Write down everything while it is fresh in your mind; write it out in full -- time so spent now will be time saved in the end, when you offer your researches to the discriminating public. Don't be satisfied with a dry-as-dust item; clothe a skeleton fact, and breathe life into it with thoughts that glow; let the paper smell of the woods. There's a pulse in a new fact; catch the rhythm before it dies. Keep off the quicksands of mere memorandum -- that means something 'to be remembered,' which is just what you cannot do. Shun abbreviations; such keys rust with disuse, and may fail in after times to unlock the secret that should have been laid bare in the beginning. Use no signs unintelligible only to yourself; your notebooks may come to be overhauled by others whom you would not wish to disappoint. Be sparing of sentiment, a delicate thing, easily degraded to drivel; crude enthusiasm always

hacks instead of hewing. Beware of literary infelicities; 'the written word remains,' it may be, after you have passed away; put down nothing for your friend's blush, or your enemy's sneer; write as if a stranger were looking over your shoulder.\*

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Herman leans back in his chair and looks out the window. "This method of teaching writing works best if you're sitting around the campfire with the students, writing with them," he says.

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\*Elliott Coes, *Field Ornithology* (1874), quoted in Herman's monograph. p. 29.

## Will Humphreys: A New Way of Teaching Logical Organization

"What I'm interested in is teaching students logical organization," Will Humphreys says, adding that he is talking about "the sort of organizational strategies needed for an argumentative essay, rather than discursive or descriptive kinds of writing."

Humphreys, a Member of the Faculty in philosophy at Evergreen, discovered a new way of teaching logical organization while teaching with his colleague Chuck Pailthorp (whose areas of specialization are philosophy and music) in the *Thinking Straight* coordinated studies program in Spring Quarter, 1983. (*Thinking Straight* is a one-quarter Core-level program in the basic skills areas of interpretive reading, logic, expository writing, and critical thinking. It is usually offered in Spring Quarter by a two-faculty team for forty students.) It had happened that Stephanie Coontz, also of the Evergreen faculty (European history), had a bit earlier recommended Van Nostrand's book *Functional Writing* to Humphreys and Pailthorp, who, upon reading it, were impressed enough with it to want to use it in their teaching. *Thinking Straight* was a natural program for which to adopt it.

The knowledge gained from the book, when added to what Humphreys and Pailthorp already knew about logical organization, led to what Humphreys enthusiastically calls "amazing results."

Humphreys subsequently attended, in the ensuing summer, a conference at the University of Chicago entitled *Writing and Higher-Order Reasoning*, run by the Harvard Human Development

Program and Chicago's "Writing Across the Liberal Arts Curriculum group. What he learned at that conference was consonant with what he had recently learned from the Functional Writing text and the experience of teaching in a program which used it.

He then proceeded to teach the method on his own in the Management and the Public Interest coordinated studies program during Fall Quarter, 1983, and to teach it with faculty member Craig Carlson (Poetry) in the Spring Quarter, 1984, repeat of Thinking Straight.

"Essentially," Humphreys says, "the steps recommended by Van Nostrand, when combined with basic instruction in formal logic, help people get started in organizing both research data and the data that is in their heads."

What the students get is a set of pre-writing things to do -- "things that get the juices to flowing and help students get started."

The technique outlined by Humphreys is a simple one, and it consists of the following seven steps, each of which is in the form of a direction or suggestion:

1. Ask yourself what types of information you now have -- what categories;
2. Put all of your data and information into those five or eight or ten or however-many categories;
3. Come up with an assertion (Van Nostrand's word) which somehow links, or ties up, all the categories.

4. If some categories cannot be made to fit the assertion which can be made out of most of the categories, then simply drop those categories which won't fit;
5. Write the assertion on a separate sheet of paper, because, truth be known, you probably won't actually use the assertion per se anywhere in the essay you will write;
6. Begin writing an introductory paragraph after you've written your assertion on your separate page;
7. The rest of the paper will then follow rather easily in most cases, or ought to.

"My theory is that the process of getting the assertion nailed down and on paper recaptures the unconscious pattern that you've used to structure the data in the first place," Humphreys says. "The writer has recreated the structuring of the body of data. The whole organization of the paper comes before the mind in one big 'Gestalt-shift.'"

Humphreys believes that a good classroom or seminar context for the employment of this strategy is one in which the students can practice with one simple topic everybody already knows a good bit about. After they have succeeded with this simple topic, he says, they see how the method works, and they see that they can do it. Then, when it is time to do a longer piece of work -- for example, a research paper -- they are ready.

"In contrast to the way this stuff is usually taught and was

taught to me," Humphreys says, "this is much different. It is at the very least much better than outlines, note-cards, and all that. It emphasizes categorical thinking, rather than syllogistic thinking.

"The students will need some basic instruction in what an assertion is and is not. The problem is that eighteen-year-olds have a problem with polarizing the subjective and the objective. They think the two are opposites and that there is no middle ground between them. You're trying to teach them that personal assertions can have, and ought to have, good reasons. This is something they've never been exposed to before. Such eighteen-year-olds also have trouble in reading work which is characterized by having good reasons for the writer's opinion. They believe that subjectivity is pure and that objectivity is pure. They believe that subjectivity amounts to a personal value-judgment, and that any such judgment (or opinion, or, in Van Nostrand's word, 'assertion') is as good as any other. And they believe that objectivity is 'the facts.'" (Humphreys notes that the mind-set of the eighteen-year-olds he is talking about is described very clearly in William Perry's book Forms of Intellectual Development in the College Years, which has been used by many of Evergreen's faculty members over the years. Perry was a speaker at the University of Chicago conference cited above, and Humphreys heard him there.)

Richard M. Jones: An Update of the Writing and Reflecting on  
Dreams and Writing Again NEH/PNWC Monograph

In the summer of 1982, Richard M. Jones wrote the monograph Writing and Reflecting on Dreams and Writing Again as part of the work of the NEH-sponsored "Writing Across the Liberal Arts Curriculum" grant made to the Pacific Northwest Writing Consortium, of which Evergreen is a member. Since that time, he has thought more about the methods described in that monograph and has in consequence fine-tuned his practice of the teaching strategy described therein. (Readers of this section of the present monograph are referred to Jones' original text, the richness of which is but barely suggested by the following updated synopsis; copies have been distributed, both at Evergreen and to external audiences, but readers who do not have a copy can still get one from the office of Barbara Leigh Smith, Academic Dean.)

Jones begins by noting that in his present work he is much more interested in the teaching of writing *per se*, and less in the specific use of dream-reflection as an aid to such teaching. He is now using dream-reflection mainly for some particular purposes in the teaching of writing. (One such purpose is the encouragement of feelings of intimacy in writing workshop groups, and a related purpose is that of teaching the art of writing about intimate feelings.)

This writing workshop can be a course or program on its own, or it can be run inside an Evergreen Coordinated Studies Program

or Group Contract.

In introducing this workshop both to students and to prospective leaders, Jones stresses one point: "The main thing is understanding that writing is not writing; only rewriting is writing. That is the key -- the secret. And understanding it also causes diminished anxieties on students' parts."

As Jones currently runs it, the workshop's activities are spread over a three-day cycle (which is experienced by those students carrying their work through to final-draft stage as a four-day cycle). The cycle is structured as follows:

On the first day, he meets the workshop after he and the students have read an excellent short story or essay. They hold a seminar on that text. They then hold a dream-reflection seminar. (Present readers unfamiliar with dream-reflection seminars should in particular consult the full Jones monograph cited above; they should also see Jones' The Dream Poet [Cambridge: Schenkman Publishing Co., 1980], which is listed below among the workshop's required texts.) They are then sent off for a two-to-three-hour period to write a piece which connects the literary work with the dream in any way. They then reassemble and read what they wrote to one another.

On the second day, the workshop's members meet in groups of four students each and respond to the papers read aloud at the close of the previous day's work -- which have all been xeroxed at the students' own expense in coin-operated campus copying machines, in order that they can now be read. In responding to the papers, students write down (a.) what they heard, and (b.)

what it made them think of. (This is done in writing only, and it takes about a half-hour to complete.) The students are then sent off for three hours and told to rewrite their papers. At the end of the three-hour period, they reassemble and read their rewrites aloud to the group. When the readings are over, the students disperse. Their homework assignment is to type up the papers they have just read aloud.

At the beginning of the third day, the students turn in their typed papers to Jones shortly before the workshop is to begin. He chooses four to be xeroxed, and the copying is quickly done. (In the absence of a copying budget, students should be told upon entry into the workshop that they should count on a xeroxing expense which they should think of as any other text expense; the cost per student per quarter, using coin-operated campus copying machines, ought to be a bit less than ten dollars.) He distributes the xeroxed four-essay package to the students. The group then seminars on these texts for about ninety minutes apiece, aiming all comments at the work of rewriting. At the conclusion of the day's work, the four student writers disperse to go home and do their final drafts -- which must of course be carefully typed -- as based on what they heard.

At the beginning of the next day, the four student writers turn in their final drafts. These essays are placed in the Program Portfolio, which is maintained in the classroom as an open document for the students to consult at their leisure. A new cycle is then begun, and the remainder of this day is the first day of the new week's work.

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What precisely happens during the rewriting seminar on the third day? Jones underlines the fact that it is mainly he who does the rewriting of the four papers -- but with much participation from the group. He does not explain as much as he simply leads discussions on specific "elements of style" as found in the student essays. "The reason I do it so well," Jones adds, "is that I don't know how to tell the students how to rewrite their essays, not being an English teacher; so I show them. And my skills in group dynamics probably help a good bit there," he admits. His laughing conclusion, which has to be taken as at least partly cautionary, is: "I'm really not sure that anybody else could do this and have it work."

Jones has put this workshop at the center of the Evergreen Group Contract titled "Writing, Reflecting on Dreams, and Writing Again" -- the same title as his monograph -- during 1983-84. He has also used it in the course titled "Dream Psychology" in the Cornell University Summer School during its 1981 and 1982 terms. In these offerings, he has used the following texts: Strunk and White, *The Elements of Style*, 3rd ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1979); Jones, *The Dream Poet* (Cambridge: Schenkman Publishing Co., 1980), used because it provides important theoretical and historical background; a good pocket dictionary and thesaurus.

Stella M. Jordan: A Strategy for Teaching Descriptive  
Outlines and Using Them to Critique Essays

Stella M. Jordan is Director of the Learning Resources Center at Evergreen. In the summer of 1981, with Evergreen support and assistance, Jordan had the opportunity to study under Ken Broufee, who was running a grant-funded tutor training program for the Brookings Institute. In her work with Broufee, Jordan learned of a pairs-based strategy for teaching students to do what she calls "descriptive outlining" and to use it as a tool for doing critiques of essays.

First, the writer does the first draft of an essay.

Second, the writer tries to state in one good, clear sentence the main idea governing the essay -- the thesis.

Third, the writer does the following for each separate paragraph of the essay:

A. He or she says in one good, clear sentence the key elements of the paragraph's content -- what it says;

B. He or she states briefly the function of the paragraph in relation to the other paragraphs and to the thesis, noting whether there is linkage with (or transition of ideas between) it and the previous paragraph. In other words, the writer says what the paragraph does.

Fourth, the writer pairs up with another writer who has also done the above work, and the two exchange essays.

Fifth, they each go through the same process with the other's draft essay.

Sixth, they each evaluate the techniques of the other's essay. They state in writing what is done well, what they like, and then what could be improved, being especially conscientious about citing specific examples of each.

Seventh, they each evaluate the content of the other's essay. Stella Jordan tells them at this point: "State whether, to you the reader, the main points of the essay are valid and effective, whether they are supported, and whether they are successful. Be specific with examples."

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Stella Jordan strongly believes in the usefulness of this pair-based technique. She says, "This deceptively simple descriptive outline . . . should help the student see what needs to be done in terms of thesis support, focus, and so forth." She thinks it especially noteworthy that "students usually are able to do a better outline of another's paper than their own."

Perhaps the most important strength of the outlining technique, Jordan says, is that it helps the student develop both as writer and as critic:

For the writer -- done after the first-draft writing, the descriptive outline is a tool for rewriting, and helps the writer check the logic and consistency of his or her essay material before starting a second draft.

For the critic -- the descriptive outline becomes a tool for clear, objective analysis of the essay.

Loverne Root King: A Writing Strategy Based on Three Life-Stages,  
plus One Good Idea for Teaching the Thesis Statement

Unlike most of the writing teachers interviewed, who gave their sources and influences and inspirations last, Loverne Root King gave hers first. She said that her source was the life and teaching of the late Mary Hillaire (a professor at Evergreen from 1972 until the time of her death); but she noted that Hillaire had not to her knowledge used this strategy in the teaching of writing *per se*.

King said that the writing-teaching strategy she wished to share is one based on the idea of three progressive stages in life and in learning. These stages are:

1. Individual Identity
2. Group Loyalty
3. Personal Authority

Accordingly, King has her students aim the first piece of writing they do under her instruction at [1]. This first assignment will often be to do a simple "reaction paper" -- one which expresses a student's individual identity as a responder/reactor. The principle here is: "Nobody can say I'm wrong."

For the second paper, or for a rewrite of the first paper, the student aims for [2]. Example: With a class of re-entry women, the assigned or suggested topic might be an issue or

question having to do with women's history or contemporary women's issues. (A paper with such an aim, and on such a topic, when assigned to such specific target-audiences might also be an excellent vehicle with which to start teaching the basics of research, King noted.)

For the third paper, the desired third stage of Personal Authority is achieved through substantiation, King said. This paper will not be merely reactive or responsive, and it will not be merely personal; rather, it will be a paper which is thoroughly backed up by logic, research, and the careful development of its ideas.

In this particular use of the three-stage strategy as a technique for the teaching of expository writing, Loverne King's audience had been made up of Re-Entry Women. But she is confident that it would work equally well with other audiences.

With audiences interested in learning other of the standard rhetorical strategies, however, Loverne King continues to place her teaching within the context of the three stages of life and learning.

For example, she believes that the teaching of narrative can aim toward, and profit from, a solid connection with [1] Individual Identity. This connection could be achieved through suggesting that the first paper be a brief memoir or anecdote which relates an incident from one's own educational experience.

Similarly, King has taught descriptive writing (sensory description, in particular) through asking students to write

about a person, place, or thing from the point of view of someone from another culture. This assignment teaches important things about [2] Group Loyalty.

King believes, finally, that there is a fine potential match-up between the teaching of the rhetorical techniques of argument/ persuasion and the learning stage of [3] Personal Authority. (This match-up can sometimes be enhanced through requiring that argument/persuasion conclusions be the results of research. The reason is that the student will have become an expert on the topic and will thus feel personal authority as genuine new self-confidence -- as a real force.)

Lovern King stresses that her three-stage teaching strategy is sensitive to, and is effective at addressing, multi-cultural concerns. It is, she says, a pedagogical method which respects differences. For example, in the case of [3] Personal Authority, both the teacher and the teaching strategy presuppose that the student does indeed possess authority -- his or her unique own authority -- which may, for example, come from his or her own special cultural backgrounds or traditions. In the case of [2] Group Loyalty, multi-cultural concerns can be addressed through the student's identification with -- or through his or her getting readers to identify or empathize with -- the culture or social group of which the writer is a member (or with which the writer is trying to achieve empathetic membership).

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Lovere King also shared a strategy for the teaching of what

a thesis statement is. She had experienced difficulty in teaching this concept to some students; thus, this strategy ". . . felt like a flash of brilliance which worked" after she had first thought of it and used it with success.

She simply said to her students one day in class, following some discussions of the idea of the thesis statement: "I once saw a marine throw open the door of a bar and shout to the customers inside, 'I've been everywhere, and I've done everything, and I can whip everybody in the house!' Well, that statement was the marine's thesis statement, and he had to spend the rest of the evening defending it.

"And that evening is your paper."

\* \* \*

Loverne King concluded by noting that she believes deeply in the effectiveness of rewriting and thinks a student learns more from doing it than from simply writing new papers over and over. She counsels that a first draft should probably not be marked on by the teacher, but should rather be conferred on with the student. The second draft would be the paper per se and would be commented on in writing. She believes that the doing of three or more drafts is even more effective than the doing of two, but she has not absolutely required of students that they do more than two.

## Mark Levensky: Response Writing

Mark Levensky, a member of Evergreen's philosophy faculty and current convener of the Humanities specialty area, uses a technique with his students which he calls "response writing." He is the author of the monograph *Response Writing: One Way to Teach Writing in the Humanities*, which was done as part of the Writing Across the Liberal Arts Curriculum project under terms of the grant funded by the NEH and the Pacific Northwest Writing Consortium. What follows is a summary of the strategy presented in that monograph; it should not be used as a substitute for the monograph itself, because the monograph gives many useful explanations for teachers and details for students which could very well be necessary to the strategy's successful employment.

Levensky begins by stating that he started teaching writing at Evergreen because (1) the college had an institution-wide commitment to the teaching of writing (c.f. "Foreword," final page) and (2) many of his students here could not write Standard English. He notes that he has now (writing in 1981) ". . . taught or encouraged writing in three dozen ways," and he tells what some of them were. He then writes: "One way that I have taught writing, while at the same time teaching philosophy and literature, is by teaching response writing."

At the start of this teaching, he tells his students the following [abridged]:

1. Each week I will ask you to write a response to the assigned reading. We will call this writing response writing.

2. The purpose of response writing is to help you improve your ability to read, write about, and discuss important and difficult books and problems.

3. I will assign a topic for some of the response writings. If I do assign a topic, then write on that topic. If I don't assign a topic, then assign yourself a topic, write the topic down, and write on the topic. Resist the temptation [to change either your topic or my topic] while doing your writing. Instead, learn to write more on a topic than you at first thought possible or desirable.

