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CALL FOR MANUSCRIPTS
Wisconsin English Journal

Winter issue: Collaborative Learning. Research, classroom practices, theoretical aspect dealing with all aspects of teaching English Language arts—writing, literature, creative dramatics, etc. Deadline November 1, 1988.


Fall issue: Literature: Reading and Responding. Whole language approach to reading, selecting texts, units based on literature, teaching particular texts, reader response, guided questions, motivating students to read. Deadline August 1, 1989.

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CHISHOLM AWARD: MARY LOUISE TAMMI

Every year the Wisconsin Council of Teachers of English presents the Chisholm Award for Meritorious Service to the Profession to a person who has contributed to the advancement of English/Language Arts. Nominations are submitted by the WCTE Directors and the Board votes for the person deemed worthy of this honor. Today I have the pleasure of giving this year's citation.

If you are familiar with Katherine Mansfield's short story "Miss Brill," you recall that Miss Brill walks to the park every Sunday, imagining she is an active participant in the dramatic vignettes occurring around her, but she is not; she is merely a viewer.

The person voted to receive the 1988 Chisholm Award is no viewer but rather one who has been involved in helping to bring about some major changes in our organization. The recipient today is no Miss Brill. This person is one who immediately conveys an enthusiasm for teaching, one who is readily interested in keeping abreast of all new developments in our field, one who has willingly given untold hours to Council work, and one who has, at times, forgone certain comforts to teach others desirous of language instruction.

Mary Louise Tammi, as a sixteen-year WCTE member, has been our president, planned a WCTE annual convention, presented sectionals, served as a WCTE representative at National Council of Teachers of English Directors' meetings, been our secretary, and for years has served as liaison between WCTE and the Wisconsin Educational Association and helped initiate the Language Arts/English sectionals that have been cosponsored jointly by WCTE and WEAC. Mary Louise is also one of our most enthusiastic salespersons, extolling the contributions of WCTE and encouraging people to become members. Believing strongly in helping others, she has journeyed to Poland, Finland, and China.
to help students in those countries improve their skills in the English language. In so doing, she also enriches the lives of her middle school students.

As her principal noted, she does her job at Glen Hills Middle School in a magnificent fashion, just as she does for the Council. We are fortunate to be associated with her.

Neil J. Vail

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**Displaced**

Casting aspersions on sleepy swine,
Something cracks open and drops pearls.
In pursuit of which I scamper
Over a skeletal roof
With something or someone,
Hooded face unseen,
With no fear of falling
Into the vacancy below, dim
As the face of the surfacing clock.

Three AM: I can stare
At the wall and wonder
Who it might have been
Running with me, light-footed,
And not to be found again.

Ralph Schneider
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

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**JARVIS BUSH COMPOSITION TEACHING AWARD**

The 1988 Wisconsin Council of Teachers of English Jarvis Bush Award for Successful Techniques in Teaching Composition in the Schools of Wisconsin was awarded Mary Jo Lehman.

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**CHANGING: AN APPROACH TO THE COMPARISON/CONTRAST PAPER**

Mary Jo Lehman

**THE BACKGROUND**

"Now when we go to the lake, I clear the seaweed out myself. The neighbors help grandma with the yard, but it is not the same, and it never will be again." Kim, a sophomore, is concluding an essay about her grandfather who had, before dying the previous year, lived on Lake Okauchee. Earlier in her paper she writes:

"Small pine trees and colorful tulips were well cared for, as was the small vegetable garden which he planted each year. The water around the front pier was almost cleared of seaweeds so that we could swim without having them crawl all over our legs." Kim's lovely remembrance was her response to a comparison/contrast assignment. In it she compares life with her grandfather to life without him and concludes that only after "we lose someone close to us" do we really know death. Her paper is a long way from the first batch of comparison/contrast papers that I'd received the semester before. In those, topics had begun with bow hunting vs. gun hunting, fell to cross-country skiing vs. downhill skiing, and hit bottom with the rich vs. the poor written by a middle class student who had experienced neither. Form, however, was great. Even the rich vs. the poor had an introduction, a "rich" paragraph, a transition followed by a "poor" paragraph and a conclusion--perfect block method. Others followed the point-by-point method and hopped neatly from bows to guns and, guns to bows before winding up with a predictable finish. I was a
success at teaching the form but a dismal failure at encouraging writing worth reading.

My excuses for eliciting such who-cares writing are few and typical of a rushed English teacher facing a new preparation. So that the students would be better prepared to face the rhetorical modes featured in their junior writing class, we sophomore teachers agreed to introduce the expository modes as part of the new sophomore writing course. Although I wrote often and had been teaching for years, my background in the formalities of exposition was light. I turned to our professional library and easily located the standard definitions of and techniques for teaching classification, definition, comparison/contrast, process analysis, cause/effect, etc. For the upcoming exposition unit I decided that we could handle three or four of them. I'd teach the form, they'd choose the topics, and we'd all have a worthwhile experience. Not so.

Up to this point I had enjoyed reading my students' papers, mostly narratives mined from childhood memories and teenage traumas. The class's workshop atmosphere of writing groups, conferencing, and revising had rewarded me with fine pieces of lively, thoughtful writing. Once form controlled function, the writing died. One semester was enough for me to look for a resurrection.

With the help of two graduate courses, one from the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point and one from Northeastern University, and with my own reading, I rewrote my sophomore curriculum, salvaging what had worked and dropping what hadn't—especially the emphasis on modes which had deemphasized real writing. Structure evolves from content—always has, always will. As a writer, I fiddle with organization only after I've struggled with ideas. But I was asking my students to do the opposite: begin with the form and then find the content. To prescribe the form and pre-teach the strategies for using it warns the student that it is better to get it right immediately rather than to experiment. James Moffett in Teaching the Universe of Discourse writes that preteaching tells students to beware of error when in fact "errors . . . are the essential learning instrument," and students should not fear them (199). Organizational errors might result but working through those problems in conferencing or writing groups will be more meaningful than trying to head them off by a group lecture. By conference time students will have invested time and thought in their papers and have real questions or problems specific to that paper.

The modifications I made in the sophomore course were many and worthwhile, but one unit, the one that sparked Kim's paper is one with which I have been especially pleased and would like to highlight in this paper. It is a unit I've called "Changing." Its goals are many. First it reaches for the general goals of the class which are to encourage young writers to:

1. gain confidence and fluency in their writing,
2. understand the university of the process of writing and to respect their own writing processes,
3. discover and value their writing voices,
4. write texts that will be read and enjoyed by their peers, and
5. think about and examine their lives.

Specific to this unit are two more goals. I hope the unit assignments will help students to discover how they and their surroundings have changed and to see the significance, personal or universal, in the changes. David Bartholomae suggests to teachers that in making assignments "we shouldn't provide a subject only; we should provide the occasion for translation," the ability to understand, to translate experiences through writing (302). Another goal is to assign writing which necessitates experimenting with organizational patterns more sophisticated than straight chronology. Chronological order was appropriate and effective in an earlier unit, "Remembering," where papers usually flow naturally from beginning to end. But what if a student needs to balance two stories or viewpoints? What if time and place have to travel miles or years to touch each other? This kind of fusion requires something other than
chronological flow. The natural pattern that evolves from most of their "Changing" writing (without my preteaching it) is what the rhetoricians long ago labeled the comparison/contrast mode. We can fine tune organization later and, we can talk about labels and methods later--after much writing and much thinking have been done first.

THE ASSIGNMENTS

Like other units in the course, "Changing" follows a schedule that encourages students to do quite a bit of writing and talking before settling on a final paper. Assignments are accompanied by in-class prewriting activities and then followed by students writing first drafts. These they share in writing groups and eventually will choose one to revise for a final paper. For "Changing" I give four assignments, each taking (depending on whether first draft writing takes place in the classroom or at home) two to three days. The specific nature and size of the class also determines the number of in-class revision days. I often plan to have four. The unit, then, can run about three weeks.