4. Frequently, your response writing will concern a small portion of the assigned reading -- a page, sentence, or phrase. One good way to begin a response writing is to type out these words exactly as they appear in the book . . . .

5. When you have completed your writing on the topic, carefully reread what you have written. Now add a short postscript . . . . In this postscript, comment on the quality of the form and content of your writing. Don't comment on what you wanted to write, tried to write, or now wish that you had written. . . . Say what seems true and important.

6. Your response writing should be three or more pages. [He here gives further information on formatting and proofing.]

7. Each week bring two clear copies of your response writing to the first class meeting of the week. During the first part of this meeting, some students will distribute dittoed copies of their response writing, some students will read parts of their response writing aloud, and parts of some response writing will be discussed. When you hear and read the response writing of others, pay attention to what is present in the form and content of the writing. When response writing is discussed, assume that whatever is said about another person's response writing is also true of your own. For example, if someone says that a sentence in someone else's response writing is ungrammatical but meaningless, assume that this also is true of a sentence in your response writing. Find the place in your response writing that is, in effect, under discussion. We will call this process transferring.

8. Following the first class meeting of the week, put one copy of your response writing in a hard cover binder which has your name on its spine. We will call this binder your response book. All response books will be kept together in a place to be assigned. Keep the other copy of your response book with you.

9. Sometime between the first and the last class meeting of the week, rewrite all or part of your response writing for that week. [Explanation is given of how to do this.] Put a neat, clear, proofread copy of your rewritten response writing in your response book next to its mate.

10. [This is a long instruction about reading in the "library of response books" -- see #8, above -- and about how to give response/feedback/criticism/editorial help to other students' writing, as well as about how to seek and use such help oneself.]

11. [This is in effect a note to his students about what he will and will not read, and about what he will do in response to what he does read.] "I will read part of your response writing during the term. I will not read your response writing every week. Occasionally I will write brief comments on your response book. If you want me to read and comment on a particular part of your response writing, I will be glad to do so . . . . [He goes on, in this appropriate section, to talk about evaluation.]

Following the above section of initial instruction to his students, Levensky goes on to other matters of importance to teachers who might become users of his strategy.

The first of these matters is purpose, and Levensky says that the strategy of response writing has the following purposes:

1. . . . To encourage people to read important but difficult books.

2. . . . To encourage people to have their own feelings, thoughts, and things to say about these books and the problems that these books suggest.

These purposes are related to a problem he faces: "My students

don't have the knowledge, skill, or experience to do scholarship or write high-level criticism in the humanities, and most of them never will. For most of them, it is even pointless to try to write a research paper in the humanities . . . . But they can come to [possess] and express their own valuable understanding of these books and problems, whether or not their understanding is intellectually sophisticated, academically respectable, or historically true. Response writing is one way for them to do this." On the other hand, there are a few students who are capable of doing more: "For those few students who can do scholarship, make critical essays, or write research papers, or for those students who want to learn how, response writing can serve as a start. It helps most students guide their own reading and prepare for active participation in seminars and lectures. It gives students a good topic for informal discussion. It builds group spirit."

Moreover, Levensky says, response writing encourages students to write it two different ways: (1) "It encourages them to make writing by first having a clear thought and then writing it down"; (2) "It encourages them to make writing by first writing without a clear thought and then having a clear thought by writing." He adds: "Both ways work."

Levensky gives precise assignments in writing for each week's response writing (they are more precise at the beginning of the term than at the end, by which point they have been dispensed with altogether), and he gives a good sample-assignment in his monograph (p. 14).

The monograph has an interesting section on how his method deals with the mechanical problems in his students' writing. One way it deals with mechanics is via the "postscripts" mentioned above, as he will suggest that a given student, in one of his or her postscripts, respond to the mechanics in the essay to which the postscript is appended. Writing such a postscript has the general effect of reinforcing the proofreading demand of the response-writing method (also mentioned above), but it does not always do so. Levensky comments: "The connection between proofreading, rewriting, and seeing words is obvious. I ask each student to proofread his writing word for word and to correct any mistake in grammar, punctuation, spelling, and usage. Not all students make the corrections. Some can't see their mistakes and have no idea how to correct them. They think that their mistake-filled writing is standard English written in their personal style. Others think that it is easier for them to express difficult thought or feeling by writing non-standard English than by obeying handbook rules. *They don't understand that, generally, the more intricate, subtle, abstract, or delicate the desired content, the clearer, stronger, and more publicly sanctioned the writing form must be* [italics added -- ed.]. Proofreading and correcting must be pushed" (pp. 15-17).

Like other teachers represented in this monograph (perhaps most strikingly, Richard Jones), Levesnky strongly believes in the value of rewriting, and he sees it as a good thing to do with response-writing after it has itself received critical response

from other students, from him, and/or from its own writer via the "postscript" device. One of rewriting's benefits, according to Levensky, is that it can make a student writer "more accustomed to simple writing facts," one of which is that even though "it is impossible to make writing right the first time, it is easy to improve it the second, [but that it is] impossible to make it perfect."

Levensky gives over a large part of his monograph to a discussion of how the response-writing meetings themselves are set up and run. The following condensation of that discussion is, for reasons of space, a radical synopsis. The elements in his structure are these:

1. The frequency of the meetings is one per week.
2. The length of each meeting is "from fifteen minutes to two hours" (depending on what has to be done and how long it happens to get it done).
3. In preparation for each meeting, one or more students ditto parts of their response writing for that week. (He picks those students or asks for volunteers.)
4. As an opening ritual for each meeting, "there is a short, informal discussion of writing and life called: 'How Hard Can It Get?' This gives people a chance for public complaint, support, and laughter." This part ends when one of the students "hesitantly" begins to distribute his or her dittoes.

5. That student reads his or her writing aloud.

6. "We discuss the writing and we discuss it in a particular way: 'This is a terrific part and this is why. This is a terrible part and this is why. This is one thing that you might do to continue the terrific part or improve the terrible part and this is why.'" He adds: "We discuss and enjoy the terrific parts first" [italics added -- ed.].

7. Only a small part of any one piece is discussed. "We choose something . . . that satisfies all or most of the following conditions: (a) It is present in the writing; (b) it is visible in the writing; (c) it can be pointed to in the writing; (d) it is important in the writing; (e) it concerns the form of the writing; (f) if it is a terrific part, it can be continued, and if it is a terrible part, it can be fixed; (g) it is also present, in one way or another, in the response writing of other people in the room."

8. "We don't discuss the writer's invisible motives."

9. "We don't say, 'I think that. . . ' or 'I feel that. . . ' or 'I liked the part that. . . ' or 'As I heard you read, it seemed to me that. . . ' or 'For me, some of your words didn't seem right.' Instead, we say 'There is an important misuse of spiritual in the fourth sentence of the seventh paragraph.' Part of the lesson here, Levensky says, is: ". . . If a person wants to help another person improve his writing by talking to him about his writing, it is best if the first person doesn't

make himself the topic of every sentence. It is best if he makes the writing the topic of every sentence."

10. "We give advice." Levensky explains at length that he once did not give advice to students about their writing, but that he now does give it, because he has learned from experience that "my students are not self-correcting writing machines any more than they are self-correcting auto mechanics."

11. One sort of advice is about the basic mechanics of writing, and Levensky notes that he gives it more at the beginning of the term than further in, although he notes that "I sometimes think I'm teaching third grade."

12. Sometimes, after writing has been read aloud, there will be no ensuing discussion at all. There can be many reasons for there being none, one of which has been that the students have decided to write their individual responses instead.

13. Regarding the "transfer" device (mentioned earlier), Levensky says the following: "When we do discuss the response writing of one student, I ask the other students to transfer part of what we say about the response writing to their own response writing. I once said this [following a student's reading]:

The first sentence of his response writing is, 'Homer's Iliad is the best known war story that has ever been written.' What does this mean?"

He continued, in the class, to analyze the sentence in great detail, questioning what it means, if anything, and how it might

mean it. He then said to the students: "We all write [such] sentences. They are easy to write, and late at night they seem perfect. In the morning they don't. Right now, find a similar sentence in your response writing and write an appropriate note in the margin next to it." He adds: "*This fact of transferring is the most difficult moment in the writing meeting. It is hard for many students to see that what is true of someone else's response writing is also true of their own*" [italics added -- ed.].

14. "During our discussion of a response writing, the writer doesn't talk." (This statement is followed by reasons; readers are referred to the sections on Richard Jones' and Leo Daugherty's strategies, which also contain the same insistence for much the same reasons.)

15. "At the end of our discussion of his writing, the writer does respond to what he has heard. He says what he has learned about his writing and thanks everyone for their effort. *What has he learned?* He does as he pleases."

16. "In addition to discussing and leading discussions of response writing during the writing meetings, I give little talks about writing . . . which last from one minute to an hour. I don't prepare them. I let the writing that I hear and see that day suggest the topic. I make up the form and content of these talks as I talk along. I try to make them relevant, encouraging, humorous, filled with examples, and true." He gives a three-page

verbatim example of such a talk.

17. "I [once] thought that I wasn't prepared to offer [such workshops], and that even if I was, they probably wouldn't be worth the time that they would take away from regular program lectures or book seminars. I've changed my mind. I now think that any teacher who writes well is prepared to offer them, and that if he does, the writing of his students will improve."

Levensky stresses that one way he encourages students to make good response writing is to use such writing in seminars: "I use their good response writing in my regular classwork. In lectures and discussions I refer to a suggestion that someone made in a response writing, or I read a passage that I have copied from a response book and then I respond to it, or I ask someone to read a particular part of his response writing aloud and then I lead a discussion on what the student said. Sometimes a student offers to read a part of her response writing in answer to a question about a book. I am careful about what response writing I use. In lectures and discussions, I only refer to, or ask for, readings of good writing relevant to the topic of the moment."

He offers individual conferences about response writing. "Usually, a student volunteers for a conference," he says, "but sometimes I ask a student to meet with me. Students also meet with each other. [These conferences] take place in classrooms, hallways, over coffee, and in my office. They last from one minute to an hour." The monograph goes into quite a bit of

detail about what might typically happen at such a conference.

Like students (who have, as noted, been encouraged to read the response-writing of others and to respond to it), Levensky reads the response writing. How does he do it, and what does he do once he has done it? He says: "Once a week I read response writing. I read for an hour. I read part of the recently made writing in one response book and go on to the next. I read quickly. I don't read part of every response book each week. I write few, if any, comments on the margins or on top of words. I sometimes write a short note of congratulations or criticism at the end. . . . As I read [it], I can feel the mood of the program. I can see what is of interest, who is writing especially well or badly, what topic needs to be discussed in the large group meetings, whom I should speak with in an individual conference, what a good idea for a future response writing assignment might be, and how much of the book is enjoyed, detested, and understood. I can also find good writing to reproduce, distribute, post, read aloud, and respond to in a lecture or discussion." (The monograph here provides a lengthy example of a piece of response writing so chosen.)

He adds: "At the end of the program, I read a portion of each student's response book and give special attention to a piece of response writing that the student has submitted as his best work. I talk with the student about this writing in a final evaluation conference and quote from it in my final evaluation of the student's work. I emphasize the student's new writing skill and accomplishment. When writing is the topic, any progress should be celebrated."

Mark Levensky concludes his monograph with a discussion of the follow-up techniques he recommends to students who need them and ask for them. He says that such students often get additional help in writing courses, workshops, and clinics. "Some," he says, "meet regularly with acquaintances who write well. Some read good writing daily and pay attention to the writing as writing. Some read books about writing, about how to write better, or about how to make a particular kind of writing."

He appends a selective bibliography of books about the art of writing. This bibliography is broken down into the following categories: (1) handbooks on grammar, mechanics, punctuation, usage, and composition; (2) books on diction and style; (3) follow-the-pattern writing books; (4) books on writing and logic; (5) self-paced books on writing; (6) books on how to write well. A final, extremely valuable category is (6) recent books especially chosen for the beginner at teaching writing.



David Marr's Extravagant Interest:

An Attempt to Synopsise A Theory of "Writing in Social Space"

I: Introduction

1. David Marr's response to the original questionnaire regarding this monograph was: "Feel free to use any part of my booklet Extravagant Interest." He was referring to his own NEH monograph in the present series, written in 1982. It was my intention to include previous monographs written by faculty members who didn't volunteer anything new, but I think I especially wanted to include Marr's monograph, because I was a bit worried that some faculty members had not found it immediately-accessible enough to use with ease -- and that it was thus being under-used. For my own part, I thought it one of the few genuinely profound pieces on helping students learn to write that I had ever read. But I knew, too, that its style and organization would militate against its being used as a "quick fix" by most writing teachers (and potential writing teachers): Its style is complex (though not by the standards of contemporary literary criticism and theory), and its organization puts off "classroom-contact stuff" until last. I think it is right on both counts -- with "right" meaning "appropriate to its purpose" -- but I think its rightness is not achieved without necessary losses. So I especially welcome Marr's invitation to "use" it here, because it is my hope, through using it, to reintroduce the Evergreen faculty and other readers to it, with the aim in mind that they might belatedly

take it up and use it with their own students. I decided to synopsise it -- not to present a boiled-down substitute for the original (for none would be either possible or desirable), but rather to pique people's interest in spending the couple of hours necessary to read it -- which in turn should lead to some enjoyable (and perhaps disturbing) hours of reflecting on it.

2. But how do you synopsise David Marr? I wondered about the prospect, and was daunted by it. But once I concluded (a.) that the job could not be done well, but (b.) that it should be done anyway (because of possible resulting payoffs in helping students learn writing and teachers enjoy teaching it), I decided just to go ahead anyway. Apologies in advance to all -- particularly to Marr.

## II: Marr's Idea

3. Marr's basic idea is that what is wrong with the institutional teaching of writing is its divorcement from the aims of education -- themselves fragmented in a context of pluralism. Marr believes that students need, somehow, to get a sense of the general purpose of writing, as opposed to possessing merely a bunch of fragmented, "atomized" purposes. He writes: "From the student's point of view, the day to day practical activity of writing proceeds from a hodgepodge of reasons which either singly or together bear little resemblance to what George Orwell or Joseph Conrad or any other writer I can think of meant by writing with a purpose. English theme on "the

sights and sounds at the street corner." History paper due next week on the Civil War and industrialism. Philosophy exam on Russell. Psychology quiz (fill in the blanks) on Chs. Four through Six. Term Paper in Biology on the autopsy performed last week in the pathology lab. I doubt that the particular necessity of the student's having a useful purpose in each of these pieces of writing can be met, so long as the general purpose of writing is atomized."

4. But what would this general purpose be, or be like? Marr explores this question in great detail, concluding that it can only come from trying to be the sort of scholar Ralph Waldo Emerson pleaded for in his "American Scholar" address -- a scholar who tries to "re-envision the social whole." "'You must take the whole society,' Emerson advised, which lies splintered into pieces around us and in us, 'to find the whole man.'" For Marr, Emerson's admonition that we "take the whole society" is the crucial thing:

This directive defines the scholar's, in particular the writer's, peculiar mode of being in the world.

It is a mode of being limned by the scholar's efforts to trace a line in between two alternatives: on the one side, transcendental re-constitution of the broken whole; on the other, remedial political action.

This line in between these two alternatives is, for Marr, the "line of the scholar's true inter-est." So the general purpose

of the writer -- including the student writer -- is to write out of this interest.

5. But what is this interest? Marr says that the scholar/writer is a person who walks a line, or tightrope, between the positions of "silent visionary, frozen in transcendental self-attention" and "man of action, seeking to bend the given social world to his will." He is "Man Thinking," Marr claims, and the line he walks is the line which is always "between being and doing." That line is the interest. And writers will write out of it, he implies, if they are taught to view such writing -- such an identity -- as the primary thing expected of them. Marr believes that teachers should lay down the primary expectation of their student-writers that they learn "to act as interested writers -- writing out of the need, suggested by the Latin roots of the word 'interest,' to be in between, to be different or important."

6. It is such an idea of writing, Marr explains, that the great nineteenth-century American writers taught and embodied -- Emerson, Henry Thoreau, Twain, Henry James, and the rest -- as well as some of the finest twentieth-century writers, among whom he names George Orwell, Ralph Ellison, and W.H. Auden. (Much of Marr's monograph is taken up with discussions of the ways in which these writers make this case.)

7. For Marr, this purpose, this interest, this identity, this "social role," is a political one. Orwell, as usual, says it well: "'Political purpose -- using the word 'political' in the

widest possible sense -- [is] the desire to push the world in a certain direction, to alter other people's idea of the kind of society that they should strive after. Once again, no book is genuinely free from political bias. The opinion that art should have nothing to do with politics is itself a political attitude.'" Marr believes that the novelist and essayist Ralph Ellison speaks in comparable political terms when he says: "'It is through the process of making artistic forms -- plays, poems, novels -- out of one's experience that one becomes a writer, and it is through this process, this struggle, that the writer helps give meaning to the experience of the group.'"

8. Such purpose is a prime creator of good writing, and the lack of it is the root cause of bad writing, Marr says. Again: The purpose Marr speaks of is the "EXTRAVAGANT INTEREST," abiding over time and space, in telling the truth as a writer. (The obverse is also true, if we accept Orwell's claim that bad writing is basically a lie -- that every instance of bad writing is "'one instance of the general case, which is the betrayal of my purpose.'" Orwell asks: "'Do you also see how in betraying (going against) my intended purposes, I betrayed (revealed) another purpose? If you see that, then you must understand that by purpose in writing I mean something ethical and not something technical, and that lapses in technique cannot be prevented by technical means alone but only by regaining control over one's purpose.'"

### III: What Might Be Taught

9. Marr has hopes for a kind of teaching which might serve as a corrective to the state of affairs he believes to exist regarding the lacks of abiding purpose and interest. "I think it is possible for students to learn to cultivate their own versions of that extravagant interest in writing exemplified in the work of the masters," he says. One strategy for accomplishing this learning (among, possibly, others) is "for them to write from standpoints in social space."