Prewriting, assignment-giving days are days during which we talk, listen, question, make lists or clusters, generally get ideas flickering. On writing-group days students move away from the full class and into groups of four where they share their drafts, their problems, and their advice. I usually supply them with specific guidelines for reading each others' papers, and I walk from group to group, listening and sometimes commenting. During revision days more individual writing and less group talking happen. Students conference with me, the tutor in our writing lab or each other. Their final papers run about 500 words and will be shared with the members of their writing groups. Often groups will read aloud one or two papers. And eventually students may choose this finished paper as the one to be included in the end-of-year classroom publication, or it may be included in the all-sophomore publication called "Bits and Pieces."

In the semesters I've used "Changing," the warmup and prewriting strategies have varied, but the four assignments have remained the same.

ASSIGNMENT I. We begin by writing about a visible change. To introduce the assignment and the unit I use an adaption of Judith Schefferle's lesson published in NOTES Plus. This is a light-hearted poetry assignment for which we write two or four rhyming lines that capture the essence of change in a pencil, for example, or a pair of jeans, an ice cream cone, a childhood blanket or teddy bear, a favorite tree, pumpkin, etc. I list the options on the board, we write, and volunteers read their poems aloud. I also read an essay written by a fellow northeastern-workshopper about her valley home town being drowned when the government built a reservoir. In her essay, Glenda Barone balances the "then" of her childhood home with the "now" of a huge lake and the difference that has made in her life. "What changes have you seen in your life? Permanent ones like Glenda's or temporary ones?" I ask. I tell them to think about balance, to give both pictures when they write as they did with the poems, and as Glenda did in her essay, to answer the question "So what?" What difference has the change made? Balance and "so what" are essential to all four assignments, and we'll return to them with each.

The resulting papers range from childhood memories to civic concerns. Jennifer remembers with regret the loss of the wooded lot across from her house where kids used to play neighborhood games before developers moved in and built apartments. Mark, who had moved to Stevens Point from a small town on the Mississippi River, compares his low-water backyard where he played baseball to its high-water time when he floated on inner tubes. Stevens Point has recently undergone extensive downtown renovations, and one student describes the old and the new, and comments on the impact of the change. Others write about seasonal changes and the accompanying change in the atmosphere of places like deer stands, family cottages, or a grandmother's garden. One student, after driving by her childhood home and seeing the doghouse gone,
the house paint changed, the trees along the country driveway cut down, decides that she won't encourage her sister to take the same trip.

ASSIGNMENT II. For the next assignment it isn't change but perception that we consider. I display and we talk about a poster from Scholastic Publishers that features a drawing of a round-faced boy encircled by several pictures of himself. Each picture shows him in a different persona: angelic, the way his mother sees him; reliable, his employer's view; devilish, as he appears to his sister, etc. I tell my students to "Think of persons or objects or events that are seen differently by two (or three) people." My version of this assignment originated with Charles Duke's book Writing in Sequence: A Process Approach in which Duke uses an old barn to illustrate how one thing can look different to two people, in this case a child and a parent (119).

If I hadn't already introduced double listing with Assignment I, I will do it here. Students simply make two columns on their paper and head each with the viewpoints they're working with. Above the headings should be the topic and, if they already know it, the answer to the "So what?" question. Under the columns they list the supporting ideas and details appropriate to each. If one column runs much longer than another, the paper may have trouble showing both sides. The student may have to dig for more support, prune one list or search for a new topic. If students choose a topic which pits them against someone, this listing insures that they'll have balance in their paper even when they are most concerned with their own view. Gina choose this type of topic when she wrote about Carl, her best friend. Gina sees a loyal friend with "an awesome sense of humor" of which she gives several examples, but Gina's mother "sees Carl as some kind of ghoulish Munsters." Mary chose something lighter when she wrote about puddles, basing her paper on her experience as a child in a larger family. In it she captures the delight of children and dismay of parents when it comes to springtime mud and water. Jerry, a senior repeating the class after what I expect was a

mispent sophomore year, produced his best paper from this assignment when he wrote about a junked Chevy in his backyard. He remembers how he and the neighbor kids imagined themselves as great race car drivers as they played in the car. He follows this perception with his dad's: he looks out at the car and sees it new and himself young and cruising the streets on a Friday night. Working with a three point comparison, Jerry moves to his mother who sees sharp, rusty edges, hiding snakes, and broken glass that threaten her son. In the end the Chevy is towed away, Mom's fears alleviated and Jerry and Dad left with memories.

ASSIGNMENT III. Before beginning the next assignment, I pose the question, "How have you been organizing these papers?" They volunteer their plans which not surprisingly follow the comparison/contrast form. I outline on the board as they talk, and then tell them the formal labels for this type of organization. Coming at this point the terminology doesn't have the power to intimidate the writer and control the writing. It assures students that they already know what is necessary to get their meaning through and, if they want, the vocabulary to talk about it in conferences. Dan Kirby in Inside Out: Developmental Strategies for Teaching Writing gives an example of a nine point comparison and contrast assignment in which the comparison/contrast lecture is point nine (178).

"What changes have occurred in your life over which you have had little or no control?" This question is the basis for the third assignment of which Kim's essay about her grandfather is an example. Besides death, students write about moving, divorce, stepfamilies, romantic relationships that end, childhood friends who move, and elementary teachers who are replaced midyear. The remarriage of his widowed father was the topic of Jim's paper. In it he tells with humor about the sudden explosion of family as his stepmother and father and their combined 10 children make room for each other in Jim's home. It isn't humor, but frustration and bitterness that come through in Laina's paper as she compares her carefree life when her father was employed, to life now that he has lost his job and has too little money to spend on her and too much time to monitor her life.
ASSIGNMENT IV. The final assignment gives control back to the students as they consider changes that have originated with them. To begin I show them an Argus poster captioned "It's only through change that we grow" and either ask for a 10 minute free write in response to the sentiment or ask for examples that prove it. These I list on the board. "What is different in your life because you have changed, because you’re different?" When contemplating the question, I remind them to think about changes that spring from decisions they've made or from just getting older. Instead of double listing, we may warm up before writing with a double cluster (often called mapping) where again, topic and "So what?" are listed on top of the page. One cluster is probably labeled "Before" and the other "After." From these grow the details and ideas that students brainstorm as they think about their topic.

This assignment elicits growing up essays. Students compare their early enjoyment of family outings with their current yearning for outings with friends. They compare youthful jobs and job satisfaction to teenage ones, childhood holidays to adolescent ones and the resulting fulfillment or longing. With the sentence "And while the music interest changed rapidly, my lifestyle changed at a slower pace," Craig led me through a fascinating comparison of his pre-heavy metal self to his post-metal self. Brian used his bedroom to illustrate how he has changed: "My Bugs Bunny alarm clock has been changed to a York SP-101 stereo system. No longer does Bugs wake me up in the morning by saying ‘ehh, wake up Doc.’ Instead I awaken to Judas Priest, as they ‘Scream for Vengeance.’"

REVISION. And the final step, after several days of exploring their lives as revolving and evolving ones, I ask my students to choose one of their four drafts for revision. Then follows four to five days of up-close tinkering and polishing and perfecting as we work toward finished papers. The drafting assignments were graded on a "did-the-assignment" basis. First draft writing is discovery writing and isn't meant to be judged on the fine points of editing or the broader ones of style and organization. But for the finished paper, quality, thoughtfulness and attention to detail count. Here is where students reach for the engaging introduction, the satisfactory conclusion, where they replace doing nothing verbs with active ones, fatten up skinny paragraphs with details and hook ideas together with transitions. Most important, here is where they hone their thesis, that answer to "so what?". And, with this paper in particular, we check balance. Have both views been given full treatment? Will a reader understand and see both the before and the after?