10. What is *Writing from Standpoints in Social Space*? Marr says: "By this I mean that they should regard the act of writing as one in which they are *twice caught*: simultaneously snared by the discipline of the craft and entangled with others. To exploit this fortunate predicament, I suggest that they take up (or recognize their) actual positions in social space and, with specific philosophical or literary ideas as their guides, write essays on whatever seems interesting to them" [italics mine -- L.D.J.].

11. How do the students *find* their positions in social space? Marr suggests several ways and alludes to others, but I would like to pick out three from his monograph.

The first way is to learn from something the novelist Henry James once said, as told by the literary critic R.P. Blackmur:

. . . the only child of a neighbor died of a sudden illness; and although James had quarrelled with the neighbor,

and they had not been on speaking terms he announced to his host that he would attend the funeral of the little boy. His host argued that, in the small church in the small village, it would be conspicuously unseemly for him to go -- the bereaved parents could only take it as an affront; but James was obstinate. When he returned, his host asked him how on earth he could have brought himself to go, and to sit, as he had, on the pew directly behind the mourners. James brushed all argument aside, and, with that intensity in his eyes which made his face seem naked, stated firmly: 'Where emotion is, there am I!'

The first way to help students find their places in social space, therefore, is to help them commit themselves to the Jamesian purpose -- which in Marr's good words is "an absorbing interest in presenting historical, or social tension as private emotion." To go to the funeral violated bourgeois decorum, most certainly, but the writer's place was most assuredly there. Marr says, "It is precisely in the smallest details of social life that James could imagine what he took to be the totality of social relations." And one of James' own characters sums it up: "'Live all you can; it's a mistake not to.'" Real living, for the writer, is being where social emotion exists and writing in response to it: "'Where emotion is, there am I!'"

Second, Marr encourages student writers (sometimes but not always through particular, detailed assignments) to respond to texts or other things in the world by looking at them in terms of

the Natural/Artificial dichotomy. He says quite a bit about this dichotomy, as well as the one immediately below, in his monograph. I shall not attempt to synopsise these passages, but shall instead rely upon the first example in Part III to shed enough light for now on what he means by them. It only needs adding that he believes the two terms in this dichotomy -- "Natural" and "Artificial" -- "block rather than aid understanding." He provides several examples of how and why this is so.

Third, Marr believes that teachers can help their student-writers find themselves in social space through teaching them to view specific instances of speech and writing as representative of either Normal Discourse or Abnormal Discourse\*. (Another dichotomy.) Marr discusses the two as follows:

Normal Discourse is characterized by the search for 'objective knowledge' ('privileged representations' or 'essences') through the observance of 'agreed-upon criteria for reaching agreement' among participants in that discourse; Abnormal Discourse lacks such common ground of agreed-upon criteria. Normal Discourse both contri-

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\*These two dichotomous terms, plus the lines quoted by Marr in this passage, are from Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979).

butes to and reverses the image of the given world . . . . Its knowledge-claims generate modern medicine as well as modern diseases, industrial cities as well as prisons in which some of the casualties of industrial life are housed, constantly watched, and schooled.

Abnormal Discourse, though indifferent to the rationality infusing the given world, seeks a *modus vivendi* with Enlightenment and is committed to a distinctively political world united under the virtue of civility.

Normal Discourse loves to make pictures of the world, in which may be seen pictures of liberal man. Abnormal Discourse looks at these pictures and says: What pictures! And: What pictures?

Normal Discourse enables three of us to go to the moon. Abnormal Discourse just looks up at the sky and wonders.

Abnormal Discourse is as dangerous as Normal Discourse.

Marr affirms that the work of trying to see one's purpose as a writer in the way that James saw his, plus trying to look at the world through the special lenses provided by these two powerful dichotomies, will help students learn to write from a found position in social space.

#### IV: Two Customs and Eleven Exercises in Social Space

Customs. Marr used this system in the Coordinated Studies Program titled Unmasking the Social World (1982-83). This was a three-quarter program at the advanced level, and it was full-time. In that program, Marr gave detailed directions and instructions for writing to his students, all of which are included in the final section of his monograph. (Marr stresses that other teachers should feel free to "fill out or modify" each exercise; he does feel, however, that the eleven exercises he provides should probably be done in the order given.)

Because it was stressed to students, as part of teaching them to write in social space, that they were members of a writing community by being in the program (a community in which the professors also wrote), certain community responsibilities were also stressed. The first was the matter of deadlines, and the second was the matter of the format of essays. Regarding deadlines, Marr told the students:

. . . You will not be shot if you miss a deadline. Something worse will happen. The structure of assignments and the cooperative work among students which that structure is intended to foster will collapse. There is room within this structure for you to learn many valuable lessons about writing . . . ; but there is no room for late papers. And we have no alternative structure to replace this one. The first lesson any writer learns has nothing

to do with how to write a paragraph, how to use the semicolon, or how to reason well. The first lesson is . . . : Meet the Deadline.

Regarding the format of essays, Marr follows the principle of "making the audience useful to our would-be writers," and he accomplishes this aim through requiring that one copy of all essays be kept in a three-ring notebook by the students, while a second copy is given to their respective program faculty members. "Students and teachers read these papers and comment in writing on them," Marr says. "Students revise each of their papers at least once, and some of these revisions are the results of collaboration by two, three, or four students working on particular problems in composition. At regular intervals, students and faculty read a large number of the papers in the program notebook and write a paper on whatever comes to mind."

\* \* \*

Exercises. Marr provides eleven specific writing exercises, starting on page 40 of his monograph. I give the first one of the eleven here, just in order to provide a sample; you have been minimally prepared for it by the foregoing synopsis of Marr's ideas, and it is representative of the others (although, as he says, it is meant to be the first of eleven, upon which, in a way, the ensuing ten are built).

Directions for the student: Read the story told by R.P. Blackmur of Henry James' vigil at the church which concludes

with James' remark, 'Where emotion is, there am I!' Discuss (in class or out, or preferably both) this story as a parable of the writer in search of something interesting to write about. Construe 'writer' here as you: avoid the temptation to psychoanalyze James. Now, find some children (under the age of five) playing, and observe them as unobtrusively as possible. Pay special attention to the stated or implied rules of the play in which they are engaged and to their fidelity to and departure(s) from these rules. 'Where emotion is . . .': Where is the emotion in this little social situation? May the scene be described as Natural or as Artificial? Is the children's 'discourse' Normal or Abnormal? Write a narrative essay giving the story of the children's game or play -- not an abstract, theoretical piece, but a narrative in which children move and speak and pretend.

David Marr adds an important postscript to this exercise and to all of Extravagant Interest's exercises: "The direction, 'find some children (under the age of five) playing,' may cause some teachers to break out in a clammy sweat. Most of these exercises present the student with an immediate practical problem to solve: how to get oneself into the social situations required or recommended by the assignment. For Exercise One, some students may well find themselves writing letters, making phone calls, and talking with parents or pre-school teachers, as part of what they consider appropriate preparation.

"I want to say two things about the practical problems that are posed by these exercises in writing from standpoints of social space. First, given the already well developed network of 'Town-Gown' social relationships initiated by the contemporary academy, such problems are not nearly as difficult as they may first appear. Second, whatever difficulty these problems present has to be juxtaposed against the often unprofitable ease involved in more conventional approaches to the teaching of writing. The Emersonian point of view implicit in these exercises situates the would-be writer in the everyday world, which is 'pearls and rubies to his discourse.'"

## Rudy Martin: Writing As A Discipline

Rudy Martin began by stating that he views, and teaches, writing as a discipline. Specifically, he tries to get his students to view writing as:

1. a way of finding out what they think;
2. a way of organizing what they think;
3. a way of trying to frame questions or issues.

When students can be brought to see writing in such a way, Martin says, "It becomes a tool."

In promoting this way of looking at writing, Martin says he does several specific things:

1. "I teach precis writing regularly," he says, noting that he especially teaches it in Core programs (but does not always do so, as other priorities may prevail). With groups of advanced students, he does a one-shot workshop on precis writing which is reinforced by different follow-ups which build on that workshop's teachings.
2. He tries from the beginning to push students to write what he terms "thesis essays" -- i.e., essays which start with a thesis statement and then attempt to support or defend it.

3 He emphasizes the importance of revision at all times. To the end of driving home this teaching, he will take his students through a guided revision. Two ways in which he teaches such revision are:

- A. to walk a student through his or her own essay-draft, word by word and line by line, in an individual tutorial session;
- B. to do the same kind of walk-through in a small group with a portion of one student's essay-draft.

In these sessions, whether individual or group, Martin says that he stresses: precision, clarity, and accuracy. (He notes that by the word accuracy he means the right word, or the right verbal strategy, for the purpose attempted.) "I make lots of marks on student papers," he says. He does so for the purpose of calling attention to student writers' problems; so his method, in service to his purpose, is to make marks which are not corrections per se but, instead, questions about student writers' intents. He sees such marking practice as entering into a dialogue with a given student writer, he says. He also observes that, when it comes to actual sessions with his students, "I can teach more to a person in twenty minutes in a one-on-one situation, focusing on his or her paper, than I can in a

much, much longer time in a group."

Regarding his actual techniques for teaching *precis* writing, Martin shares the following strategy\*:

First, he uses model *precis* with his students -- good *precis*, bad *precis*, whatever. The students read them and think about them.

Second, he has the students write very brief *precis* of their own -- only two or three sentences long sometimes -- in which they try to say what they have *read*. (Sometimes, when first introducing his students to *precis* work, he will simply read something aloud to his students from a common text as they read along with him silently. Then he will have them write *precis* of that brief reading, and he will write, at the same time, his own *precis* of it, too. After everyone is finished with this writing, he will show his *precis* to the students, or read it to them, and they can then see how he understood the passage, as well as how he transformed his reading of the passage into his own words.)

Martin points out to his students that little *precis* might become building-blocks of much larger pieces that they might write -- paragraphs or essays, say, or maybe the core of an answer to an essay question on an examination.

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\*My desk dictionary defines *precis* as "a concise summary of a book, article, or document; an abstract." It has been a traditional pedagogical tool with rhetoric teachers." -- L.D.

Martin, who is himself a short-story writer, also teaches the writing of fiction at Evergreen. In this teaching, he says he makes his own writing the hub of the students' reading matter. He sometimes does this by reading aloud from his own work; at other times he xeroxes his writing and distributes it to the students. But he prefaces the sharing of his writing with the setting of a problem (or problems) in fiction writing, going on to show the students how he believes his own work to address that problem (or problems).

For example, Martin noted that on the day before our interview session he had shared with his students a recent example of his character-development work. He had read them a story-section in which a character "flounced" into a chair. This description of "flouncing" is but one example of what Martin calls "signature actions." He believes that it is important to teach this particular technique to students, and he believes that one excellent place for them to see it employed -- as well as other of the techniques which in large part make up the art of character development (and, subsuming it, of fiction itself) -- is in his own stories.

A specific strategy for teaching this technique (and, when modified, other techniques as well) is as follows:

1. Students are asked to divide the upper two-thirds of a page into two vertical halves, and they are then asked to separate that two-thirds from the bottom third by a horizontal line.

2. On the left side, the students make a list of physical features.
3. On the right side, they make a list of personality traits.
4. On the bottom section, they make a list of actions which define, or which might define, characters. (These actions are what Martin terms "signature actions"; for example, one of his characters "sort of squats when he talks"; and such instances -- such "signature actions" -- can be multiplied infinitely.)

This simple four-part strategy ends up in taking two hours to do well, Martin notes. He also notes that the lists students make are drawn from preliminary drafts of their own stories, containing their own characters -- and thus that this teaching strategy is really a rewriting strategy, as the "signature actions" generated by the strategy will be used by the students in subsequent (and perhaps final) drafts of their stories.

Martin makes a point of stressing to his students that he himself does this four-part exercise in the development of his own fictional characters. He shows them one of his own tripartite pages (containing the three lists). Only then does he read them his own fiction (or share xeroxes of it with them). The point is to show them how he worked his way to the creation of signature actions which satisfied him. Then, there follows a period of discussion.

"What students learn," Martin says, "is how different imagination is from being sure that certain kinds of words get on pages -- words which say what the character conception was."

Doing this "signature-action" work successfully makes it possible to go ahead with more complicated character development, as well as to the other challenges of effective narrative -- including dialogue, plot, and setting.

Charles J. McCann: Little Things and Big Things

Charles McCann made the following statement about how he deals with basic problems of sentence-level convention violations and with the larger problem of creating order:

re: inaccurate sentences, comma splices, punctuation rules, etc.: one very simple, effective solution -- threaten 'no credit' if by quarter's end they haven't mastered something they should have mastered by Eighth Grade. Works with 90%.

re: the much more difficult problem of order: I've had most success with Barbara Minto's method in her The Pyramid Principle: Logic in Thinking and Writing\*.

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\*The Minto text is also used by, and praised by, L.R. "Pete" Sinclair in his section of this monograph.

David W. Paulsen: Critical Reasoning and Good Writing

David W. Paulsen is Member of the Faculty in Philosophy at Evergreen. His teaching-of-writing strategy begins in Monday's Faculty Seminar. (External readers need to know that all faculty members at Evergreen are members of ongoing Faculty Seminars. Most of these are regular parts of Coordinated Studies Programs, as is the one Paulsen refers to here.) Part of this particular Faculty Seminar's work is to come up with three original questions about the program's texts or topics of the week. After deciding on the questions, they pick two which will serve as student seminar foci on the following day, and they pick ~~one~~ which will serve as a focus for student writing. (Later in the academic year, the students will be put in charge of developing this set of questions.)

Example: The Introduction to Natural Sciences Coordinated Studies Program (staffed by Betty Estes, Linda Kahan, K.V. Ladd, and Paulsen) -- an offering aimed mainly at second-year students -- used as one of its texts Mary Shelley's novel Frankenstein. In the Faculty Seminar on this novel, the teaching team might well have produced the following three hypothetical questions: (1.) What is the author's attitude toward science, as shown in her creation and development of the character Victor Frankenstein?; (2.) With respect to some of Rousseau's ideas (previously covered in a program lecture on Hume, Rousseau, and Kant), comment on the implicit theories of education in the middle chapters of the novel; (3.) Comment on the relationship between

the novel's main story-line and the story-within-the-story (the latter consists of Victor Frankenstein's recounting his experiences to the novel's narrator). As noted, two of these would be selected for seminar discussion, and one would be selected for student writing. As a rule-of-thumb, the question which seems closest to the program theme should be the one chosen for writing. (Again, external readers will need to know that Coordinated Studies Programs at Evergreen normally have integrative themes which tie all their varied endeavors together and provide students with necessary feelings of unity, coherence, and orderliness.)

On the next day -- Tuesday -- the student seminars discuss the questions in a preliminary way. (The three questions have been xeroxed by the faculty members and are distributed to students at the beginning of the sessions.) These Tuesday book-seminars are about two hours long; thus, enough time is provided in them for good discussions to be at least launched. At the end of the sessions, students are asked to think hard about the questions during the two or three days before the next scheduled book-seminars.

On the following Friday, the student seminars hold their second regular meeting of the week. At the very beginning of the period, each student is asked to write down his or her thoughts on the questions discussed the previous Tuesday. (The writing is meant to be done quickly; about fifteen minutes is allotted for its completion.) After the writing-period, a general discussion is held on the three questions, with the writing question

preferably getting dealt with last.

The students then disperse for the weekend. Their assignment is to write an essay in response to the question chosen for writing. (At the beginning of programs, almost all student essays will thus be roughly on the same topic; toward the end of programs, more latitude is provided.) These essays will be due on the following Tuesday at book-seminar.

The general requirements for these student essays are minimal and simple:

1. They should be at least two pages long, shooting for about four;
2. They should be typed (but the rule is not strictly enforced, in that untyped ones can be accepted in some circumstances);
3. Each paper should present a clear statement of its thesis and good arguments to support it;
4. It is required that some papers be revised.

Of these four points, the third is of course the important one, and readers unfamiliar with Paulsen's work should realize that he attaches rather rigorous and specific meanings to the words "thesis" and "argument" -- as opposed to the looser and more general meanings sometimes employed by composition teachers. Paulsen's ideas about these terms (as well as on many others in logic and rhetoric) -- and about how the principles they name can be used in the teaching of writing -- may be consulted in the

college text *Critical Reasoning: Understanding and Criticizing Arguments and Theories* (Belmont, California: Wadsworth, 1982), which is co-authored by Paulsen and Jerry Cederblom.

On the following Tuesday, at the first book-seminar of the week, the students bring in the essays they have written. Two of the students will have been chosen (self-selected, preferably) at the end of the previous Friday's session to bring xeroxes of their essays to today's meeting. This is a two-hour seminar, and its first half is given over to the discussion of a new text which the students have been reading over the weekend in addition to working on their essays. The second half, however, is devoted to discussing the xeroxed essays of the two students -- essays based, of course, on the program's previous text.

The second half of the Tuesday seminar is organized in a manner derived from Leo Daugherty's method, described in detail elsewhere in this monograph. (In an earlier program, Paulsen and his then-teammate Barbara Cooley learned its details and rationale from a conference with Daugherty.) The seminar group splits into two sub-groups, each containing eight or nine students. The paper is read aloud, and the students follow the reading on the xeroxed page. Afterward, the writer must remain silent as his or her paper is discussed in detail, because the words on the page must alone provide the thesis and the reasoned support for it. The process followed is that of asking the successive questions "What?," "So What?," and "Now What?" of the essay's thesis, its supporting arguments, and its rhetorical strategies for presenting both the thesis and the support.

During this process, when working with second-year or upper-division students, David Paulsen depends almost totally upon peer feedback. He serves as a resource person who only gives advice on demand. But he notes that these students unlike the Core Program students he had taught earlier, did not need all that much instruction in the basic mechanics of writing. He believes that he would have to be much more directive with Core Program students. Even with students beyond Core-level, however, he plans to use this strategy in the future along with a syllabus containing Hodges and Whitten's *Harcbrace College Handbook* (9th Edition), along with Sheridan Baker's *The Practical Stylist*.

This teaching strategy -- used in conjunction with a syllabus containing basic writing manuals -- is currently (1983-84) being used in the Core Program *Society and the Computer*, in conjunction with instruction in word-processing. Paulsen says that this work constitutes "the major pedagogical experiment in that program." (The teaching team is made up of Beryl Crowe, Al Leisenring [Coordinator], York Wong, and Paulsen.) In this program, the faculty have naturally moved toward placing more emphasis on the revision of essays, even extending to third and fourth revisions, focusing particularly on larger organizational problems. Because it is a Core Program, formal parts of its weekly instruction time are given over to the mechanics of writing.

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The theories behind David Paulsen's strategy for the teaching of writing are, he hopes, implicit in his text Critical Reasoning.

Paulsen's theory of writing is essentially a theory of editing. "First you get it on paper; then you structure it," he says. He believes that critical reasoning and good rewriting go hand in hand -- as long as the writing is argumentative (as almost all of his own reading and writing assignments are).

His related pedagogical theory is one which says: "Seeing the structure of what other people write helps you edit your own writing for structure." He believes, for example, that it is probably a mistake to spend a lot of time with beginning students on outlining before actually writing.

At bottom, he is an adherent of "fits and starts and revisions" as a way of doing mathematics, computer programming, and writing alike. This idea derives from Seymour Papert, Mindstorms: Children, Computers, and Powerful Ideas (New York: Basic Books, 1980), and is developed by Paulsen in a recent paper rwritten for a conference at Sonoma State University\*. For some students, Paulsen argues,

. . . it is especially important to emphasize the possibility, even the desirability, of getting a 'first draft' out and then seriously editing what has been produced. Such a tactic can often limit 'writer's block.'

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\*David Paulsen's paper written for presentation at the Sonoma State Conference had not progressed beyond the first-draft stage when this monograph was written; thus, it was not yet titled.

Paulsen continues:

Seymour Papert (a mathematician turned cognitive scientist) makes a similar point in . . . *Mindstorms*. He argues there that many people have been frightened away from mathematics and mathematical arguments because they see only the finished products and not the incremental, error-making, and detecting process that went into creating them. Papert holds that early and sustained exposure to a 'user-friendly' computer language like LOGO (which Papert helped develop) can make mathematics more palatable. Important in this process, for Papert, is 'debugging' -- i.e., editing or correcting a computer program. According to Papert, exposure to such 'debugging goes some way toward preventing the development of math phobias.

Similarly, we have found that emphasizing the editing or 'debugging' of first-draft arguments helps treat 'Logophobia.'

Paulsen adds that Seymour Papert worked with Jean Piaget and that his theories of learning derive in part from Piaget's own.

Hazel Jo Reed: The Role of Brain-Hemisphere Theory  
in Learning How You Think and What Kind of Writer You Are

I. Applications. Hazel Jo Reed's shared teaching-of-writing strategy has at least the following two applications, in her view: first, it will put the student more in touch with how he or she thinks as an individual -- including personal images, ideas, and ways of associating them -- by providing specific tools useful for achieving that self-knowledge goal; second, because of having achieved the goal, the individual student will know a lot more, in terms of actual writing, about what he or she can actually do (and, conversely, about what he or she might not really be able to do), in keeping with his or her own individual nature. Thus, it can be said that the first application is about the generation of writing, whereas the second is primarily about the criticism of writing.

One way Reed believes she can help students realize these aims is by going about her actual teaching only after having administered diagnostic tests to her students which attempt (1) to determine their left- or right-brain dominance, and/or (2) to spot hemispheric-dominance conflicts in their own sample texts. She cites as an example of the latter a student whose poetry was conflicted because it was characterized by abrupt and discontinuous rhythms alongside flowing and coherent and highly tactile images. It was particularly troublesome for the student and the writing that the tactility was in conflict with the abrupt and discontinuous rhythms, and it turned out to be

especially helpful for her to see this particular conflict in her work -- and in herself -- and to be able to work on that conflict in a focused way. One of Reed's methods was simply to ask the student which of the two effects she wanted in her work -- after pointing out, first, that the two were in conflict, and, second, how they conflicted.

Reed believes that such text-based diagnostic work is aided by adequate diagnostic examinations. Optimally, all students attempting to realize this strategy's goals would be pre-tested. Reed has developed testing instruments for the determination of hemispheric dominance as part of the over-all development of her strategy (and she notes that she is willing to share these with any colleagues interested in trying the strategy).

Reed believes that a teacher using her methods can often help some students to see that speech -- including language-related activities of many sorts -- is really not their strong suit, whereas visual work or musical work or mathematical work might be. "Some students are fighting against their own natures -- their own dominances," she has come to believe. But she says that sometimes, if a given student lacking an individually strong-suited language nature, is still "hell-bent on being a poet," then the issue might be, "What sort of poetry might he or she be more successful at producing?" Thinking about the specific student whose coherent, flowing, tactile images were in conflict with her abrupt and discontinuous rhythms, Reed tentatively answers: "Japanese haiku, maybe." She stresses that "hell-bent student writers are not to be discouraged; rather, they are to be helped to see what sorts of things (within, say, a

particular genre) they might be able to do well in a reasonably natural way.

II. Theory. Hazel Jo Reed's tentative theory is that students can be helped to write by the teacher's careful observation of their apparent characteristics of individual personality, including their perceptions. It appears at present that a good bit of what most people regard as the personality can be explained in terms of an individual's hemispheric dominance, she believes, although it is also apparent that the presence or absence of some characteristics or habits will likely fall outside anything that can be explained by that particular binarism. The teacher helps by aiding the student in the work of coming to understand what is dominant in the student, so that the student might then be able to choose either to (1) follow his or her dominance, or (2) cope with challenging "unfavorable" dominance.

Reed says that four observations led her to this particular theory:

1. As a mathematics student and professor, she observed over the years that people routinely fall into one of the two categories of (1) being able to do algebra or (2) being able to do geometry better -- and that seldom is a person "equal" in this matter. She was greatly puzzled by this observation for a very long time. She now believes that left- and right-brained dominance offers an explanation.

2. She observed that some mathematical concepts are simply expressed better in one language than in another. For example, some ideas in geometry are more naturally suited to Spanish than to English. Specifically, she believes that her significant observation is that a right-brain geometrical idea, when processed by left-brain speech competence, can be expressed better in performance by some languages than by others.\*

3. She discovered, while working with a colleague in anthropology at the University of California at Irvine, that the language in which people encode a mathematical problem literally determines how they perceive it and deal with it. She learned of this through an experiment. The experiment was done with Liberian tailors' apprentices, who must learn to do many arithmetical operations for their jobs -- buying cloth and making change, for example. Some of the apprentices did the arithmetic in their native language, and some did it in English. The finding was that specific arithmetical mistakes tended to follow the language chosen, and that they differed enough that the experimenters came to be able to tell easily which language the apprentices had processed a piece of arithmetic through without being told -- i.e., without "really knowing" -- to an extremely high degree of accuracy.\*\*

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\*The terms competence and performance, although they are common, everyday words, have special meanings in modern linguistic theory, and Reed is employing those special meanings here. In a very general way, one could say that competence means the capacity for talking, whereas performance means actual talking.

\*\*Reed relates her points #2 and #3 to the [Edward] Sapir-[Benjamin Lee] Whorf Hypothesis [continued, bottom of next page]

4. She feels that she learned a great deal through finally coming across the emerging field of brain-hemisphere research, particularly hemispheric dominance research, as found in studies by Rudolph Arnheim, Edward De Bono, and Julian Jaynes, as well as in the recent texts *Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain* and *Writing on the Right Side of the Brain*. Most recently, she feels that significant learning on this front came from taking a workshop from Jean Mandenberg (Member of the Faculty at Evergreen in Visual Arts), who employs hemispheric theory in her studio teaching and who uses the text *Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain*.

\* \* \*

Hazel Jo Reed is enthusiastic about her teaching-of-writing strategy and equally enthusiastic about discussing it with her colleagues: "It works!" She stresses that her verbal formulations of it are still necessarily tentative, but that she

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in linguistics. This hypothesis (again, very generally, holds that the perceptions of persons, and indeed of entire cultures, are significantly determined by the specific languages they have -- particularly if they are isolated and monolingual. Hence, world-view to a marked extent follows native tongue. Linguistic beginners should note that this hypothesis, now over fifty years old, is both highly respectable and highly controversial. Reed is convinced that people do in fact possess individual and cultural perceptions of the world and that their subsequent abilities to express those perceptions are 'greatly colored' in many instances by the language they speak. She does not, however, believe that the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis is all-encompassing. For example, she believes that while it is 'terribly important in the naming of things, as well as in nominalism itself,' still it remains true that 'nominalism is by no means the whole thing.' She stresses that 'many perceptions are apparently unmediated by languages -- e.g., those which have connection to nomenclature.'

is "hoping to be able to enunciate them in a complete and ordered way, eventually." (It was partly to this end that she came to study these matters on professional leave during Winter and Spring Terms, 1984.) It was her worry at the interview for this monograph that, because the presentation of her teaching-of-writing strategy as found here would inevitably be not only somewhat speculative, but elliptical as well, it would likely not be usable or "exportable" simply as found here. She would thus welcome interested colleagues' telephoning or writing her to arrange conferences or other sorts of discussions -- particularly as she will be in possession of the added knowledge made possible by her research leave by the time the monograph is published.

Sandra Simon: On What Writing Is, on Energy Points and Padding,  
and on Epistemological and Linguistic Worlds

Sandra Simon is a Member of the Faculty in Literature at Evergreen. She first began inventing and developing strategies for the teaching of writing as a graduate student at UCLA. Since that time, she has worked on them incessantly in her teaching, strengthening them and refining them with the passing years.

She began her interview for this monograph by simply stating: "There are three things I do." And those three things were as follows.

First, "Students have to be spoken to about their writing," Simon stresses. "It used to be that we corrected their papers; nowadays, we have to do a lot more: we have to start from scratch, because either they haven't had anything or what they've had is incorrect. So I start by telling them a lot about writing in general, and they like that approach very much. They like to be talked to about writing -- both writing in general and then, later, their own writing. They are incapable of doing an essay until they are taught."

Second, "I talk to them about how their ideas come -- trying to teach them the difference between [a.] the padding we all do just to get going and thinking, and [b.] the real 'energy points.'" Simon defines an energy point as an indicator that the mind is working: "Something is happening. The writer is onto something that he or she is really thinking about." For Simon,

the idea of energy points is closely linked with the notion that authentic writing is "something your mind needs to do because it really needs to work on it." (An energy point can also be in pre-writing talk; she tells certain students in certain learning situations to use cassette recorders to find energy points prior to sitting down to write.)

An energy point is the exact opposite of a piece of padding in writing. To demonstrate this fact, she will sometimes take xeroxed copies of a particular piece of writing to class and ask the students to distinguish between its energy points and its padding. (Some such writing is by students; other pieces are from published essays and books.) They see the point quickly.

One nice reward which comes from using xeroxed texts in class, contrasting energy points with padding as an exercise, is that students stop being ashamed of the padded writing they do. They see that it is sometimes necessary -- that it is often a vital step toward the completion of a final draft. They see that it can simply be thrown out. They start allowing themselves to have the fun of picking out the padding in their own work. Through looking at writing in this way, students become able in a fairly short time to tell, themselves, what is good and what is bad in their own work. She has her students do "Thumbs Up/Thumbs Down" with shared passages of writing. ("Thumbs Up" is for a piece of writing which is, or which at least contains, an energy point; "Thumbs Down" is for padding.)

Sandra Simon teaches that an important thing to realize about energy points is that ". . . they are a voice which

comments on the material, thinks about it, reflects on it, and so on, as opposed to shoving facts at the reader." (Padding, she believes, is mainly just the shoving of facts at the reader.)

Yet another realization has been that making the distinction with students between energy points and padding can be an effective tool in the teaching of books and other written materials in seminar contexts. Simon notes that the distinction between these two kinds of writing is also extremely effective in learning to be a critic of other students' work. "It is in fact done better with others' than with one's own sometimes," Simon says, "because one's own ego is not involved."

One thing Simon stresses in her teaching -- and it is reinforced by the energy point/padding classwork -- is that it may take a very long time to develop one's energy points, plus necessary padding, into final-draft writing. (They learn, for example, ". . . that it is perfectly okay to say, 'This is just padding, and nothing else will come, and there's just nothing more I can do with it now.'")

But the crucial point, according to Simon, is to understand, and to teach, that "bad writing is the start of good writing."

Third, Sandra Simon tries to establish, with all of her writing students, what she terms their epistemological and linguistic worlds. She believes that each person writes in a different world, and that each person thus needs to work on that world, not on somebody else's. To this end, says Simon, "there

are two main things I do for students." First, "I teach that one can be a good writer through developing craft." Second, "I teach that there are some writers who are terrible at craft but who have an energy of ideas." Her belief is that these are in actuality "two ways to be a good writer." One is not better than the other, she affirms. But the fact of this situation requires that one's students be worked with in two very different ways.

Teaching out of an awareness of this situation goes a long way toward showing some students that they can be good writers even though they do not know much about writing, says Simon, and, moreover, they are delighted to hear that this is so. It also shows those students with facility in writing that they are the ones who should be stylists. The point is that a student's linguistic world must be looked at by the teacher and by the other students with whom he or she is working. "The student must be helped to make that world make sense," Simon stresses, "in addition to being helped in the development of his or her facility."

Because of the fact of the existence of these infinitely various epistemological and linguistic worlds, it is crucial to Simon's theory and practice that "all people should be taught writing differently." She notes that

their epistemological worlds must be looked at. Some are spatial. Some are historical. Some are scientific.

The teaching of specific writing techniques -- for example, editing techniques -- should follow these individual ways of seeing/perceiving the worlds of

the people involved.

Simon believes that this approach helps students enter other people's epistemological and linguistic worlds. "It even enables them," she says, "to help those in other worlds to more effectively navigate those worlds, simply because they can learn to help others with their writing." Such basic training in empathy is useful for many different sorts of writing-related and text-related instruction.

Students who are not interested in, or capable of, the achievement of style -- i.e., students who are for the most part not really in the linguistic world -- ~~are~~ usually interested in ~~controlling something~~, Simon has found. And she believes that she has found how to use this interest in the cause of effective teaching. Such students may be divided into two sub-groups:

1. Those students who see the reader in front of them -- as if they are speaking directly to him or her.
2. Those students who see the reader behind them, watching them think. (For these students, writing is a way of solving problems; many of them are scientists, Simon has observed.)

For the first kind, you teach ways of getting a particular reader to understand the writing.

For the second sort, you teach ways to observe how they deal with, or cope with, certain problems and their complexities.

These two "ways" amount to ~~tones~~; and each is a tonal

attitude toward a readership or a tonal attitudes toward material.

In summarizing her beliefs about an instruction based upon the awareness of an infinitude of student epistemological and linguistic worlds, Sandra Simon says:

I teach that if you are a stylist you must always be superior in the use of language as a constructive device -- of a linguistic world which can stand on its own. To take this pose, the writer can not make a single mistake -- because he can't let the reader in to criticize. There is a daring and an arrogance and a creativity there.

But if you are the other major kind of writer (the one who really doesn't have a linguistic world), and if you are in the first subgroup of that type [called #1, above], then your stance is, 'You and I, reader, share certain values and have common ground, and I am going to bring you along now until you can see and accept the argument/thesis/point of view I'm advancing here.' You are a teacher, really. The point is to 'equalize the reader.'

If, on the other hand, you are in the second subgroup [called #2, above] of the type who doesn't have a linguistic world, you need a reader who's your equal to validate your ideas. Your writing can't be jargon. It certainly can't be padding. It has to have a lot of energy points. (And it naturally requires a reader who

has energy points of his or her own with which to reciprocate.)

\* \* \*

Sandra Simon has taught writing for many years -- at UCLA, at Washington State University, and at Evergreen -- and she has thought about it deeply. "The more I go," she says, "the more I see that for most of the students, the production of a really good piece of writing is a very long way down the pike. But meanwhile, teaching them out of an understanding of how little they know at first about writing, and teaching them what energy points and padding are and how they differ, and teaching them in cognizance of the realities of their widely differing linguistic and epistemological worlds . . . with such teaching, meanwhile, they can be enthusiastic about trying."

## Pete Sinclair: A Real-World Writing Strategy and an Experienced Writing Teacher's Wisdom List

L.R. "Pete" Sinclair shared what were essentially two separate (but necessarily related) pieces of knowledge won by his years of experience as a writing teacher. The first is a real-world writing strategy in two related parts. The second is a "wisdom list" -- or list of self-directed commandments -- which he and I think could be of use to others.

### I: The Teaching Strategy

Sinclair's strategy derives from theoretical ideas found in Barbara Minto's *The Pyramid Principles: Logic in Thinking and Writing*\*. Sinclair gives what is perhaps the highest praise possible to this text when he says, "In my experience, it is the best since Aristotle on the problems it deals with." But he readily concedes that it is a difficult book and that specific pedagogical applications of its theory must be created by the teacher who reads it: "The text is unusable as it is; it can't be readily put into service by academic professors; but the thinking is marvelous, so I take her thinking and devise my own examples and exercises.

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\*Minto's text is also spoken highly of by Charles McCann, who also uses it, in his section of this monograph.