I return their final essays with an attached sheet on which I have written my response to the paper along with a grade based on the criteria we worked on during revision and one more reminder of the inevitability of change—a poem by Shel Silverstein entitled "The Oak and the Rose." As the Oak grows, it leaves behind its interests, "Wind and water and weather" and speaks "of newer things—Eagles, mountain peaks and sky." Of course, it also leaves behind its friend, the Rose. Such interplay of growth and change, of loss and gain can spin 15 year-olds into a emotional maelstrom. "Changing" gives them the chance not just to work on their writing skills but to pause in order to discover, clarify, or, as Bartholomae puts it, translate their world.

Works Cited
MAGAZINE DEADLINES
CALLS FOR MANUSCRIPTS

Virginia English Bulletin: Drama in the English classroom—ways to use drama activities in regular English l.a. classrooms; examples: tchg a particular play; using performance activities to teach another genre; Shakespeare; creative dramatics; readers theatre; writing and performing radio or TV plays; using one-act plays; how studying drama enhances literary analysis; managing the classroom for dramatic performances. Theoretical, analytical or practical. Deadline January 15, 1989. Patricia P. Kelly and Robert C. Small, Jr., Editors; College of Education Virginia Tech; Blacksburg, Va. 24061.

Briefly Noted: Current issues or programs or units of study or classroom techniques. Length: 1½ pgs single space max. No deadline. Lorraine A. Plasse, Editor; 41 Balboa Drive; Springfield, Mass. 01119.

LUCILLE S. POOLEY AWARDS
The Lucille S. Pooley Creative Teaching Awards, sponsored by the Wisconsin Council of Teachers of English, were presented to Joan C. Wiegand, first place, and Frederick N. Poss, second place.

FOCUS AND EXPAND

A RESEARCH PROJECT FOR MIDDLE GRADE STUDENTS
Joan C. Wiegand

Getting middle grade students to write interesting nonfiction material can be a real challenge. The typical report is a tedious, mundane compilation of information lacking voice and style. The students copy their notes from an encyclopedia and dutifully recopy them "in good sentences" on their paper, without thinking much about or becoming involved in their subject. They often view this whole process as one of merely rearranging information, devoid of interest and meaning.

When wrestling with the problem of developing an interesting report writing unit, I remembered a short article about apples that I had cut out of the newspaper several years ago. I rummaged through my yellowing, tattered stack of "articles I might use someday." To my surprise, there it was, easily recognizable because of the apple shape it was printed on. Skimming the article quickly, I recognized the potential it held as a model for writing. Rereading it carefully, I noted what had impressed me several years ago. Instead of limiting the subject to facts about apples, such as where they grow, what they are used for, and who grows them, the author looked at his subject from every vantage point. He told about people who make apples famous, what proverbs contained the word apple and names of other things that included apples. The article contained all the facts about apples, but skillfully woven among these facts were all kinds of other information about the subject. The author wrote the article in a very appealing, lighthearted style. I knew I could build a writing unit using these ideas and thus was born the project I call "Focus and Expand."
SESSION 1 - THE INTRODUCTION

I decided to try the unit for the first time with a fifth grade class. I described the project and the title. I explained that "focus" meant to zero in on the subject, looking at it closely, and "expand" meant to enlarge their viewpoint and to observe the subject from all angles. Then I distributed copies of the article, had the students read it and together we listed the different ways the author had looked at his topic, "apples."

This is the list the students generated: (The lines in parentheses show examples from the apple article.)
1. Where does the subject come from, live and die. (Apples are born on trees, spend a large part of their lives in barrels, and are buried in pies.)
2. What kind and how many varieties of the subject are there?
3. Compare the topic to something outside of its group and unlike it. (Apples are eaten from the inside out; melons are eaten from the outside in.)
4. Compare two types of the subject. (Green apples are lower in quality, losing firmness in storage faster than the light yellow apples.)
5. Find unusual facts about the topic.
6. Find some kind of play on words or pun using the topic.
7. Find historical facts about the topic.
8. Find a person who made the topic famous. (William Tell, Johnny Appleseed)
9. Find your topic used in a name. (The Big Apple)
10. Find your topic used in sayings, superstitions or proverbs. (An apple a day . . .)
11. Find a reference to your topic in literature.
12. Can you find your topic used in a different context? (Adam's apple)

After reviewing the article and the types of information it exemplified, we discussed topics that could be researched in the same manner. Such ideas as stars, cars, class, cats, trees, whales and spiders were suggested by the students. I told them to think about these and any other topics overnight, choosing one to investigate further.

SESSION 2 - THE RESEARCH

I typed the list of research categories, leaving a four inch space between each sentence for notes. (When I did this project with another group, I had them use a note card for each sentence, which also worked well.) Each student received a copy of the list. Then we discussed each item in terms of the subjects they had chosen. This discussion helped to give them some ideas to get started. Then came the next probler: Where could they find such information? Of course, the students immediately thought of their old standby, the encyclopedia. I agreed they could find information there, but wanted them to search out other possibilities first. I suggested that they begin by looking up their topic in the dictionary. I saw some perplexed expressions as they glanced at each other. They were used to using a dictionary to spell words or to find a definition for vocabulary work. Imagine their surprise when they found all kinds of information and ideas to pursue in the dictionary! Kelly, who had chosen "Cats" as her topic, not only found the definition but nine kinds listed, from the Cheetah to the domestic cat. She also discovered that a malicious woman could be called a cat. Finding "cat o'nine tails," in the cross reference entry, Kelly proceeded to that word and found it was a whip with nine knotted ropes that left marks like the scratches of a cat. After looking up the cross referenced words under cat, Kelly looked through the following entries to find other words related to cat. She found such words as catfish, catbird, catwalk, catamaran, cattail, cattail, catkin and cattail. She also discovered that Cat is the trademark of a caterpillar tractor and the caterpillar means "hairy cat." Cat and mouse means to toy with something before destroying it, just like a cat playing with a mouse. When Kelly came across "catbird" she couldn't find out why it had that name. So she consulted a bird book and found the answer to her question.

Jeff found in the abbreviation section of the dictionary that his topic, "car" could stand for "Civil Air Regulations."
The students were fascinated with the dictionaries; they had never noticed the wealth of information that could be found there.

Next I brought out the Thesaurus and synonym dictionaries and reviewed the use of those reference materials. Kelly immediately flipped the pages to "cat" and found the synonyms tabby, grimalkin and mouser. She also learned not to let the cat out of the bag. I could feel the excitement build as the children began to find all kinds of fascinating facts about their subjects.

SESSION 3 AND 4 - MORE RESEARCH

When I introduced them to "Bartlett's Familiar Quotations," they really began to see the limitless possibilities. Kelly found out that Ben Franklin said that "The cat in gloves catches no mice," and Carl Sandburg said, "The fog comes in on little cat feet."

Just considering all the places to find information became an exciting prospect in itself. Interest spread. Delightedly the children shared bits and pieces of information as they worked. They thought of trying to find experts or people who knew a lot about their topic. Karl remembered a friend who had a Chinese exchange student. He learned how to write "whale" in Chinese characters! That gave the others a new idea - how to say their words in a foreign language. Foreign language dictionaries borrowed from high school brothers and sisters appeared.

Kriste got her mother involved. After dinner one night, I understand they had a delightful time thinking of sayings that had something to do with clams. They seemed to be as happy as clams working together, and neither one considered clamming up!

Someone suggested adding "songs about the topic" to the list of categories. Consultations with the music teacher resulted. Of course, that led to finding their topic in titles of movies and TV shows. Jeff found that Kit of Knight Rider and Herby the Volkswagen were car stars!

The students then looked up their topics in the encyclopedia. It was amazing how much interesting information they gleamed from this source. It appeared they were now much more selective in their choice of material.