One of Sinclair's applications of Minto took place in the Core Program titled Vancouver and Puget (1981-82), in which he employed the following strategy:

First, he had the program's students submit to the "Admiralty" (i.e., "Sluss, Sparks, and me") written proposals for individual or small-team research projects which they would do in the program's Spring Quarter. These proposals are turned in by the students at some point during Winter Quarter -- when the students are individually ready with them -- and Sinclair critiques them as they come in. He gives them back, with written criticism, following a conference. He looks at three drafts of these proposals, critiquing each draft as it is completed and giving it back for revision; some students end in doing more than three drafts (on their own), but he only looks at three.

The final draft of the proposal is the student's plan for an entire academic quarter (Spring Quarter), and it is a plan for individual or collaborative work -- which will be unmonitored by the professors, who will only look at the results.

This final draft must constitute a good, workable plan which convincingly includes ideas for:

- (a.) Activities
- (b.) Implementing the activities
- (c.) Describing the final written project (including, in some cases, drawings and diagrams)

Sinclair stresses that such a detailed final draft of a

proposal for an individual project is an extremely common kind of document in the real world -- and that this teaching strategy is thus a piece of good preparation for that world.

The doing of such a draft, he adds, helps students think.

And he is also convinced that the doing of such a draft helps students write, as well, because it becomes clearer and clearer by way of the drafting and re-drafting processes how important it is to turn inchoate thoughts, generalities, intuitions, and hunches into clear and clean and unambiguous writing. The craftsmanship is built through trying to create an unassailable document -- and perhaps especially through seeing to what extent the creation of such a document will be of critical importance to students' success in doing the Summer Quarter's worth of subsequent work.

Underneath it all, "What I do is to teach them the importance of the form. It is really all I can teach them. I give over to them complete authority about the content." (He notes, however, that the complete authority he gives over to them is in reality somewhat illusory in almost all cases; most of the content in fact comes from seminar and lecture contact with professors and from texts suggested by professors, and this underlying reality is obvious to almost all the students.)

A crucial preparatory part of this strategy has to do with Sinclair's belief in, and commitment to, the thesis that stories are a "fundamental way of knowing."

From the reader's point of view, good stories can teach or instill:

- a. experience
- b. craftsmanship
- c. imagination

From the writer's point of view, a good story is the result of:

- a. experience
- b. craftsmanship
- c. imagination

Sinclair therefore believes that students should become good readers and good writers of stories. "At the very least," he says, "what I am trying to do is to introduce my students to the consciousness of these three elements' importance in the prose transaction."

In attempting to do this work, Sinclair uses certain tools:

a. Tools for Work on Imagination:

Homer and his poetic images, from both his *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, as well as from sea-associated literary works in English from Anglo-Saxon times down to modern times: *Beowulf*; Virgil's *Aeneid*; Shakespeare's *The Tempest*; Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*; Twain's

Life on the Mississippi and Huckleberry Finn;  
Melville's *Moby-Dick*; Hemingway's *The Old Man and  
the Sea*.

b. Tools for Work on Craftsmanship:

- Instruction in the tradition of keeping journals of natural history via a system derived from that of Steven G. Herman, Member of the Faculty in Biology at Evergreen. (See Steven G. Herman, *The Naturalists Field Journal: A Manual of Instruction Based on A System Established by Joseph Grinnell* [Olympia, Washington: The Evergreen State College, 1982]. Herman has his own section in this monograph, to which readers are referred; his monograph is available in the Evergreen book store.)
- Instruction, too, in the matter of how such natural history journal entries play a prominent role in certain earlier literary texts: "the technique of scientific investigation as shown in the cases of three prominent American practitioners" -- for example, in Hemingway, Melville, and Twain.
- Instruction in the actual keeping of journals gives students the experience of craftsmanship -- through having them work on perfecting a three-dimensional object (the journal) and thus learning how concern for the art leads inevitably to beauty and vice-versa.

The students are here following a tradition of craftsmanship that has come down to us through the ages.\*

c. Tools for Work on Experience:

"The journal is not about bugs or water. It is of course about the students' own lives, at least for the most part." Sinclair believes, for example, that what he terms "classical experiences" are provided by sending the students on carefully constructed one-day field trips -- and by then having them incorporate the experiences of such field trips into their journals

Example: In a program staffed by a literary critic, an oceanographer, a natural historian, and a painter, the critic would give a natural history assignment (e.g., bird-watching), and the artist would give an oceanography assignment, and the oceanographer would give a drawing

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\*Detailed instruction on the keeping of such a journal is given in Pete Sinclair's NEH/PNWC monograph *Journal of Exploration: An Approach to Teaching Writing* (Olympia, Washington: The Evergreen State College, 1981). In that monograph, Sinclair credits his Evergreen colleague Marilyn Frasca (Visual Arts) with teaching him techniques for learning from experience via artful journal-keeping. (Frasca's work is adapted from the theories and methods of Ina Progoff.)

assignment, and the natural historian would give a writing assignment. What the student brings back from such an assigned field trip is a record done in one of those four ways. These practice-retrieval field trips are subsequently discussed in class. (Note: The students are also required to do such work on their own, later, and in fact most work of this kind ends up in being self-assigned -- after the necessary skills have been learned.)

The doing of such a journal, Pete Sinclair stresses, is only a preparation for the multi-draft process of putting together an unassailable Spring Quarter Prospectus.

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## II: Sinclair's Six (Verbatim) Principles for Teaching Writing

1. I work hard to improve my own writing.
2. I refuse to be my students' only audience; I try to be their editor.
3. I believe -- but seldom say out loud -- that the main purpose for writing is to seek the truth. Bad writing is bad mainly because it is in some way false.
4. Geoffrey Chaucer implies, and I believe and tell my students, that literary intercourse consists of:

Story -- Books

Experience -- Audience

Craft -- Poet

5. I tell students that correct prose either has the form of a story or it has the form of an argument.

6. I tell students that spelling, grammar, and punctuation are essential -- but I won't teach it to them. I recommend good handbooks.

\* \* \*

When asked what sources (if any) he would cite for his principles and ideas about the teaching of writing (as opposed to theories, such as Barbara Minto's, from which such principles and applied strategies could be derived), Pete Sinclair listed "my Evergreen colleagues Richard Jones, Bob Sluss, Marilyn Frasca, Steve Herman, Leo Daugherty, Mark Levensky.

## Matthew Smith: Teaching How to Write A Thesis Statement

"The one thing I stress about writing in my programs is how to write an essay," says Evergreen political scientist Matthew Smith, adding: "The essay has to be about something; the student has to be concerned with the something; the something is a thesis; and each essay must have one."

"What I do is: first, I teach how to write a thesis, and the first lesson in that teaching is, 'If you don't have a thesis, you don't have an essay'; second, I teach how to expand a thesis into an essay -- teaching which often takes one or two whole quarters with Core-level students."

Smith's teaching of how to write a thesis statement goes as follows: He asks the students to take the first piece of reading for the quarter and to go through the same steps recommended by Sheridan Baker in the first chapter of his widely used text *The Practical Stylist* for the writing of an argument. (Baker asks students to make an assertion, says Smith, then to come up with reasons for that assertion, and then to come up with counter-arguments which, when made, do not beat the assertion.)

"Baker's exercise makes any assertion translatable into a thesis," in Smith's view. And the difference between a thesis and an assertion, he says, is: "A thesis is something that is supportable by articulated reasons. It is not merely an opinion; it is an opinion with reasons -- and hopefully with counter-arguments, too -- whereas an assertion is essentially just an opinion."

"In this first lesson," continues Smith, "I try to teach students the fact of the multiplicity of theses. You can make a thesis easily, and you can make dozens of them. It takes no great wisdom to produce a thesis. Any single text can generate hundreds of them in the mind of a good reader.

"I do that teaching by compelling students to write a variety of thesis statements about one book, to share those thesis statements with their fellow and sister students in group work, and finally to pick one that makes some sense.

"The way this works is, I toss off a bunch of fast, spontaneous theses about a text we have all read in common.

"I tell them to worry about quality only after they've produced several theses.

"All of this leads into the 'thesis-as-flexible-instrument' point of view. It is a starting-point. It is what one ~~thinks~~ he or she is going to write about. Without it, one just makes a lot of words."

Smith feels that there is an analogy which clearly explains what he is trying to do in his teaching, to wit: When his brother was an apprentice potter, his brother's teacher would come in, look at the pots his brother had just made, and then proceed to smash them, because only through smashing them could he see how well his apprentice was doing in the all-important matters of uniform wall-thickness and interior shape. "The paradox here," Smith says, "is that in order for excellence to be achieved, the psychological investment in the original artifact had to be thrown away -- with the artifact, of course -- and the

same thing is true of experimental apprentice thesis statements.

A typical schedule for Matthew Smith's instruction in thesis-statement-making and essay-writing is as follows\*:

On the first day, he delivers a lecture on thesis statements. That lecture contains the following five points:

1. Thesis statements are easy to come up with.
2. Thesis statements are necessary starting points.
3. Thesis statements are critical for the structuring of essay writing.
4. Thesis statements are critical for the structuring of evidence (particularly for throwing away what you don't want).
5. Any thesis statement is more complicated than any mere assertion -- although all thesis statements must start as assertions.

At the conclusion of this lecture, Smith distributes a handout to the students which repeats and reinforces the lecture. They will use both the lecture and the handout in the work they will do in coming up with their first complete essays.

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\*Smith has used this teaching strategy -- and this schedule or something like it -- in the Outdoor Education coordinated studies program, which he taught during the 1980-81 academic year with his Evergreen colleagues Rita Pougiales and James Stroh. He has since used it in some other programs, most recently in 1284 (1983-84).

Right ~~before~~ the lecture, however, the students will have participated in a workshop session in which they have talked about and defended the theses which they have tentatively chosen to function as the center of their first essays. This workshop's criteria, according to Smith, are:

1. Demonstrability: "Can the students think of evidence available in the text which they can use to support or deny their theses?"
2. Interestingness: "The theses should not be demonstrably and yet ~~boring~~. But at the same time, in order to be un-boring -- ~~i.e.~~, interesting -- theses must be arguable."
3. Manageability: "Is a given thesis manageable, in terms of the assigned (or otherwise dictated) essay length?"

During the remainder of the year, Smith works on what he calls "making writing which is both bigger and smaller."

Examples of making writing bigger include instruction in paragraph structure, paragraph relationship to thesis statement, introductions and conclusions, and overall organization of paragraphs into finished and effective essays.

The main example of making writing smaller is instruction in how students can use what they are learning as a primary editing tool. They will be taught to (and exactly how to) jettison text which is unrelated to the final, settled-upon thesis.

Smith also stresses that this instruction in thesis-making is central to the later research-paper project, simply because, in his view, a research paper which lacks a clear thesis has no *raison d'être*.

#### A Postscript on "Signposts":

Matthew Smith notes that one important thing he learned about the teaching of writing came from his fellow faculty member David L. Powell (Literature). This was the practice of teaching, by lecture, what are called "signpost" words and phrases. These are simply road signs in the midst of one's writing, and they are commonly called "transitions" by rhetoricians. Some everyday examples are ~~moreover~~, ~~in contrast~~, ~~by the same token~~, ~~therefore~~, ~~nevertheless~~, and so on. Smith believes that it is important to teach Core-level students the fact of the relatedness of such signposts to the effective presentation of a thesis, because beginning writers must be taught to clearly relate paragraphs and sections of essays to their theses -- for their readers' sake.

Susan Strasser and Teaching from Authority:

"I'm A Writer, and I Want My Students to Know It"

I: A Writer's Stories

Susan Strasser is the author of a recent, critically-acclaimed history of housework entitled *Never Done*, and she has also recently been awarded a major grant by the American Council of Learned Societies to write a second book. Knowing that very few things will stimulate one's students to write much more than the knowledge that their teacher is also engaged in the same tough work of an evening and on weekends, Strasser makes a point of talking about her experiences as a writer in her writing classes. [Leon Bottstein, a writing teacher who in his time has served as president of both Franconia College and Bard College, has claimed that the failure of most high school and college writing teachers to teach many people to write much better than they did prior to enrolling -- as contrasted to what he sees as the relative success of studio-arts professors and professor-scientists -- is caused by the fact that their students know they aren't practitioners of what they profess. --L.D.]

Some examples:

1. She tells stories about her writing.
2. She tells students that writing will make them nervous -- and she tells them how to deal with the stresses they feel. (For example, she tells them that her refrigerator is kept full, for those nervous

moments, with nutritious and low-calorie food -- which is good for the orally-oriented and even useful for those who are not.) In other words, coping with stress is, for Strasser, an important part of what she teaches.

3. She tells them stories about her editors -- stories, that is, about her dealings with professional people who know writing. She tells them how painful it is, sometimes, to show them hers.
4. She tells them stories about deadlines.
5. She tells them stories about her own behavior as a writer. She keeps notes on this behavior and regularly shares those notes with her classes. This practice, Strasser feels, is of particular usefulness.
6. She says that she tries to communicate to her students the fact that ". . . writing is the only time I must confront, starkly and alone, what I really think, and it's very exciting to me." The important thing to convey is the possibility of feeling that particular excitement. "That's the part of the composing process which is the hardest," she believes. She can help her students with it, in her experience of teaching, just through sharing her own experiences of anxiety about it.

Basically, she shares with her writing classes what it feels like to write -- to agonize over it and to joy in it. She even tells them the differences between working at writing problems and teaching how to work at those same problems; for example, she tells them that, for her, editing is both not as exciting as composing and more difficult ~~than~~ composing, but that it is fairly exciting to teach and relatively easy to teach.

"I think I use the authority of having a published book," Strasser says. "I think I use it humanely. But I also think I consciously use it."

## II: A Strategy for Teaching Outlining:

### "Don't Put Your Ideas in Prison"

First, Strasser gives a lecture. The lecture has three parts:

1. A discussion of outlines, in which she tries to teach that "outlining is not the process of putting one's ideas in prison" -- an argument which neutralizes students' main piece of resistance to outlining. She explains that outlining is categorizing work, not "a bunch of stuff about getting your Roman numerals right." She stresses the creativity of outlining -- "the mental work of it."

2. A discussion of theses and why they are important. (During this discussion, she stresses that a thesis can change in the outlining work. She tells personal stories about her

experiences with metamorphizing theses during outlining. She teaches the idea that "the thesis is a flexible instrument" -- and she has her students write that clause down and remember it.

3. A discussion of her method of outlining, which is made up of the following steps:

- A. A first stab at a thesis
- B. A randomness stage -- including brainstorming of all possible topics
- C. A second stab at a thesis
- D. Creating out of this thesis two to five categories
- E. Putting everything that got brainstormed into one of these categories
- F. Fitting into these categories anything left over -- sometimes necessitating the altering of the thesis and the altering of the categories
- G. Then: Repeating the entire process (A-E) for each of the categories, if what she is writing is book-length, with the categories becoming the book's chapters

Second, she does a demonstration in which she helps the students create an outline of the lecture on outlining which she just finished giving. She asks them to tell her what her thesis was in the lecture she just gave. Additionally, she asks them to

tell her every topic she mentioned. She notes that they will commonly give her examples from her lecture, not topics. She proceeds to show them how -- in their own work on restructuring her lecture and on their own random thoughts which might one day be outlined and written about -- to make her examples (and the students' examples) illustrative of her topics (and of their own).

One quick (and predictable) result of Strasser's strategy for teaching outlining is that the most dutiful students do subsequent papers which are "dull as dogshit" -- perfectly outlined, but unreadable. She responds: "Okay, you did a perfect job on that paper. Wasn't it boring?" When they emphatically agree that it was, she says: "Well, loosen up some. Don't put your ideas in prison."

A second quick (but not so initially predictable) result is that everybody but the most dutiful students will write subsequent papers which are dramatically clearer and more coherent than anything they have managed to do previously.

#### Notes on the strategy:

1. Strasser would use this strategy for any research paper for the obvious reason that it does such a good job of helping students distinguish between evidence (example) and topic.

2. She would also use it for most kinds of undergraduate expository writing.

3. She believes it is best for essays of five-plus pages.

4. She does not see it as appropriate for the teaching of fiction, poetry, and other non-expository genres.

5. She has successfully used this strategy with groups ranging in size from fifteen to sixty.

6. The whole presentation takes about two hours to do well, counting time for a needed break between lecture and discussion.

Nancy Taylor: A Core Program Writing Workshop in Basic  
Skills and Critical Thinking

Nancy Taylor is a Member of the Faculty at Evergreen in History and Education. Her Core Program writing workshop, which was run in the two Great Books of the Western World programs (1980-81, 1983-84), is similar to Gordon Beck's workshop; and, like the Beck workshop, it is based on Leo Daugherty's general model, which should probably be consulted by readers wanting structural and methodological details.

Taylor begins the workshop by picking out one small thing -- one common error currently being made by a good many of the students in her whole group of twenty or so -- and by then giving a short lecture on it with blackboard examples. (Some sample problems are split infinitives, dangling participles, and *it/it's* confusion.) Each week produces a "prescriptive" rule. Thus, at the end of sixteen or seventeen weeks (that is, well into the second quarter of a scheduled three-quarter duration), the students will each have a notebook accumulation of sixteen or seventeen dependable rules which are based on solecisms actually written by the critical mass of the workshop members -- by the individual student and his or her peers. (It is important to note that these solecisms should be deviations from real-world contemporary stylistic norms in expository writing -- deviations, that is, from standard editorial practice -- not departures from merely "ivory tower" standards or, worse, individual professors' subjective norms.)

This accumulation of rules is used by Taylor and her students as a check-list. Each week when the students hand in their essays for the week, they must hand in the check-list with the paper, showing that they have proofread their papers for every error covered in the checklist. Taylor claims that this technique helps enormously in the elimination of basic errors in the essays of Core Program students -- primarily because the errors being checked off by the students are precisely the ones they have been habitually making all along. And, because the students themselves are now catching these errors before turning in their papers, the instructor does not have to keep seeing them and marking them week after week.