SESSION 5 - WRITING THE ROUGH DRAFT

The information was gathered and the notes were taken. I had the students reread the original apple article. Then I read several other articles to them from National Geographic, Ranger Rick and the newspaper, all modeling lively, interesting styles of expository writing. They could see that informational articles do not have to be dull, dry and boring.

The students were prepared to write. From their notes, they began to organize and put together the notes they had gathered. They were to write in an informative but interesting style. These students had been using process writing for several years so were quite capable of proceeding from this point. The room became quiet as they composed, reread, considered and composed some more.

SESSION 6 - REVISION

The rough drafts were completed and the students chose partners to work with throughout the revision process. The revision sessions became a lively time, as the students enjoyed sharing the information their partners had discovered. Occasionally we paused, so some particularly good lines could be read to the group.

SESSION 7 - FINAL EDITING AND PUBLISHING

Finally it was time for editing - self, peer, and teacher editing. Then came the big surprise - instead of theme paper for the final copies, I supplied 24" x 36" pieces of colored tagboard. They were to cut out the shape of their topic and write their reports directly on the shape. They could decide how best to fit the material onto the shape. This really pleased the students. There is nothing more motivating than finishing off a difficult project in an unusual way. Jeff, who was writing about cars, wrote the main part of his report on the body of his car shape and then wrote the details around the wheels. They finished the project on their own time and I can attest to the fact that there was none of the usual dawdling!
THE CONCLUSION

The students were proud of their final product. They read their articles to other classes and were especially happy with the positive feedback they received. Then the "shape reports" were displayed around the building. The students even thought of a logo for the project. A microscope would symbolize "Focus" and a snowflake, which has a myriad of facets and points, would represent "Expand."

The goals that I set for the project were met. The students were involved in their subject and learned to look at a topic from all sides, to think divergently. Indeed, I discovered at least one student who, when writing a nonfiction book later in the year, chose the unlikely subject of "crayons." She remembered the "Focus and Expand" lessons and wrote a wonderful book exploring the world of crayons. It was also noted by other teachers that the students involved in this project wrote especially well on the district expository writing sample. They included information from their own knowledge that made their reports stand out from the rest of the papers.

The students were introduced to reference sources that they had not used before and learned to use familiar sources in new ways. They learned to write interesting expository material. I feel all of us gained from this project, students and teacher alike, as we broadened our horizons and learned to "Focus and Expand."

"The Apple Corps" by Pat R. Cuda. The Milwaukee Journal, date unknown.

THE NINTH CIRCLE

Frederick M. Poss

Three faces, six wings, and certainly placed farthest from God. From a student's viewpoint, that is the classic intaglio for any teacher who assigns some kind of written research. Whether at the elementary, middle school, junior high, senior high, or college level, composition instructors continually face sentencing by the court of student sentiment to the lowest level in all of academia. Worse, good teachers realize that the overwhelmingly negative reaction from learners accustomed to the suffering and ordeals of the usual research paper spells defeat before the battle for the soul of discovery is even joined.

Losing necessary rapport with students, replacing a friendly learning atmosphere with a hostile one, footdragging on preliminary work essential to building organized papers, excuse-making reaching the extremes of human experience, and creating strongly negative attitudes toward a fundamental set of skills are just some of the typically "hellish" problems teachers of the language arts predictably face when research is assigned.

Can anything be done to prevent this automatic descent into the inferno?

What about writing for publication?

Or should that idea receive its customary glance and then safely be assigned to its usual remote corner of language arts?

Writing for publication, after all, does have its problems, not the least of which is applicability to the business of writing good research. Granted, free lance writers around the world do put bread on their table investigating and composing accurate, concise, and fascinating nonfiction. But an article in The Atlantic Monthly or The Wisconsin Sportsman or Highlights for Children doesn't have much similarity to a term paper. Does it?

Admittedly, there are certain rough similarities. The use of the same reference skills appears to be parallel. Obviously, writing an article for a magazine does force the writer to thoroughly research print materials pertaining to the subject.
And, too, someone composing good nonfiction may even have to go beyond the usual investigation of Reader's Guide. Telephone or face-to-face interviews with experts in the field extend the notion of inquiry. Even the necessary "applied research" for a free lance writer could be viewed as valuable for the student constructing a term paper. The hands-on experiencing of a topic such as mound building, fourteenth century pottery, or an interview with Ray Bradbury does make any writing better for free lancer and student alike because both of them have to have a complete understanding of their subject to make the prose come alive for an ever-critical audience.

But this is a discussion of term papers, isn't it? The focus must center upon the basics. And basically speaking, good research doesn't even look like good nonfiction.

Take writing footnotes, for instance. There aren't footnotes in most magazines today. Or are there? Yes, Atlantic Monthly has them. Yes, Wisconsin Sportsman has them. Yes, glancing through almost any nonfiction publication today, a reader will stumble onto footnotes . . . perhaps not as many as a research paper, but they are there.

A purist in this regard, when pressed on the matter, will also admit that the methods of documentation for educational research have changed. Many term papers, even ones written for college level classes, make use of brief references to the sources set off with parentheses as part of the text, not set apart at the bottom of the page. Footnoting has been increasingly simplified . . .

Bibliographies, however, are another matter.

Admittedly the magazines mentioned previously all have articles with bibliographies. And, admittedly, the entries are recorded in a consistent manner similar to the bibliographies of a term paper. Yes, a reader can even locate annotated bibliographies in commercial nonfiction.

But the topics!--the topics that sell magazines are not the same ones that elementary, high school, and college composition instructors assign. Teachers of the language arts do not require students to seek out areas that have any personal interest or any relevancy to students' backgrounds, experiences, or areas of study. Teachers in English, history, and science instead assign research writing that explores mound building, fourteenth century pottery, the development of character in contemporary American fiction, and the like.

Of course, students do not need to see any connection between learning and life--especially in the area of writing. While such publications as Ranger Rick at the grade school level, Wisconsin Trails at the high school level, and The New Yorker at the college level, did happen to include some superb nonfiction this autumn on mound building, pottery, and American writers is no reason to assume that topics for term papers could come from the pages of Writer's Market.

Or could they?

And if they could, how could anyone go about creating such assignments so that the same research processes and skills are incorporated into the act of writing relevant, marketable prose?

The first step, naturally enough, begins with source material. Check out a copy of Writer's Market from the reference section of the school media center or city library. Turn to the end-of-the-book section entitled "The Business of Free Lancing," and make enough photocopies from it for a class to share in small groups.

The first time a teacher presents this in class he or she should take a minute to "sell" the approach. Explain how typical term paper ideas which seem particularly irrelevant can actually lead to some exciting and challenging writing opportunities. Select a few articles from current magazines as examples to hold up; then go one step further and locate the listings for the example magazines in Writer's Market. Take a minute to read what the editors have to say for their publications, examine what their needs are currently, discuss their requirements for format and length, and even mention whether the magazine pays writers with copies of published material and/or money. Remember, too, this preliminary look is adaptable to any level of education--
elementary students can investigate a publication like Stone Soup just as easily as college students can peruse Connoisseur.

Second, ask each small group to put together short oral reports on the basics of free lanceing, information available in the handout just distributed. Help each group zero in on such simple things as what a title page needs to look like or how long to expect an editor to read a manuscript before he or she reports back.

Once the reports have been heard, the rest of the steps are even easier. Why? In case neither teacher nor students have realized it, everyone has already immersed him or herself in preliminary research. And now that the ball is rolling, so to speak, the role of the teacher is only to keep the momentum alive.

A set of photocopies of the table of contents from Writer's Market will provide students with the next major activity: picking a market--or if preferred--selecting a research paper topic; the distinction now is starting to disappear.

Another important point is that students are making the choices here, committing part of themselves to the business of this writing project . . . and every good teacher knows that students have to make that investment before real learning can proceed.

Whatever is done, don't hurry through the selection of a market/research report area. This is the exciting part. Where else can students brainstorm about what they've always wanted to investigate than in the front of the leading reference guide for all of the world's most successful writers? This is Candyland Time if it is presented properly. This is window shopping at Christmas with all of the neatest stuff would-be writers can ogle.

Pick a topic. Any topic. Turn to the middle of the book. Look. Look. Look! What exactly does the editor want? How long is the article to be? Where should it be sent? When do editors report back to writers about the articles? In seventeen years of teaching, I have yet to see any student who failed to find some area that he or she couldn't get excited about, even if it meant a writing project as simple as creating a cartoon or finding the words for a greeting card. (It is also true, unfortunately, that most teachers of the language arts have no working knowledge of Writer's Market, and in many cases the students' infectious curiosity spreads to the instructor as well.)

For high school and college classrooms, students and teachers pursue more difficult areas, of course. But wherever the level of instruction, the bottom line is the same: both the student and the teacher have to come to some kind of agreement about topic selection. The beauty of the free lance approach is that editors provide students with excellent models of how large subject areas can be reduced to very specific topics.

Students now fine tune their study of the market they have selected. Exactly what topic, slant, evidence, and word length is the editor demanding? Is a written inquiry detailing the writer's ideas necessary before any serious writing takes place? Can certain markets be eliminated or included because study reveals reporting times are faster, no inquiries are needed, or fees are paid even if stories are later put on hold?

Yes, this is research. So is going out to locate an actual copy of the publication to read carefully. Studying successful prices already published is a simple recipe for many writers' successes. And as the drafting begins, the role of the teacher continues to be someone who monitors the pace of the research and adjusts for individual problems. Helping writers brainstorm sources of information, for example, not only is a necessary type of teacher-student activity even for the standard term paper, but when used to write for publication this can become the stuff that bonds people together in the ever-stimulating pursuit of a common, intellectual purpose.

The lines continue to blur. Teacher is no longer an authority figure arbitrarily imposing archaic and tortuously irrelevant writing assignments; he or she is simply a friend, an encourager, a confidant, a source for advice, a place to go to bounce off the kind of wildly creative ideas that rush in and out of the heads of truly motivated students.
Teachers may encourage students to select smaller magazines and newsletters as "practice targets" for this first step into the world of free lanceing. Teachers may guide students to markets that pay only with a few copies of the publication as a reward for submission. Teachers remind students that whatever they finally choose to write for—the art of writing remains the art of rewriting. Teachers continue to allow students to research their own talents and abilities while exploring the world of real writing.

Finally, most teachers should remember that each writer must decide for him or herself whether the writing will actually be submitted. In some cases, the writing for a market is enough—the sending to market is not the same thing.

And, too, some writers who submit their pieces will encounter rejection.

But how really unusual is it to receive a letter which says "thank you, but no thanks"? For the students and adults I work with, there is only a strange sense of curiosity about what a real rejection slip looks like, a little bit of joy at actually hearing from a publisher, and a measure of determination to simply go ahead and submit again somewhere else. Indeed, some students frame their rejection slips, and I always call for a round of applause for anyone who receives his or her first one because, after all, it does represent that person's first attempt at exploring a potential talent and skill that may have otherwise gone undiscovered.

Turning a possible negative into a definite positive—yes, that constitutes a familiar role for teachers, too.

And some students will be accepted! The rush of emotion in a classroom when a student proudly comes in with an acceptance letter is an experience every writing teacher needs to have some time in a career. Suddenly all those skill sheets, all of the nights students and teachers have labored over compositions instantly become worthwhile. Students, parents, other teachers, and the community as a whole cannot help but smile on this kind of success.

And one success will only breed another success. Let one student receive a letter, a copy of a small publication that actually contains their article, or even a tiny check for three dollars and twenty-five cents, and suddenly everyone wants to get on the bandwagon. Writing does have its payoffs. No, not everyone will receive money. But seeing someone's own words in print is a thrilling experience for even the most jaded soul. Knowing that an original piece of writing is being shared with hundreds or thousands of other people is a tremendous experience for anyone.

And all of this is a logical consequence of good research. . .

NCTE ASSEMBLIES

ASSEMBLY ON COMPUTERS IN ENGLISH

The purpose of this assembly is to promote communication and cooperation among all individuals who have special interests in computers and the English language arts; to promote an increase in the number of articles and publications devoted to it; to encourage the responsible development of computer software in the language arts; and to integrate the efforts of those with an interest in this subject. For information, contact Mary Louise Gomez, 1214 Wellesley Road, Madison, Wisconsin 53705.

ASSEMBLY ON LITERATURE FOR ADOLESCENTS OF NCTE (ALAN)

ALAN is for individuals interested in adolescent literature. This assembly provides convention programs and quarterly journal, emphasizing new books, research, and methods of teaching adolescent literature. For information, contact ALAN/NCTE, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, Illinois 61801.
ENGLISH WOULD OFFICIAL LANGUAGE
BECOME THE "ONLY" LANGUAGE?

Making English the official language of the United States is
the subject of a bill pending in Congress and of legislation and
debates at the state and local levels. Will such laws, already
passed in some states, make English not just the "official"
language but the only permissible language for public uses and
activities, including education? Issues and potential problems
stemming from this movement are the focus of English as the
Official Language, the latest Starter Sheet issued by SLATE, the
action wing of the National Council of Teachers of English. The
brochure, which includes a discussion of the issues involved and
bibliography, is a part of SLATE's continuing program: Support
for the Learning and Teaching of English.

Author James Stalker, professor of English at Michigan State
University, discusses the status of English as a unifying symbol
and the past history of assimilation of non-English speakers into
American life and language. He surveys the concerns of "English-
only" proponents about bilingual education programs, noting that
"official language" legislation cannot ensure higher-quality
teaching in any type of English program for speakers of other
languages.

It is possible to declare English the official language and
at the same time encourage the retention or acquisition of a
second language, Stalker points out, "to reaffirm English as the
unifying language of the United States, but to recognize our
increasing need to communicate with the rest of the world in
languages other than English."

The starter sheet includes background information and the
text of a 1986 NCCT resolution urging that legislation to
"preserve" English by giving it official status can stunts its
vitality and create hostility toward English on the part of
groups whose languages are suppressed.

(For a free copy of the SLATE Starter Sheet English as the
Official Language, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope with
your request to SLATE, NCCT, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, Illinois
61801.)

READER RESPONSES WHEN "UP AGAINST THE WALLS"

David L. Hackbart

Some literature is memorable for raising many questions
rather than for providing clear answers. Melville's "Bartleby
the Scrivener, A Story of Wall Street" is a favorite of mine for
this reason. I have always delighted in the ways Melville brings
the reader up against what must remain ultimately unknown about
the title character, although I admit to an ongoing difficulty in
conveying to my students why lack of certain details in the
narrative makes the story all the better. While I take pleasure
in the fact that the narrator's questions are only partially
answered, my students instead express frustration with Melville
and with me: "We've thought about setting, characterization, and
major conflict. Since we can identify theme related to the
conflict, how come it seems like we're missing something about
this story?" "Because, class," I reply, "there is literature
with loose ends which refuse to be tied; there are stories with
empty spaces which need to be filled, although your first
encounter with one might well strain the only lines of analysis
you have learned in the past."