Taylor then picks out one essay from among the set she is about to turn back (after having critiqued all the essays in writing) -- one which she feels shows a solid attempt to make a reasoned, logical argument. (Like Beck and Daugherty, Nancy Taylor uses Cederblom and Paulsen, Critical Reasoning, as her group's text in introductory logic and critical thinking.) The section of the paper which is the argument is read aloud by the student who wrote it. The whole group then proceeds to do a brief critique of this section in terms of its successes or failures in the avoidance of common confusions and logical fallacies, using the student's own argument in the exact same way as the exercises are used which follow each chapter in Cederblom and Paulsen's text. (The students also do these exercises each week and are sometimes asked to turn them in.) Thus, students come to see just how easy it is to fall into those confusions and

fallacies -- which they have only recently discovered to be confusions and fallacies at all.

Following this whole-group work on cases from the actual writing of students in the class, Taylor breaks the whole group into two subgroups (the constituencies of which are stable). These subgroups work for about forty-five minutes (and sometimes longer) on their two xeroxed essays-of-the-week furnished by student writers. (For details on how the subgroups are set up and run, again see Leo Daugherty's section.) The subgroups generally focus their critiques on materials being studied for the week (from Taylor's own checklist, from the grammar and rhetoric handbooks, or from the Cederblom and Paulsen text).

Nancy Taylor said in her interview that one of the two subgroups was terrific, having developed a near-perfect *esprit* which it maintained all the way. This group created its own identity and kept it. Its members worried constantly about being broken up at the ends of academic quarters and so on. The second group was fine, going by the usual standard for expository writing classes, but was nowhere near as successful as the first. Taylor attributes the difference to personal chemistry and to the luck of the draw. (The latter was a factor because the first subgroup had a much higher skills-level in its own small critical mass than did the other. No one had considered using skills-levels as a factor in placing students in each of the two subgroups; students had simply placed themselves -- and should probably continue to do so, lest the process become altogether

too sterile.)

Nancy Taylor said that she saw her monograph interview as a "testimonial" for the workshop as a technique for teaching expository writing to Core Program students -- and that she thus believed the report of it should be taken as a testimonial, too.

## Charles Teske: A Workshop Strategy

[Special Note: Reading, understanding, and using this strategy requires your referring to some teaching materials supplied in Appendix II of this monograph.]

Over the years, Charles Teske (Member of the Faculty in Literature at Evergreen) has carefully developed a set of teaching materials for instruction in writing which he believes to be useful in workshop settings. He describes these materials as "cribbed maxims from a variety of composition books"; but, while the materials do represent an obvious eclecticism, it is also obvious that there is much of Charles Teske and his teaching-of-writing experience in them, too. (See Appendix II.)

Teske believes that these materials (and the workshops based upon them) are most appropriate for instruction in "longish essay writing" offered in the lower division. He tells both his students and any teachers who might be interested: "Take this stuff as a bunch of hints."

In what teaching situations has Teske run these workshops? He answers that he has usually run them as voluntary, quarter-long workshops within lower-division Coordinated Studies programs. He has sometimes offered these workshops for specific, pre-announced equivalent credit, and has sometimes not. He has usually supported his own workshop teaching materials with such excellent standard texts in rhetoric and logic as William Strunk and E.B. White, *The Elements of Style*, and Monroe C. Beardsley,

Thinking Straight. Additionally, Teske uses Fowler's Modern English Usage for the doing of etymology exercises with his students.

How does he use the materials in the workshops? After some initial sessions on whatever elementary text he has adopted (e.g., Strunk and White), he does several sessions in which he and the students work slowly through the sheaf of hints and tips. They do this work until he is satisfied, "even if I'm just kidding myself," that the students understand -- "that they know what those tips and hints are about." With many of the specific tips and hints, he provides lots of examples in class.

One of Teske's most unusual innovations is his delay of offering the workshop at all until he has first read a whole quarter's worth of student essays. The workshop itself (typically offered during Winter Quarter, following a Fall Quarter in which he studied the students' written work) is then based on his perceptions of them, both as individual writers and as a collectivity. (One result of his quarter's worth of pre-workshop essay reading is that he sometimes finds students with enormous problems. "With hard-core cases," he says, "I don't hesitate to send them to the Learning Services Center. They're much better at dealing with them up there than I am.")

Thus, the first day of a Winter Quarter writing workshop would be devoted to Teske's saying, in effect, "Here are my quarter-long perceptions of you as individual writers and as a group of writers."

Does "volunteerism" work? That is, does making student participation in the workshops voluntary, instead of mandatory, solve more problems than it creates? Teske admits that volunteerism has its problems. He notes, for example, that "the good student writers almost always want 'remediation,' but too many bad writers do not." This leads to a situation in which "you have a class of twenty-four, in which eight don't need it but want it, eight need it terribly but don't want it, and eight who need it in varying degrees but who don't always show up." Still, he believes that volunteerism works better than "requirements" in the case of writing, simply because no one can improve his or her writing who does not want to do so and who is not committed to some degree to do so now.

The typical workshop period (for credit) would be two hours per week, either in one or two sessions. The students' writing assignments for the workshop would simply be their weekly seminar essays.

The workshops progress as follows during the quarter:

- I. For the first few sessions, he simply asks: "Is there anything in Strunk and White you don't understand?" He spends the session time on answering the resulting questions.
- II. For the second few sessions, he and the students work their way through his teaching materials in the same fashion.

III. For the third few sessions, he asks the students to begin reading their essays aloud to each other before they are handed in for him to read and critique. Also (and Teske notes that he learned this technique from Craig Carlson [Member of the Faculty in Communications and Poetry at Evergreen]), he asks the students to hand their papers to whomever is sitting adjacent to them in the workshop, requesting of these next-door neighbors that they simply read the the essays aloud to the students who wrote them.

As for the structure of a given week, Teske describes it as follows:

- I. The student brings in on (say) Monday morning his or her essay.
- II. By the beginning of the afternoon of that same day, he or she submits a xerox of that same essay to Charlie.
- III. Then, on that same afternoon, the students go into workshop session. This session will involve either (a) their reading the papers they have written aloud to each other, or (b) their listening to their neighbors read their papers aloud back to them.
- IV. Meanwhile, the instructor, sitting in a nearby room (close enough, ideally, to monitor what is going on, in case of fights or whatever), reads the xeroxed papers and makes brief comments on them. These

comments are of two sorts: (a) marginal comments on stylistic matters; (b) longer comments about possible strategies for rewriting, reworking, redoing parts or the whole.

- V. Following the students' session, he hands back to the students the xeroxes of their essays, containing the responses/feedback/comments/editorial help he has written to them.
- VI. On the next workshop day, Thursday (say), the student hands in a revision of the paper initially submitted the previous Monday. The revision is based on what happened in the workshop and on his written comments on the xeroxed copy. (Teske notes that in the case of students with serious writing problems, he insists that these revisions be based strictly upon those written comments.) Teske will return the revision, containing extensive comments of the same two sorts, on the following Monday.
- VII. The Thursday workshop session itself is then about the context of the students' essays: the seminar texts-of-the-week to which they are a response. The session takes the form of responses to aspects of those texts which, the students say, continue to puzzle them after they have tried hard on their own to puzzle those aspects out.

Perhaps the central goal of Charles Teske's workshops -- the centerpiece of their idealism -- is to blend thinking and writing pedagogically in such a way that his students do not merely get the idea that, in his words, "Now we think, and now we write" -- i.e., separately. (The achievement of the creation of the amalgam in the students' minds does, however, usually cause a bit of a problem with the meeting of deadlines with essays, Teske notes, because sometimes the students will be thinking about their reading, in preparation for writing about it, instead of writing about it. Therefore, once the quarter is well underway -- and especially when a quarter features a heavy syllabus -- he will modify the weekly schedule given above by delaying the Thursday session in Week I until Week II, skipping the Monday session of Week II, and proceeding on in that staggered fashion through the end of the term.)

## Craig Thompson: Assignments-Based Education

**Who He Is and What He Believes.** Craig Thompson is a writer who serves at Evergreen as Associate Director of the Learning Resources Center and as an Adjunct Member of the Faculty. His ideas on the teaching of writing are connected with what he terms an "assignments-based" education.

Students who come to Thompson typically lack backgrounds in the various ways of doing essays, he says. They are inexperienced, and this is perhaps the crucial fact about them as learners. An experienced writer can make certain artificial strategical moves which employ the various wisdoms of the classical rhetorical types: description, narration, argument, and so on. But an inexperienced writer cannot.

Thompson sees himself as a "whole writer" who brings into play all of the rhetorical techniques necessary to the piece when he is plying his craft. An excellent recent place in which to see a good writer succeeding in these terms is, in Thompson's estimate, *The Tree Where Man Was Born* by Richard Matthiessen. On the surface, Matthiessen will be writing an argument about the effects of modernization on Africa's indigenous populations, but the work is also intensely descriptive, and its forward movement is achieved in large part by narration. In other words, Matthiessen is "whole" because he constantly does the one thing in terms not only itself but of the other two things as well.

Thompson believes that, for most people in our culture, the ability to write as a "whole" writer is learned or acquired, for

it is an ability which is made up of a repertoire of skills which allow the possessor to bring out his or her innate potentials (or, in the language of modern linguistics, of "competences"). "These are the tools," he affirms, "which enable us to reach our talents."

Assignment-Based Learning. An inexperienced writer confronted with an assignment calling for any one of the three classical types of writing -- and particularly for two in combination, or for all three at once (with, say, two doing service to the primary third) -- is almost certainly going to panic.

But a student who is at the end of a good expository writing course ought to be able to do such work on demand.

Giving assignments of the right sort, says Thompson, is the main technique for getting a student there.

Of the art of giving such assignments, Thompson says: "I want to give assignments which will meet the student's present abilities, yet which will challenge the student to refine those skills much further." Of the three classical types of writing, he would teach description first, then moving on to personal narration, and then, finally, to exposition/argument. He believes that to present them in this order is to take them up in their order of ascending difficulty -- and, hence, is to make assignments in the most profitable order of difficulty.

All along the way, he supplements the teaching and making of writing assignments with assigned examples of the best English essayists. Examples of his reading assignments in

description are: Michael Herr, *Dispatches*; Richard Matthiessen, *Beneath the Mountain Wall*; John McPhee, *Coming Into the Country*; Barbara W. Tuchman, *A Distant Mirror*. Examples of personal narration are: Maya Angelou, "Graduation"; Loren Eiseley, *The Immense Journey*; Dylan Thomas, any of the highly autobiographical stories from his *Portrait of the Artist as A Young Dog*. Examples of exposition/argument are: Francis Bacon, any collection of his best essays; George Orwell, "Politics and the English Language" (collected in the book of the same title); Bertrand Russell, "Useless Knowledge" and countless other essays on social- and education-centered topics. (Noting that the Bacon essays are from c. 1600, Thompson says that although these great pieces are archaic-seeming to students at first, they end up admiring him for his flair as a writer.)

Equally important (if not actually more important), he supplements his teaching with examples of his own writing in various draft states.

What He Does. Craig Thompson talks with his students a lot at first. He takes pains to get to know them, in order to find out how assignments can "complement their knowledge and expand it." He says of this introductory work: "Students realize I am much more experienced with the language than they are, but I treat them as equals. I try to infuse in them some of the love I feel for the English language."

One of Thompson's assignment-based workshops is done as follows:

He gives the students a writing assignment which can be done on the spot. He will write with the students. An example of such an assignment is: "Describe the most beautiful sunset or sunrise you've ever seen, and do it in such a way that someone who has been blind from birth can appreciate it." He reinforces the verbal assignment with an abstract, fantastical, pictorial representation of such a scene -- one which can be easily hidden from the students' eyes until such time as he wants them to see it, and which can be taken away again when he doesn't. "This assignment appeals to my sense of the melodramatic," Thompson says, "because of its element of surprise."

The time needed for the workshop is an hour-and-a-half to two hours. Thompson and his students all sit together at one table to do it. Using the specific assignment-example given above, the students begin by writing down a collective list of the images which come to them. Most of these images will be tactile ones (as it happens), but some will be of sound and smell. The only "disallowed" images are of course those of sight.

The students take the accumulated images and begin as a group to construct sentences out of them.

Thompson provides some guidance in the collaborative sentence-making. For example, he will probably tell the students to make their sentences into a paragraph that either begins or ends with a topic sentence, with the other sentences serving as elaboration. The elaboration will often be poetic, he says, because of the imagery itself. (He remembers that the first

actual sentence he ever heard come out of this assignment was: "It is the color of love-making." And every time he has done the assignment since, the completed paragraph has contained "honest, human sexual imagery." "My conclusion from all of this," Thompson says, "is that the colors of sunsets and sunrises must be the colors of love-making.")

What the students get at the end will be a collectively-arrived-at paragraph, the construction of which Craig Thompson will have lightly orchestrated.

The workshop students doing this assignment will often pick up on such devices as alliteration, just in passing. His experience shows him that such devices are frequently assimilated because of good assignments, as such assignments provide students with a welcome opportunity simply to play with their language. Indeed, some of the students begin to appreciate language as they have not appreciated it previously; this is so, says Thompson, ". . . because they are actually doing stuff which they've seen only 'real writers' do previously." He adds: "They're doing something like achieving comic results in language for the first time. And they're learning sentence construction. And paragraph organization. And description. And having fun."

When the collaborative paragraph is done, Thompson gives an assignment for the students to read a chapter or chapters from a standard rhetoric text -- either their own text or a text he has placed on reserve. The reading assignment will complement the writing assignment; and -- as he is also meeting with most of his

students individually, on a one-to-one tutorial basis -- the reading assignment will also complement an individual student's individual assignment, as well. (One such rhetoric text would be Hans P. Guth's *Words and Ideas*; another is Sheridan Baker's *The Practical Stylist* [or his *The Complete Practical Stylist*].)

This example is typical of those chosen by Thompson for the first of nine sessions (that is, for the first session of an academic quarter) with a workshop having a continuing membership. Such a quarter-long workshop would be supplemented by at least ten one-hour individual tutorial sessions held with him personally. Each student in such a workshop would be required to do a total of five completed essays per quarter, plus turned-in drafts.

A good size for the workshop group is about twelve, Thompson believes. The absolute largest is thirty, and the best is eight. ("When the group is smaller than eight, there simply aren't enough personalities in the room to make it interesting.")

This workshop is appropriate for any level of instruction, says Thompson, even though this particular description of it has been presented within the context of basic-level work. (At the more advanced levels, he adds, the students simply do different, but equally valuable, things with it.)

\* \* \*

When I asked Craig Thompson if this teaching strategy was based on any theory of linguistics, learning, or pedagogy, he

replied that it was not consciously and directly based on any. He said that it was based on experience, and he sounded very convincing when he said it.

## Gail Tremblay: A Creative Writing Workshop

Gail Tremblay is a poet, fiction writer, and weaver who has taught several kinds of poetry and fiction studios at various instructional levels. Before joining the Evergreen faculty, for example, Tremblay taught the course "Form and Theory of Fiction" at the Writers' Workshop at the University of Nebraska at Omaha; she also taught basic, intermediate, and advanced poetry studios at UNO. One way she teaches writing is through creative writing workshops. These workshops are characterized by:

1. The presence of a group of serious writers;
2. The use of xeroxed copies of student writing (every student brings his own writing, xeroxed, to the workshop; the students pay for the cost of xeroxing, but Tremblay notes that she would not let financial need prevent a student's membership and participation);
3. The serious critical discussion of students' xeroxed writing;
4. The use of individual appointment time to discuss individual pieces of student writing -- one-half hour to one hour per student per week (or per piece);

This kind of workshop is successful with both fiction and poetry, Tremblay notes. It is also effective with what some workshop

theorists have felt to be "too long" pieces, she adds, pointing out that she once did a sixty-page short story in such a workshop.

Additionally, the workshop's success leads to "real-world" success, in her experience. She is happy about the fact that she has seen a good many students begin to publish their pieces before their period of enrollment in the workshop ends.

From the point of view of the instructor's flexibility, the workshops are extremely useful, Tremblay says, because they can be done either with or without background teaching in literary criticism, literary theory, creative writing techniques, and so on. That is, they can be done prior to the study and practice of such matters as character-creation, sonnet-writing, point-of-view, plot, or whatever.

By the same token, the workshops are also flexible in that they can be done with students who themselves have a lot, a little, or no background. "I'll take anybody," Tremblay says, noting that there is no necessity for screening. "People become serious," she points out, "because they know they've got to put their writing before everybody every week: the practice of doing that produces writers."

How long does a typical workshop session last? "With all of them coming, and with everybody bringing a xerox, a session would be about two hours long," Tremblay answers. "But when discussions get hot, they go over," she adds. (Often the workshopers will adjourn to more favorable climes in such

circumstances, too.)

In such circumstances, these two-hour workshops would be held twice a week.

The workshop courses themselves run from a term (i.e., an academic quarter or semester) to a full year.

**Size:** The optimum size, Tremblay thinks, is from fifteen to twenty students. (She notes that one constraint is of course the necessary weekly individual conference time.)

**Texts:** Tremblay sometimes uses standard anthologies containing models of the various genres. (One anthology she has used with success is Golden Stevenson's *Short Stories of Modern America*.) To such anthologies, she notes that she always adds examples of work by people of color. She believes that it is especially important, too, to present work of equal quality by writers of color. She stresses that such representation is crucial (among countless other reasons) because of the importance of presenting role models for students of color who are members of her creative writing workshops. Thus, she uses the best texts she can, in order to provide representative samples of the best or most interesting models from the various genres; but she finds that she must supplement these texts in order to provide representation of the best or most interesting potential role models for students who would not yet find enough of such role models included in the standard anthologies.

\* \* \*

Gail Tremblay concludes by pointing out that the creative writing workshop, as a studio teaching method, is the major piece of standard "Writers' Workshop" procedure -- as it is practiced by writer-teachers in such programs at the University of Iowa, the University of Oregon, the University of New Hampshire, and so on. She notes that she has not yet been able to set up and run such a workshop at Evergreen, but she is confident that it would work here. She hopes to use it in her upcoming Group Contract titled Writing Short Fiction and Poetry, to be offered within the Expressive Arts specialty area.

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The following Evergreen faculty and staff writing teachers contributed sections to this monograph:

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Appendix I: Alexander's Advice

WORKING WITH THE VAGUE QUESTION THESIS TO GET US TO A WORKABLE ONE

1. This is a "what is it?" question as it stands. Cut back to one issue--

JEFFERSON'S POSITION ON THE BANKS

Still a "what is it?" What's the second term?

J'S POSITION ON THE BANKS

CURRENT DEMOCRATIC PARTY'S IDEAS

What's the relationship between the two terms?

(J'S POSITION) HAS CONTINUED TO INFLUENCE (CURRENT D.P. POSITION)  
or HAS REMAINED IN FULL FORCE IN

What is the real subject of my question/thesis?  
Is it:

JEFFERSON'S POSITION ON THE BANKS HAS CONTINUED TO INFLUENCE CURRENT  
DEMOCRATIC PARTY IDEAS ON BANKS

OR:

CURRENT DEMOCRATIC PARTY POLICY ABOUT BANKING STILL ADHERES TO THE  
IDEAS OF THOMAS JEFFERSON ON BANKING

2. What is the controversy? Why is this important or significant? Why is it important to me?

Well, I want to explain somehow an odd element in current Democratic Party thinking--that on the one hand it argues for a large array of government interference in and control of the economy, but it also still adheres to Jeffersonian ideals that the "people" should rule, and that government should interfere as little as possible in the lives of the people.

So--

CURRENT DEMOCRATIC PARTY POLICY ON THE BANKS DISPLAYS A CONTRADICTION BETWEEN ITS SUPPORT FOR WIDESPREAD GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION IN THE ECONOMY, AND A DESIRE TO HAVE THE PEOPLE CONTROL THE GOVERNMENT WHILE THE GOVERNMENT INTERFERES AS LITTLE AS POSSIBLE IN THE LIVES OF THE PEOPLE, A CONTRADICTION WHICH DERIVES HISTORICALLY FROM THE SAME CONTRADICTIONS IN JEFFERSON'S IDEAS.

3. Refining the thesis-- How do I get Jackson, Crockett, Hamilton, Paine, Crevecoeur into the thesis?

Well, Hamilton argued for interference, but for control by the rich; Jefferson for little interference and control by the common man. I guess, in some ways the current Democrats are the heirs of both Hamilton and Jefferson. This comes to a head under Jackson and Van Buren. Crockett was on the side of the Banks and the little people? Paine too. I guess this goes back even to the pre-revolution. Agrarian vs. Manufacturing. Crevecoeur is an agrarian....

Refine my terms-- Well, am I really talking about Banking? No, it has shifted, and I'm really concerned about the relationships among government, wealth, and popular control. OK, change the thesis.

(CURRENT DEMOCRATIC POLICY ON THE PROPER RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GOVERNMENT ACTIVITY IN THE ECONOMY, WEALTH, AND POPULAR CONTROL) (DISPLAYS CERTAIN CONTRADICTIONS) which (CAN BE EXPLAINED BY THE SAME CONTRADICTIONS IN THE EARLY PERIOD OF OUR COUNTRY) (WITH JEFFERSON AND THE AGRARIANS ARGUING THAT ...) and (HAMILTON AND PAINE ARGUING THAT...), a split which (CONTINUED INTO THE JACKSON PERIOD WITH JACKSON AND VAN BUREN ARGUING..., WHILE CROCKETT AND BIDDLE ARGUED THAT...), so that (THE CURRENT DEMOCRATIC POSITION IS THE HEIR OF BOTH THE HAMILTON AND JEFFERSON ARGUMENTS) and (THUS NECESSARILY CONTAINS MANY APPARENT CONTRADICTIONS).

4. Is this still too big? Probably, but I'll go for it anyway. Here's the outline (rough)
  - I. Introduction; current Democratic Party position....contains apparent contradictions....important to understand because... Could be explained many ways, but I want (for some reason) to approach it from history. These contradictions have their roots in the earliest years of our country, particularly pre-revolutionary, early Federalist, and Jackson era.
  - II. Current Democratic Party positions
  - III. Comes down to the proper relationships between
    - A. Government activity in the economy
    - B. Power of Wealthy
    - C. Power of the common people.
  - IV. How this appeared in pre-revolutionary period--
    - A. Crevecoeur as early agrarian
    - B. Paine all for manufacturing, banks, etc.
    - C. Both wanted somehow for power not to get into the hands of wealthy aristocrats. but...
  - V. Federalist period:
    - A. Hamilton's views--
      - 1) role of the rich and well-born, need to commit them to the country
      - 2) necessary government activity to promote the economy
      - 3) this would ultimately work to the advantage of the common people
      - 4) how this is like, and not like Paine.
    - B. Jefferson's views--
      - 1) role of the common people in controlling government; need for policies to help common man to independence, agrarian
      - 2) government to do only what absolutely necessary
      - 3) fear of the power of the rich and well-born
      - 4) how this is like or not like Crevecoeur.
    - C. Hamilton/Jefferson clash. Leads into Jackson period...
  - VI. Jackson period:
    - A. How the issue was seen in this period... Biddle's bank, industries.

## OUTLINE

Question: Which principles of Jefferson, the founder of the Democratic Party, are upheld by Democrats today, and which are not?

Answer (thesis):

Many of Jefferson's principles became firm rules in America, but some were lost.

### I. Some principles that stuck

- A. Freedom of the press
- B. Freedom of religion
  - 1. separation of church and state
  - 2. firm Democratic party position
- C. States' Rights
- D. Education
- E. Slavery

### II. Some which did not

- A. Bank Issue
- B. Agrarian concept

MAKING OF AMERICA

WRITING WORKSHOP #1

GETTING STARTED

A) THINKING AND WRITING

The key to writing well is thinking well.

Thinking is hard work, and very hard to teach. In one way or another many teachers of writing avoid trying to teach thinking, and concentrate instead on teaching mechanics or form.

What are you doing what you think? (as opposed to dreaming, remembering, repeating, reporting, reflecting, responding, etc....)

TO THINK IS TO CONSCIOUSLY ESTABLISH SOME MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS BETWEEN AT LEAST TWO SEPARATE ITEMS (facts, ideas, images, events, and so on).

ORIGINAL THOUGHT establishes connections which the thinker at least has never previously encountered, or never encountered in quite this situation or in quite this way. Originality is useful, ultimately, only if the new connections are significant and lead to something important. In most college-level work, originality is a low-grade virtue at best. Do not worry at all about originality at this stage in your career.

IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO THINK ABOUT ONE ITEM ALONE.

B) START WITH A QUESTION

(This is the most important set of ideas about writing I will ever present to you, and you should return to this discussion continually as you work to improve your writing.)

Good college-level thinking usually starts with a question, or at least arrives at a question very quickly. You (the thinker) then proceed to answer this question. You do research. You learn more. You test your ideas. You constantly rethink your question.

There are good questions and bad (useless) questions. Here are the differences:

- a) The good question has more than one item, at least an x and a y, and the question is about the relationships between x and y. There is more than one source needed to answer this question.

-- BAD question: "What is it?"  
(unless what it is is itself controversial -- see below)

- b) The answer to the question is not obvious.

-- BAD question: "Of course.")

- c) You do not already know the answer to the question. You are open to new information, to ideas different from those you already hold.
- BAD question: You already know the answer, or you are so convinced of the sort of answer you will accept that you are closed to new information and ideas.
- d) You know what the subject of your question is. You have decided that your question is essentially about x, or about y, and you understand why you have so decided.
- BAD questions keep shifting their focus uncontrollably, or lose focus altogether.
- e) The good question is controversial, and you know what the controversy is.
- i) equally qualified students of this question disagree as to the answer
- or ii) the answer itself is uncontroversial, but there is some controversy which would be settled if people understood this point or had this information.
- BAD question: "Everyone agrees to that. So what?"
- f) The good question is significant, and you know what the significance is.
- Another way to put this is that it matters whether your answer is correct or not. Something important in the world will be affected if your answer is one thing, or another. The answer makes a difference.
- BAD question: "OK, but what difference does that make?"
- g) The good question is important to YOU, and you know why it is important to you.
- BAD question: "Well it's controversial and significant, but I don't really care what the answer is. I'm just doing this to fill an assignment."

C) What do you do next? Well, you set out to gather the information necessary to answer your question. You do as much study, research, and thinking as you have time for. You gradually come up with some sort of answer to your question.

Once you have an answer -- of some sort -- which you are willing to argue, you have a THESIS.

Your THESIS is the answer you are willing to argue at the time you sit down to write your paper.

Every paper should have (must have) both a question and a thesis.

Once you have both a question and a thesis, you can readily organize your paper.

We will discuss how you organize a paper, using your question and thesis as the source of and guide to your organization, at the next Writing Workshop. For the moment, please have faith, make the best stab you can, and turn in a finished paper. Concentrate initially on making sure you have a good question, and that you have at least tried to answer it in your paper.

D) HOW TO TEST YOUR QUESTION --

Ask yourself, seriously:

- a) Do I have at least two items (an x and a y), and is my question about their relationship?  
  
Do I need more than one source to answer this question?
- b) Is the answer to my question obvious?
- c) Do I already know the answer to my question? What sort of answer am I looking for? Will I accept only one possible answer?
- d) What is the true subject of my question? (Frame the question several ways, using now one subject and now another, and be sure that you understand the question you settle on.)
- e) Is there a controversy about my question?  
  
i) Is there disagreement about the answer? If so, what?  
  
ii) Is there some other controversy which needs the answer to my question?
- f) How is my question significant? Why does it matter what my answer is? WHICH of the many possible significances for this question do I mean to discuss?
- g) How do I care about this question?

As you test your questions, and as you learn more about the subjects and the possible answers, you will probably find that both your sense of the questions and your understanding of the answers will shift and change. This is both expectable and a GOOD THING, so long as you keep it under control. It is the sure sign that you are actually thinking, actually wrestling with your questions. But you must not allow the questions to change so radically and so frequently that you can never settle on one question, or ever settle on any possible answer. Once you have a good question, stick with it. Be especially careful to stick with the subject, the controversy, the significance, and the importance to yourself. If you let these go, you are lost.

## PUNCTUATION

Nowadays, the punctuation system actually used by most writers and editors is one which is based upon the meaning intended by the writer--upon the logical relations intended--rather than upon "rules," or pauses.

Therefore, in order to punctuate accurately, one need only understand the meanings of the marks of punctuation, and to understand what one means to say in one's own writing.

### I. Marks of punctuation defined:

ALL MARKS OF PUNCTUATION SEPARATE: NO MARKS OF PUNCTUATION JOIN.

If this is true, then we can define all marks of punctuation by the degree of separation implied, and by the logical relations between the separated words which are implied.

#### a. Between groups of words which could be separate sentences:

- A. B.      the period--the strongest separation. The material on either side are separate complete thoughts.
- A,B.      the comma--the weakest separation, mere separation. A & B are now one single thought, only slightly broken.
- AB.      the run-on sentence--A & B now constitute one undivided thought.
- A; B.      the semicolon--stronger than comma, weaker than period. Two possible meanings: a) a series; b) the two pieces are independent, but required together to express one thought. This latter situation is usually (but not necessarily) a positive/negative relation, as in "All marks of punctuation separate; no marks of punctuation join."
- A:B.      the colon and the dash--both introduce a sort of series. The second part ("B") is wholly dependent upon the first
- A--B      part ("A"), usually explaining it further, or offering an example. The colon is formal. The dash is informal, and in addition serves to emphasize what follows it.

(Sentence Fragments are quite common, and do mean something. Since the period indicates that everything preceding it is in some sense one complete thought, in this case this fragment, this image, is supposedly a complete thought. In context, this could be very meaningful.)

#### b. Between items in a series:

commas separate the items in a series.

semicolons separate sub-groups within a series, or are used when one or more items in a series have internal punctuation themselves.

c. Separating quoted materials from your own writing:

Most people understand this process well enough already, so I will limit myself to two comments.

1. One of the very few real "rules" is that periods and commas are placed inside the last quotation mark, whether they belong to the quotation or not; semicolons, colons, or dashes are placed outside the final quotation mark, whether they belong to the quotation or not; question marks and exclamation points are placed inside or outside the final quotation marks depending upon whether they belong to the material quoted or to you.
2. Long quotations--that is any quotation longer than three lines of your paper--are separated from the text, single-spaced, and indented from both sides. DO NOT USE QUOTATION MARKS ALSO, for you have already indicated that it is quoted materials.

d. Separating parenthetical material from the essential sentences:

Parenthetical materials are important to the thought expressed, but not essential to it.

- |   |   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|---|---|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| , | , | Two commas--the weakest separation, mere separation. The material is only slightly parenthetical.                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| - | - | two dashes--somewhat stronger than commas. The dashes also call attention to the material between them.                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| ( | ) | parentheses--the strongest separation, absolute separation. The material is unquestionably parenthetical, and the separation is so strong that the material inside can violate the syntax of the sentence that contains it, can even be a number of sentences itself, or contain quotations, for instance. |
| [ | ] | brackets--a very special parentheses, used <u>only</u> inside quotations, and separating <u>your</u> inserted or substituted wording of your original.                                                                                                                                                     |

II. Logical relations within English sentences.

A SENTENCE is a word or group of words which expresses one complete thought.

A PARAGRAPH is one sentence or a group of sentences which develops one (complete?) idea, or topic.

An ESSAY is one paragraph or a group of paragraphs which provides an exposition of one (complete?) thesis.

from Paul & Percival Goodman, Communitas, orig. pub. 1947.

1. We must mention still another obstacle to community planning in our times and a cause of the dull and unadventurous thinking about it the threat of war especially atomic war
2. people feel and they are bang right that there is not much point in initiating large-scale and long-range improvements in the physical environment
3. when we are uncertain about the existence of a physical environment the day after tomorrow a sensible policy for highways must be sacrificed to the needs of moving defense
4. nor is this defeated attitude toward planning relieved when military experts come forth with spine-tingling plans that propose the total disruption of our present arrangements solely in the interest of minimizing the damage of the bombs such schemes do not awaken enthusiasm for a new way of life
5. but even worse that this actual doubt grounded in objective danger is the world-wide anxiety that everywhere produces conformity and brain washed citizens for it takes a certain basic confidence and hope to be able to be rebellious and hanker after radical innovations as the historians point out
6. it is not when the affairs of society are at low ebb but on the upturn and in the burst of revival that great revolutions occur now compare our decades since world war II with the decade after world war I in both there was unheard of productivity and prosperity a vast expansion in science and technique a flood of international exchange
7. but the decade of the 20's had also one supreme confidence that there was never going to be another war the victors sank their warships in the sea and every nation signed the Kellogg-Briand pact and it was in that confidence that there flowered the golden age of avant-garde art and many of the elegant and audacious community plans that we shall discuss in the following pages
8. our decade alas has had the contrary confidence god grant that we are equally deluded and our avant-garde art and thought have been pretty desperate the future is gloomy

9. and we offer you a book about the bright face of the future it is because we have a stubborn faith in the following proposition the chief the underlying reason that people wage war is that they do not wage peace how to wage peace?

## Appendix II: Teske's Tips

## I. Organization

- Limit your topic as much as you can; it is always easier to expand than to cut. Do not, however, assume that this limitation excuses you from a close familiarity with the whole territory around your topic.
- Whether or not you have made an outline, your reader should be able to make one easily. If possible, work out your organization from the way the material naturally falls (Aristotelian suggestion); if impossible, then be in command all the way. You are responsible.
- Avoid mere summaries and chunky quotations; you must "treat," "process," use everything that appears in your text. If you have four kinds of things to say about four topics, do not use a 1A 2A 3A 4A 1B 2B 3B 4B (etc.) or A1 A2 A3 A4 B1 B2 B3 B4 (etc.) scheme. Try for 1A 2B 3C 4D if you can; but you must be in charge and override all rules rather than sticking to any one mechanical principle. (See S&W, p. 26)
- Decide what is important and go to it swiftly. From the beginning, even if you wish to convey the feeling of dramatic discovery, now where you are going, what you are attempting to prove, or demonstrate, or suggest.
- If you bog down, scribble quickly all your thoughts and references on a given topic, leaving space between each item. Then go back and read over the scribblings, deciding which jottings you wish to keep, which are merely repetitive, which are interesting but irrelevant, and which are only throat-clearings. On another piece of scratch paper, play around with various sequences in which these jottings might make sense, using key words, letters, or numbers for reference. After a few hours away from these automatic writings, you should be ready to make a sane outline. But whatever you do, avoid bothering the readers of the final draft with your fits and starts.
- Don't depend on marked or spaced subdivisions to do your organizing for you. The movements of your ideas should be clear, whether or not you provide typographical signposts.
- In sections and paragraphs, know what your topic sentences are; if you don't write topic sentences, know why.
- Observe the rule of grouping and the rule of direction in your organization. Avoid such structures as: "If we had some bacon, we could have some bacon and eggs, if we had some eggs."

- Don't depend upon such weak hinges as "also," "however," "nevertheless," and "in addition." If the sense demands them, all right. But they will not save a disorganized paragraph or add more than a show of logic to the development of a section.
- When you make transitions, know that you're making them and how you're making them: by parallel structure, by logical or chronological connections, by repetition of key words. Obiter dicta belong in the notes or nowhere. The tighter your control over the development of your discussion, the less you should have to worry about taking your reader with you. If you don't know where you're going, how should he know?