Despite student difficulty with "Bartleby," most can trace a
general outline of the story. The "rather elderly man," the
self-described narrator of "Bartleby," is a successful, if
unambitious, Wall Street lawyer. Bartleby joins the lawyer's
office as a scrivener, a law copyist a century before the Xerox
machine. At first, Bartleby is industrious, mechanically so.
But soon he gently refuses to proofread his work, run errands, or
do anything for which he was hired. His response to all requests
and demands is the same: "I would prefer not to." The narrator
discovers that Bartleby is living in the law offices. Frustrated
by all spurned efforts to extend kindness, and after paying wages
and severance, the narrator directs Bartleby to quit the
premises. Since Bartleby won't abandon the offices even then,
the narrator finally does. Against all conventional logic about
employer-employee relationships, the narrator still feels
responsible. After returning from a lengthy trip, he finds Bartleby behind bars, in New York City's prison, the Tombs. Bartleby chooses to stare facing yet another wall. The narrator remains baffled by Bartleby, this "man of preferences." He can only exclaim, "Ah, Bartleby! Ah, humanity!" We readers sigh along with him, perhaps for any one of a variety of reasons, on a scale from amused sympathy to frustrated antipathy.

After reading the story, some students may look to the textbook questions which so often provide something to say if all else fails. Typically, factual questions predominate: What are the names and characteristics of the narrator's employees? What details is the narrator able to discover about Bartleby's life before his employment in the law office? The few textbook questions which require student interpretation beyond merely factual surface detail focus upon the imagery of barriers and walls; the teacher handbook may suggest that "responses will vary" for this particular question. Finally, until the teacher may decide to intervene by interpreting for them, students are left with little assistance beyond their own understandings and the questions they themselves are able to raise.

However, when readers feel that impulse to make sense of aspects of a story which are not immediately obvious, the readers' questions themselves are worth articulating. We would do well to suggest to our students that their baffled expressions perhaps have come about because they were reading carefully rather than because they missed something along the way. There are growing numbers of advocates for using student response as a starting point. Ann E. Berhoff, in "A Curious Triangle and the Double-Entry Notebook; or, How a Theory of Language Can Help Us Teach Critical Reading and Writing" (Focus: Teaching English Language Arts, Winter 1981, 19-23) recommends capturing response statements, questions, indeed all creative ideas which result from a reading. Berhoff asserts, "how we construe is how we construct," and the notebook serves as a tool to self-consciously record original responses to a reading. Kathleen McCormick starts classroom analysis of literature in the same place, with the response of the student reader. In her "Theory in the Reader: Bleich, Holland, and Beyond" (College English, December 1985, 837-850), McCormick describes a variety of ways in which "reader responses can be redeemed from banality if the teacher gives them focus," so that student assumptions about the literature can be brought to light and examined. These are two of many recent writers who advance some practical strategies about working with student responses.

To help bring these responses to the surface, I require my students to make notations of any questions which occur during the reading of the story. Here is a cross-section sampling of student questions from last semester:

- Why does Bartleby act respectful and rebellious at the same time?
- Why does the narrator cling to Bartleby so?
- Why does Bartleby get his way when he is of no use to society?
- Did isolation in the law office change Bartleby, or was he peculiar before taking this job?
- Why does the narrator put up with the strange behavior of all of his employees?
- Why does Bartleby take the scrivener's job if he doesn't want to work?
- Why doesn't Bartleby spend his savings to better his life?
- Why does the narrator feel responsible for Bartleby in the least?

None of these questions, I would suggest, is easily answered. Each would take a discussion or a written response to depths well beneath the surfaces of the story, beyond the factual concerns of most textbook questions. Often, student questions are more open to interpretation and touch upon more significant aspects of the story than factual textbook questions that have a way of conveying that when they are answered, nothing more need be asked.
Use of Anne Berthoff's double-entry notebook technique yields similarly thoughtful ideas about "Bartleby," though these are often phrased as statements rather than as questions:
The American Dream has worked for the narrator, but not for Bartleby.
Bartleby is "up against the wall" in more ways than one, but mostly psychologically. He's got problems relating to society and he upsets society, especially the narrator.
The narrator can't be the same character as Melville's narrator in "The Piazza," because he is so timid he wouldn't be able to face his problems.
Bartleby won't communicate at all. The lawyer did more than any reasonable person should and should not feel so responsible.

These statements deal with significant issues which students "own" because they have identified those issues themselves. Any would make a productive starting place for discussion, or the central focus for written work.

Another approach I have taken in reaction to student frustration with "Bartleby" is to compound the difficulty by assigning another story about isolation behind walls, Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper." There are some benefits to be seen in reading one difficult work against another. Certainly there are entire units of study to be developed around the imagery of walls and barriers in American Literature, which might include Poe's short stories and Frost's "Mending Wall" as some obvious choices.

"The Yellow Wallpaper" is often anthologized in collections of ghost stories, and like other good ghost stories, works well as a psychological character study. Narrated in the first person like "Bartleby," this story tells of an ill-fated summer in the country. The narrator is suffering from a nervous condition after the birth of a child. Her husband and her brother, both physicians, have prescribed the rest cure in a large, vacant house. The house turns out to be not conventionally haunted, rather the narrator discovers a woman trapped behind the complicated pattern in the wallpaper of the title. Although forbidden to write due to her condition, the narrator is driven to tell of her discoveries in the journal entries which comprise the narrative.

The papered walls of this story and the walls of "Bartleby" are interesting images to compare and contrast. The isolation of the Melville story is often seen by students to be perversely self-chosen by the scrivener while the isolation of Gilman's narrator would seem more open to interpretation. After classroom discussion returned frequently to the subject of alienation and the degree to which characters are isolated willingly or unwillingly in both stories, I assigned a paper to address the question, "Who is responsible for the isolation in each story?" Some students held both main characters responsible for their own isolation, as in this reader's reaction:

Both stories show the decline of main characters due to isolating themselves from society. Bartleby refuses to let people help him so eventually he loses his life. The narrator of "The Yellow Wallpaper" also isolates herself from society. Her downfall comes in another way; she loses her mind and goes insane. The two stories are very much alike in one sense; a wall separates the main characters from society.

Another student concluded,

These two stories show ways in which people can be isolated from society. They may build up their own walls as in "Bartleby" or the isolation may be imposed, as in "The Yellow Wallpaper." In Melville's story, society wants something out of a man that he refuses to give. He will not conform so he builds walls around himself. In Gilman's story, the author is revealing society's feelings toward women at one time. Women, it seems, were kept weak and dependent upon men. They were not allowed to have a mind of their own. In this story the woman cannot handle this confinement and becomes insane.
The former statement by a male student and the latter by a female student provide crucial opposition on the issue of repression by society. These debatable positions are worth identifying and sharing with the class as a whole in order to encourage further reaction. Once raised, the issue is seen to be relevant; some students identify examples of societally imposed isolation in both stories, and lively discussions result. In another class where the same argument developed, I sharpened the question by having students write about whether or not there were victims in either story. Some cited Bartleby, some the narrator, and some cited ways in which both could be seen as victims. For "The Yellow Wallpaper," the wife rather than the husband is most often seen as victim. The societal issue opens discussion about cultural and ideological constraints central to the historical context of the nineteenth century when both stories were written. Obviously, these issues still have relevance which students are quick to address. The walls in our own lives, those which we erect ourselves and those imposed by others, are recognized as being pertinent for examination in relationship to the texts being studied.

These strategies serve to enable students to verbalize the difficulties they have with texts and to use those very difficulties as starting points for analysis. If unconventional, disruptive texts like "Bartleby" and "The Yellow Wallpaper" are opened by questions beyond those requiring factual responses, then students may learn to see new angles of approach to more ordered, conventional literature as well. Perhaps readers will see that there are few texts which are either so obvious and common-sensical or so obscure and unconventional as to be closed to their responses. Perhaps all readers--teachers and students alike--can develop the confidence to move beyond the limitations of textbook questions, by recording and taking seriously their own questions, statements, and responses of all kinds.

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WRITING "A" PAPERS

Cliff Wood

(Advice to students who requested it.)

YES, it is necessary to remember everything you have learned in your composition courses, alas! Remember to organize carefully, spell correctly, develop varied sentence structures, control your style, place apostrophes where they belong, distinguish between affect and effect, place commas and periods inside the quotation marks even when that seems "illogical," be suspicious of cliches and passive constructions, use singular forms with singular antecedents, and avoid saying "in conclusion" in a three-page paper.