## II. Rhythm

- When there is no strong reason to differentiate materials, assimilate them; "express co-ordinate ideas in similar form"; if you find yourself forced into "elegant variation," there will usually be something wrong with the development of your discussion; compress.
- Be aware of modulations among long and short sentences. Learn what "loose" and "periodic" sentences are. Articulate difficult ideas in the clearest possible structures, using parallelisms and working slowly. Force home simpler ideas through variety of pacing and careful building-up of emphasis.
- You will achieve emphasis by segregation, position, repetition, proportion. The most emphatic position is the end of any pattern or series; the next most emphatic is the beginning. (These remarks apply to sentences, paragraphs, sections, and whole essays. See S&W p. 27.)
- Put the weight of meaning into nouns and verbs, not into adjectives and adverbs; into main clauses, not into qualifying clauses or phrases. If you wish to work obliquely and suggestively, all right; but know that this is what you're doing.
- Beware of repetitions--of running too long in one place; beware of primer prose.
- Should you need to compress material, turn sentences into clauses, clauses into phrases, and phrases into single qualifying words.
- Consider the distinction between architectural unity and surface coherence; the former depends upon logical understanding, the latter may depend upon all sorts of associations; "solidity" is the virtue of the former, "flow" of the latter.

- Don't shift constructions, levels of style, points of view, or tense-sequences unnecessarily. Play by your own rules, unless there is a clear, overriding reason for breaking them.
- Though you should try to vary the sizes of paragraphs for rhythmic interest, suspect any paragraphs that are too long or too short. If they are too short, either find supporting material or incorporate them into neighboring paragraphs. Short paragraphs are good only for emphatic summaries or crucial transitions.
- Leave spaces between bursts of metaphorical language. Beware of suppressed metaphors in abstractions. If you wish to ride a metaphor or a simile into a long-distance conceit, make sure that it doesn't end by riding you.
- Pay attention to the timing of your effects (by examining how you have spaced them within your paper). Remember that it should take the reader only a few minutes to peruse a section which it took you a whole day to write.
- Although you should avoid them most of the time, learn how to use such "fillers" as "indeed," "of course," "by no means," "consequently," and "in effect" as devices for spacing and thus for throwing emphasis upon what follows. Compare the rhythms of "We are born, we live, and we die." "We are born, we live, and of course, we die." Eliot: "I see nothing quite conclusive in the art of temporal government,/ But violence, duplicity and frequent malversation."
- Avoid rhyming jingles and heavily metrical constructions in prose; otherwise, you seem to promise the reader something which you aren't prepared to sustain.

### III. Words

- Use simple words unless you are forced to use large and complex ones. Supposedly you have enough that is new to tell the reader; there will be no need to impress him with ornaments.
- Cultivate your ear for appropriateness; shifts into slang may be exciting, but you are likely to lose more by distraction than you gain in energy.
- If you love literature, then you must love words. Be responsible for sensing the connotational "spin" on them as they come to you. Have special care for the exact usage of Greek and Latin abstractions.

- Realize that by shifting connotations, you can make the better appear the worse cause. One man's "scholar" is another man's "pedant"; your "Renaissance man" is my "dilettante"; your "light touch" my "superficiality"; your "do-gooder" my "philanthropist." Be careful to block connotations that you don't want your reader to think of. A steak is, after all, the seared flesh of a dead animal.
- Be aware of those central terms in an essay by which all else is defined but which are not defined in themselves ("liberal education," "human spirit," "genius").
- When writing about literature, prefer active verbs; the world which you perceive seems filled with agents doing something to other people and things; keep that feeling whenever you can. Remember, however, that it is almost impossible to be emotionally neutral when you use simple words; if for some specific reason you want to be neutral and remote, use abstractions; but even abstractions can be precise or imprecise.
- When writing about literature, be aware that technical terminology is not an end in itself. Critical and theoretical terms serve mainly as a shorthand previously agreed upon so that writers can get at their subjects more swiftly. When you do use such terms, use them conventionally or else carefully explain your departure from accepted usage. Do not multiply entities unnecessarily.
- If you simply cannot think of fresh turns of language to say what you mean, then you can exploit clichés by getting inside them, extending them, or (in Wimsatt's phrase) "twisting their tails."
- Bad words: "interesting," "important," "significant," "meaningful," etc. Use the space they would have occupied to show why your topic should strike the reader as interesting, important, significant, or meaningful. Too often they are like exclamation points in a schoolgirl's correspondence, meant to whip up urgency when none has been created by the close writing itself. Bad words: "case," "aspect," "factor," "feature," "nature," "character," etc. They are either pompous padding or else take up space better used for working in closer to whatever aspect of the character of your factors you wish to examine. Bad words (in profusion): "of," "with." (Another Wimsatt rule:) Watch out for three "of's" in a row; usually something will be wrong in the logical relationships of objects which seem to be parallel. "With" is unfortunately weak; in the Second World War, we fought with Germany; we also fought with England against Germany; we hit our enemies with bombs and with courage and with telling effect.
- By rigorous self-examination, isolate the fashionable jargon of the day ("identify," "relate with," "empathy," "charisma," "escalation," "thrust," "consensus," "psychedelic," "esoteric," "sensibility," etc.) and try not to use such words as new all-purpose toys.

#### IV. Logic

- Be wary of using too many compound sentences. If the thoughts you express in the several clauses admit of subordinate relationships, then subordinate them. don't force the reader to do this sort of work for you. Eisenhower was elected, and the Korean War ended. (Because? Although? Shortly after?)
- Remember that in using a non-restrictive clause within a main clause, you are making two statements, each of which may be questioned.
- You cannot prove anything by analogy; you can only illuminate your topics.
- Decide whether you are operating deductively or inductively; if deductively, make sure that your premises are sensible and that your arguments are clean; if inductively, reason from enough instances so that you will arrive at your conclusions only a step before the reader. In formulating hypotheses, observe the rules of simplicity and frequency-- and make sure that these criteria suit the age in which your subject was written, not only your awareness of your own age.
- Beware of circular and impromptu definitions.
- Understand the fallacies of denying the antecedents and affirming consequents in conditional arguments.
- Especially when you are working in the study of historical influences upon a writer's work, beware of the fallacy of post hoc ergo propter hoc.
- Realize that comparison-and-contrast methods of development may lead you into difficulties. If you discuss two works or two men or two periods (A and B), and if you alternate between them frequently (A but B; A, on the other hand, B), you will probably make clear their relationship but you will never establish what they are in themselves; if, on the other hand, you devote a single big block to A and then another to B, the reader may understand what they are in themselves but not why you have chosen to talk about both of them.
- If you have to demolish opponents, use sharp blades, not rubber hoses.
- If at any time you must play unfairly, let the reader know that you know you're doing it-- and have a pretty good reason for it.
- Try to be logical, but never be smug. Q.E.D. arguments don't lead English-speaking students to an appreciation of works of the imagination.

## V. Strategy

- Originality is largely a matter of precision in terms; it follows from an unwillingness to settle for others' --or your own -- clichés, and to imitate rhythms of thought external to your present problem. Sincerity is a matter of energy and discipline; it follows when affection or dislike is translated into forcible clarity.
- Decide what you are doing in every step of your research and writing; allow time for sheer brainstorming; do not count on being able to produce more than three pages of finished text a day.
- Your paper must have a shape, a structure; it cannot be a "transcript of reality." There is no such thing as not having a style; you have either a good style or a negligent, confused, derivative style.
- Beware of pet hypotheses and of unanalyzed first principles; if you have prejudices and cannot escape them, warn the reader in an introductory passage or note.
- Make your mistakes loud and clear; otherwise no one will be able to hear you when you're right.
- Do not try to exhaust your subject. You can't do it anyhow, for poems and dramas and fictional prose are media untranslatable into true-false discursive prose. Literary criticism and scholarship should lead back toward the work itself.
- Unless you have strong reasons to work otherwise, follow rules, group your discussions into paragraphs, and strive for economy. You must assume that you have enough that is new to tell your reader; don't waste time and energy in tricks and sloppiness. Do not show the reader your preparations for writing.
- Be concrete; do not generalize about Greek tragedies when you are reasoning from a knowledge of only one or two plays. The reader will accept suggestions on further problems if he learns to trust your procedures on those problems which you do treat intensively.
- Think hard about the styles and tones appropriate for scholarship; not whipped up excitement, but penetration; not humor, but some wit. Plan for some climaxes, but be very careful about rhapsodizing. Critical scholarship is a cross between the art of the interpreter and the analysis of the scientist. Love of a work should be shown not by repeating enthusiastic comments but by the care with which the work has been studied.

- In your relationship to readers: Don't take too much for granted. A simple "of course" or two will allow you to flatter the reader while still telling him something he ought to know but may not know. Speak as if to someone generally intelligent, mildly opinionated, but specifically ignorant on your topic; someone willing to learn if you don't make it too hard for him. Give the sense that if you wanted to extend discussion on any related points, you could. Direct footnotes and bibliography toward what the reader might like to know in pursuing the subject. Stand not above the work, but between the reader and it, your palms open and extended in both directions.
- Write with knowledge of what others have said; ultimately, however, they can't speak for you. Don't pretend to more knowledge than you have; don't be afraid to admit your limitations in notes or introductory material - don't be too humble: every declarative sentence could begin with, "From my limited viewpoint, at this particular place and time, given the problems of knowing and feeling and expressing, entropy, and original sin, it would seem that...."
- Learn how to incorporate quoted material smoothly, using as little as possible (save for a long crucial passage or two from primary works) but playing fair with your sources. Rules: (from W.W. Watt, An American Rhetoric, 3rd ed. (New York, 1964, p. 9:) "Acknowledge indebtedness (1.) whenever you quote another person's actual words; (2.) whenever you use another person's idea, opinion, or theory, even if it is completely paraphrased in your own words; and (3.) whenever you borrow facts, statistics, or other illustrative material-- unless the information is common knowledge."
- Know the relative valuation and solidity of texts and authorities you cite. When providing bibliographies, be prepared to comment on the worth of various sources. Don't use references for padding or name-dropping.
- Follow the MLA Style Sheet; try to feel the reasons behind the conventions.
- Beware of setting up straw men-- opposing opinions easy to confute; but be sure to show the need for your work as you disagree with others. You will learn most by arguing with the strongest scholarly competitors.
- A good device for importing the tone of the original into your critical discussion: build paragraphs toward the climactic words of your author (but make sure these words aren't so resounding that you are left with nothing to say thereafter).
- When you are stuck in the middle of a sentence, or a paragraph, or a section, usually the trouble lies not at that place but in something you have done earlier; go back; don't waste energy where you are.

- Beware of giving away main points early in hopes that something better will come; be willing to re-arrange. Don't hesitate before writing something; you can't revise something you haven't put down.
- When you leave your manuscript for a break, leave in the middle of a sentence. Generally you will do well to scribble at the end of the day notes to yourself about the points to be considered tomorrow; sometimes you feel closure coming on as you do so, and this is a wonderful feeling.
- Set and keep deadlines for (1) the finishing of preliminary scholarship, (2) the writing of the first draft, (3) the completion of major revisions. Don't overestimate your powers for completing last-minute bursts of genius.
- Avoid pumping up your discussion by superlatives (S&W, p. 59); but FIND THE MINIMUM THAT YOU MUST SAY, THAT YOU CAN TRULY DEFEND-- AND THEN SET IT FORTH AS CLEARLY AND EMPHATICALLY AS YOU CAN.

## GENERAL SUGGESTIONS ABOUT WRITING

### Strategy

- 1) No one else can think with your mind or see with your eyes. You have something to say.
- 2) Originality and profundity result not from any decision to be "original" or "profound." They come from a drive for clarity, for precision, for expressing what you mean. Don't settle for others'-- or your own -- clichés; don't try to imitate what you think good writing should be.
- 3) Sincerity is a matter of energy and discipline. It follows when you translate your opinions into forcible clarity, and when you back them up with homework-- research and reasoning.
- 4) Your paper must have a shape, a structure; it cannot be a "transcript of reality." There is no such thing as not having a style. You have either a good style or a negligent, confused, derivative style.
- 5) Make your mistakes loud and clear. Otherwise no one will be able to hear you when you're right.
- 6) Do not try to exhaust your subject. You can't do it anyhow. Limit your topic to an issue or several points which you can treat well.
- 7) Unless you have strong reasons to work otherwise, follow grammatical rules, don't distract your reader with petty errors, group your discussion into paragraphs, and strive for economy. You must assume that you have enough that is new to tell your reader. Don't waste time and energy on tricks or trying to imitate other people's voices.
- 8) Do not show the reader your preparations for writing. Save your throat-clearings for rough drafts. Rarely will you be able to write out a whole essay or other discussion when you start with blank paper and try, all at once, to think up ideas, to organize them, to criticize your strategy, to put your thoughts into full sentences, and to edit what you are writing. These are separate activities. Until you get very proficient at writing, perform them as separate steps.
- 9) If you bog down or don't know how to start, scribble quickly on scratch paper all your thoughts and references on your topic, using abbreviations and catch-phrases, leaving space between each item. Take a break. Then go back and read over the scribbles, deciding which jottings you wish to keep, which are merely repetitive, which are interesting but irrelevant or too much to handle, and which are only throat clearings. Cross out what you can't use. Take a break. Then, on another piece of scratch paper, after you have numbered the items you have left, play around with various sequences in which these jottings might make sense. Make an outline. Take a break. Now start writing the paper. You will know what you have to say and where you are going.

- 10) In your relationship to readers, don't take too much for granted. A simple "of course" or two will allow you to flatter the readers' knowledge while still telling them something they ought to know but may not know. Speak as if to someone generally intelligent, mildly opinionated, but specifically ignorant on your topic-- someone willing to learn if you don't make it too hard for him or waste his time. Even if only one teacher will be reading the paper, you should develop the habit of treating that teacher as an editor and writing to other real people beyond the walls of the college and the constraints of its being an academic assignment.
- 11) When you get stuck in the middle of a sentence, or a paragraph, or a section, usually the trouble lies not at that place but in something you have done earlier-- committing yourself to an imprecise main term, giving away a large point prematurely, getting lost in a digression. Don't waste energy where you are. Go back, find the trouble, and start fresh from there.
- 12) When you leave your desk for a break, leave in the middle of a sentence, not at the end of a paragraph or section. Generally you will do well, if you are leaving the work for a lengthy period (for a meal, or because you are going to sleep), to scribble to yourself some notes about what is going to come next. At any rate, give yourself every opportunity to keep the thread going.
- 13) Set and keep deadlines for the finishing of preliminary research, the writing of rough-draft materials, the writing of your full draft, and the editing of the final paper, including any revisions and corrections of errors. Don't overestimate your powers for completing things in last-minute bursts of genius.
- 14) In all of this, find the minimum that you can say, that you must say, that you can truly defend-- and then set it forth as clearly and emphatically as you can.

#### Traps to Avoid

- 1) Avoid mere summaries and chunky quotations. You should "treat," "process," use everything that appears in your text toward making your main points.
- 2) Avoid "elegant variation." If you find yourself searching for different ways to say the same thing, there will usually be something wrong with the development of your discussion. Compress it.
- 3) Avoid starting any full draft of a paper without knowing where you are going. Whether or not you have made an outline, your reader should be able to make one. You can always alter your conclusion if a better idea strikes you while you are writing. And better ideas are more likely to strike you if you have some ideas to start with.
- 4) Remember that though it may take you many hours to write a paper, your reader will be going through it in minutes. So pay attention to the timing of your effects.

- 5) Though you should try to vary the sizes of paragraphs for rhythmic interest, suspect any paragraphs which are too long or too short. If they are too short, either find supporting material or incorporate them into neighboring paragraphs. Short paragraphs are good only for emphatic summaries, or crucial transitions. If your paragraphs become very long, you probably are trying to make several major points within each of them, and you should experiment with dividing them.
- 6) Don't use any abstract word merely because you think it sounds "important" or "scientific." Good writers love words and are aware of the histories of words, of the connotational "spin" with which they come down to us. Therefore, you should make friends with your dictionary. And if you must use an abstract word, make sure you use it precisely. (Indeed, the ability to write precise generalizations-- yes, generalizations can be precise-- is one of the most useful disciplines you can develop in your college writing for use in any profession you will join.)
- 7) Don't lapse into slang or faddish jargon. You are likely to lose more by distracting your reader than you gain in the energy of the communication.
- 8) Avoid misspellings and typographical errors. Yes, they are only small slips; but they may distract your reader for a minute or more and make him worried that he's going to be upset again. (Compare such slips to wrong notes in a musical performance. Yes, they last a split second, but what happens to the listeners' concentration and confidence in the performer?)
- 9) Especially when you're trying to write about genuine feelings, recognize and avoid the faddish pop-psychological jargon of the day ("identify with," "relate to someone," "empathy," "charisma," "lifestyle," etc.).
- 10) Slippery words: "interesting," "important," "significant," "meaningful." Use the space they would have occupied to show why your topic should strike the reader as interesting, important, significant, or meaningful. Bad words: "case," "aspect," "factor," "feature," "nature (of something)," "character." They are either pompous padding or else take up space you might better have used to work in closer to whatever aspect of the character or the nature of your factors you wish to examine.
- 11) Don't depend on such weak hinges as "also" or "in addition." Outside of legal language, you should also suspect "however" and "nevertheless" if you find yourself using them often. Such hinges will not save a disorganized paragraph or add more than a show of logic to the development of a section.
- 12) Avoid the passive voice and colorless verbs of being whenever you can. Use the active voice. Get your meaning into subject- active verb- direct object in your sentences. Don't write pallid main clauses and then attempt to rescue them by putting what you really want to say into prepositional phrases and adverbs.

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