BUT, the real measure of your best writing will be your ability to observe external and internal reality, to distinguish what is significant at a particular moment in a particular context, to note the relationships between occasionally very different perceptions, and to convey your interpretations coherently and vividly enough to stimulate understanding and response in others. Because the realities you perceive involve complex interactions and because your perceptions are themselves sensory and intuitive as well as intellectual, it is a considerable accomplishment to "really see" your own world rather than merely look at it; and it is an even greater accomplishment to communicate what you really seen and think and feel instead of what you merely assume you are supposed to see and think and feel.

ALSO, in a very important sense, a clear insight is something that does not even occur in your own perception until you can express it to your readers so as to evoke the same clarity in their perception of you. Like sound waves which are not audible if no one is there to hear them, your perceptions do not have any objective existence unless they can be made comprehensible and significant to someone else who will react with some predictability and with a correspondingly sharpened awareness.
AND, one of the most helpful things to keep in mind about writing an academic paper or exam essay is how short it is. If your reader can do 250 to 350 words a minute, the first trip (the really important one) into your paper may take less than 90 seconds. What are you going to do for his or her senses and inquisitive intellect in that time? How are you going to assure that the reader will be held still long enough to linger over the implications of the reading experience you have designed? You have only a brief moment to share the ideas and images posed to grant you total and sympathetic attention. Still, that moment provides a rare opportunity. You should probably not wish to use it up in retelling something you have seen or heard or read but really not thought enough about, or in juggling a trusty old idea that has grown comfortable to handle as it has lost its edge.

So, spend your valuable time and space bringing into more detailed focus something that is new and interesting to you right now and projecting it for others to enjoy and admire along with you. The great reward in the growth of your writing ability is the experience of having others share excitedly in the complex patterns of thought and feeling that your words have suddenly simplified and made surprisingly true. Clifford Wood is in the Department of English, University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh.

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Poetry is
shaken soda pop
held back
by a thumb,
an unpredictable release
of explosive
effervescent
expression.

James Erdman
Eau Claire Schools

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PLANNING FOR BETTER PRESENTATIONS
Peggy Agostino Sharp

Library media specialists, teachers, and administrators often make presentations; a presentation to the school board may result in a bigger budget; a talk to the parent group can generate some additional funds for an author to visit the school; and explanation of a new program before the faculty invites participation. Whatever the presentation, there are certain techniques that can make it better.

Before beginning to plan your presentation, take a personal inventory of what you know about effective presentations. Make a list of what you like and dislike about those you have attended. As you evaluate these presentations, divide them into four components: content delivery (the type of information and how the presenter shares it); personal influence (the personal attributes of the presenter); arrangements (the physical characteristics of the presentation); professional competence (how effectively the presentation was shared).

My research has indicated that the positive factors in content delivery include audience participation and the relevance of the information presented. Negative factors include lecture and lack of relevance. In the area of personal influence participants like speakers who are exciting, motivating, and inspired; they do not like dull speakers who talk down to the group and alienate them. Participants like presentations that ask for and meet the audience's specific needs, but do not like sessions that applied to a different audience, or were too long. Participants are well aware of the speaker's professional competence and appreciate speakers who are well informed about the topic. They do not like listening to speakers who do not know enough about the topic; are not well organized, stray form the topic, give vague directions about small group work, and provide no time for questions. Ask yourself about your personal requirements for an effective presentation, and use what you know as you plan one.
In order for a presentation to be effective, it needs to be professional. This requires careful planning. No one likes to listen to a poorly planned, disjointed talk. Some simple steps to follow when planning a presentation include:

Identify the topic of the presentation
What will be the focus of your talk? A narrow topic thoroughly presented can be more effective than a broad topic generally presented.

Identify the presentation objective
What will participants know and be able to do as a result of this presentation? Clarifying the objective will help you determine what to share and how to share it.

Determine the script for the presentation.
An outline will help guide your presentation, but a written script provides a permanent record for future reference.

Develop the necessary materials for the presentation
Materials such as overhead transparencies can provide the outline for the presentation, alleviating the need for note cards.

After you have determined the content, it is necessary to put this content into an effective presentation. Many have attended presentations in which the speaker knew the subject, but did not know how to present it. While not every detail is important to each presentation, think about each one as you plan, if only to acknowledge that it is not a consideration for the specific topic. A "Presentation Planning Checklist" will assure that you do not forget anything before your next presentation.

Know Your Audience

Size of group
Knowing whether you will have a group of 20 or 200 is essential.

Knowledge of subject matter
How much does your audience know about your topic? If they have been involved in several presentations about the subject, then do not address them as beginners. Generally, however, it is better to assume that your audience knows less rather than more.

Attitudes and beliefs
Although this is sometimes difficult to determine, it is helpful to know if your presentation is an attempt to sway opinion or reinforce what the audience already believes.

Needs and expectations
What is it that the audience and/or organizer wants as a result of the presentation? It is important to satisfy the needs of the audience, but do not try to be something that you are not in your attempts to meet those needs.

Voluntary or mandatory attendance
Are the people at the presentation because they want to be or because it is required that they attend? Often, if participants are voluntarily in attendance, they will be enthusiastic about the topic before you begin; if attendance is mandatory, you may have to spend time convincing the audience of your "cause."

Participants' knowledge of one another
How well do the participants know one another? If they are co-workers, they will easily move into group activities; if they do not know one another, some icebreakers or getting-to-know one another activities would be appropriate.

Provide An Icebreaker

Gain attention of participant
An icebreaker can make the participants enthusiastic about learning more about the topic. These icebreakers may focus attention on the material to be presented.

Get acquainted
When participants do not know one another, provide an opportunity for them to introduce themselves. This will facilitate group activities later, as they will be acquainted when it is time to work together.
Keep it fun and non-threatening
There are people who would rather not participate in icebreakers. Recognize this preference, and always give people the option of participating or not. Usually, this does not mean stating that the activity is optional, but rather, planning an activity that allows some to watch if they prefer.

Sharing Expectations
State goals and objectives
During the initial stages share your goals and objectives for the presentation—why are you presenting, what will you share, and what do you want the participants to learn, etc.

Note format structure
Participants will want to know the agenda of the presentation. It is important to indicate when the presentation will be over, but it is difficult to determine exactly how long you will talk about each subject. It is a better idea to list the topics that will be discussed within a specific length of time rather than identify minutes for each subject: i.e., in the morning we will discuss strategies for initiating research activities. Participants do need to know that there will be breaks, and a specific time for lunch, if appropriate. Also, let participants know about the materials that are a part of the presentation. Explain the organization of these materials in general and then refer to them throughout the presentation.

Participants' expectations
What does the audience hope to gain from the presentation? They will want to hear something directly related to their needs and situation—you will be more successful if you hear of these needs and expectations before and during the presentation. Provide an opportunity for them to comment upon the content and format and be ready to address their expectations before and during the presentation. Often, participants' questions can easily be incorporated into your pre-planned content and format.

Time
Time allotment
It is important to know how much time is allotted for the presentation and be certain that you use that time effectively. It can be appropriate to begin no more than 5 or 10 minutes late, but it is important that you end on time. Do not apologize for lack of time. The participants want to know that you have planned the presentation based upon the time allotted, and that they are not receiving a shortened version of a longer (i.e. better) presentation.

Time for breaks
Approximately once every hour to an hour and a half, participants need an unstructured break.

"Slippage" factor
No matter how well you plan, there will always be situations that were unexpected or points that will require more discussion than you anticipated. As you plan your presentation, allow for these "unknowns," and be prepared to adapt.

Time for reflection, relaxation, integration of new ideas
Participants need an opportunity to think about and "try out" the new ideas shared. This time may be a structured group activity, or a pause in your presentation, but people need time to think about what you've said.

Climate
Size of the physical space
People do not like to feel crowded. Give each person enough space so they feel comfortable while at the same time allowing them to feel part of the group. Be sure that you have enough space to move through the group and that all participants will be able to see.

Lighting
The room should be bright when you are presenting. However, if you will be using slides, etc., be sure that the room can be made dark enough.
Temperature/ventilation
One of the most common criticisms about a presentation is that the room was either too hot or too cold. Unfortunately, it is not possible to please everyone. However, remember that participants will not be moving as much as you are, and may be cool when you are comfortable. Also, the number of people in the room greatly affects the temperature, so the room should always feel cool before they people arrive. Circulating air in the room is essential.

Physical arrangement of facilities
Make a conscious decision as to the type of arrangement that will be best for the specific presentation. If there will be a substantial amount of small group work, then round tables may be effective. If you are going to present information during most of the presentation, then seating that is facing the speaker is best. If participants will be taking notes or writing, then the use of tables is appropriate. Water on the tables is always appreciated.

Necessary equipment
Request all equipment in advance. Determine that there are enough electrical outlets. Allow yourself enough time to set up all equipment before beginning the presentation.

Presenters' survival kit
Because the situation is never as expected, be sure to bring all the necessities to make your presentation work; a three-prong plug adapter, extension cord, extra bulbs for equipment that will be used, portable microphone, small clock to place on the speaker's table, extra pens for the overhead projector, multi-outlet adapter, flashlight, anti-static spray, blank transparencies, etc.

Ease of materials distribution
Determine how best to distribute materials without interrupting the flow of the presentation. Often, it is best to have all materials available as people arrive so that those who are early can read them while waiting for the presentation to begin.

Appropriate Sequencing
Introduction, body, conclusion
Introduce the subject, explain the topic, and summarize the content of the presentation.

Flow
Transition from one part of the presentation to the next in an orderly and logical manner is essential. Make the connections between thoughts very specific so as to aid the listener.

Basic sequencing principles
some skills need to be mastered before others teach easier concepts before more difficult ones provide a demonstration before practicing a skill

Variety

Vary experiences by multi-sensory involvement
Participants can listen to what you have to say and see the visuals you use. Also, encourage them to become emotionally involved through laughter, etc.

Vary lengths of different segments
When presenting, it is effective to have some lecture segments, some group work, some media, etc.

Vary structure (group size) of experiences
While some people enjoy small group activities, others are not enthusiastic about sharing. To accommodate all types of learners, provide a variety of experiences during your presentation.

Vary intensity of different experiences
Some parts of your presentation can be very serious while other parts can be on a lighter note. No one likes to cry through an entire presentation; likewise, everyone needs some comic relief at times.
Simplicity
The design of the presentation needs to be easily understood identify the topics and structure of the talk and how it all fits together. During the presentation remind the group of the connections so that the participants can easily follow the presentation plan of design.
The easier and simpler the design is, the greater the chance for a successful presentation
Share the message as simply as possible without insulting the audience.

Pacing
Rate of presentation
Some parts of the presentation can be slow, while other sections can be fast. Take your cue from the audience, if they are getting restless or seem bored, change your pace. It is very effective to slow the pace, and to leave some pauses during the presentation.
Activities
Watch the audience to determine how much time is necessary for them to do the activities. When most people are finished, give a specific amount of time for completion and then, move on!
Allow for interruptions, unexpected difficulties
The unexpected will occur during the presentation. For this reason, do not give a specific schedule for activities, so that people will not feel cheated if a time schedule is not kept.

Flexibility
Be Flexible
Because it is impossible to predict what might happen, it is absolutely necessary to remain as flexible as possible. The presenter's task is to make the presentation work, no matter what. It is not a good idea to make apologies for what cannot be helped; accept the situation and do the best you can.

Make changes during the presentation, if necessary
If the presentation is not going well, however, do make changes. Do not present as planned at the expense of the audience; if what you had planned is not working, be prepared to try some alternatives.

Evaluation
Evaluate the presentation at the end
A formal or informal evaluation is appropriate at the end. Evaluation forms that ask for a numerical designation are limiting because the tendency is to look for the numerical rating only. Two very important questions to ask after the presentation are; has the presentation met its stated objectives? Have the participants' expectations been met? As the presenter, make a quick list of what did and did not work so that you will be even better prepared for the next presentation.

Fun
Involve participants
Encourage the audience to participate in a variety of ways during the presentation through movement, talking, laughing, and thinking. Try to make them actively participate in their own learning.
Be creative
There are no limitations on the possibilities for presentations. Just because you have never seen it done before, does not mean that it is not possible. For each presentation, try some new strategy.

Humor helps
You do not need to be a comedian in order to include laughter in a presentation. Acting human is often enough to get a chuckle or two. Do not be afraid to laugh at yourself and human situations. Telling a joke is difficult for some, but everyone has an amusing anecdote. Don't try to be more humorous than is natural, but remember not to take yourself too seriously.
Have fun
Provide opportunities for both you and your audience to enjoy the presentation.
Good presentations do not just happen. Follow the guidelines described and your next presentation will be rewarding for everyone.


BOOKS FROM NCTE
Educators know a great deal about teaching students how to read. They have paid far less attention to what make young people want to read.

A new book from the National Council of Teachers of English provides answers to this neglected question, from the students themselves. **Voices of Readers: How We Come to Love Books** offers insights for teachers, curriculum planners, librarians, and education policymakers. What these professionals can do to feed—or kill—the urge to read is evident from students' thoughtful, candid comments.

For their analysis, coauthors G. Robert Carlsen and Anne Sherrill drew on a mass of "reading autobiographies" which Carlsen, a professor at the University of Iowa, has for thirty years assigned his students to write. Sherrill, now of East Tennessee State University, participated in the research on the Iowa campus.

The students who retained the urge to read have key experiences in common. They were exposed to a range of books in a supportive atmosphere. Family members and teachers read to them. They were taught to read by teachers who encouraged their efforts instead of punishing them for every miscue. The luckier ones were exposed to classics along with other reading, but were not forced to spend weeks in secondary school dissecting a single play of Shakespeare. They encountered at least a few teachers and librarians who loved literature and knew how to project that love. They had opportunities to talk about their reading with others.

Analyzing responses from students who had lost interest in reading, Carlsen and Sherrill note that some grew up in nonreading families. In school, others had negative experiences such as being reprimanded for reading ahead of the class. Still others found themselves branded through their miscues as "poor" readers and learned to avoid reading.

Rigid curriculum mandates, the authors say, appear to force many students to tackle classics before they are mature enough to understand them. "Book reports did more to kill the young people's interest in reading then to promote it," they observe. Restrictive library practices also take their toll. When students encounter the many distractions of adolescence, the authors observe, these factors can cause them to abandon books.

Students across the decades listed different books as favorites, the authors report, but "the overall experience with books seemed to follow a consistent pattern throughout the thirty years of study." While Carlsen and Sherrill do not prescribe actions for educators to take, they suggest that less rigidity in reading and literature programs and more concern for exposing children and youths to a variety of reading in non-threatening circumstances would help to make the U.S. a nation of readers.

ADVICE

for my creative writing class

Take this paper from my hand, offering. It is blue and not unlike the lake it might have sailed out on. Sometimes this paper wants. Wants to be sky or sorrow or the vein along your temple: a voice so quiet

it is always your name. This paper wants it wants to be a river the Danube wants to be a song. It wants too much sometimes. You cannot give this paper everything. It is too small anyway. But it is waiting, is listening for the weight of your hand across it. Be for this paper some thing, some grace, a face in the doorway to bring it home. Be for this paper the rain that loves dust and falls through the blue not knowing what will welcome it. Be like the rain.

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University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

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