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Wisconsin English Journal is published three times annually in October, January, and April by the Wisconsin Council of Teachers of English. Subscription rate is $7.50 per year for public and private libraries, curriculum centers and similar professional offices. A single copy is $2.25. Make checks payable to the Wisconsin Council of Teachers of English. All subscriptions and other correspondence referring to Wisconsin English Journal should be addressed to Dr. Rhoda Maxwell, English Department, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire 54702-4004.
The Spring issue of the Journal will not have a particular theme. I want the opportunity to publish articles on a variety of issues as I finish up my term as editor. Articles on teaching English Language Arts at all levels are welcome. Manuscripts should be from five to ten pages in length, double spaced, and follow the MLA style.

The deadline for the Spring issue is February 25. Send manuscripts to:

Wisconsin English Journal
Rhoda Maxwell, Editor
English Department
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire
Eau Claire, WI 54702

NANCY C. HOEFS

Nancy Hoefs, 57, Milwaukee, died Tuesday, November 6, 1990. Nancy was the daughter of the late Ervin and Pearl Hoefs. She is survived by cousins and many dear friends.

Nancy recently retired from a teaching career spanning 31 years. The first two were spent at Mayville, WI followed by 29 years at Nicolet High School. She was a graduate of the University of Wisconsin, Madison; a member of Sigma Kappa, Pi Lambda Theta; an officer of the Wisconsin Council of Teachers of English and a member of the Christian Science Church. A memorial fund will be established in Nancy's name to provide scholarships for Nicolet High School students. Contributions may be sent to the school at 6701 N. Jean Nicolet Rd., Glendale, WI 53217.

WCTE has established a memorial fund in remembrance of Nancy. Make checks out to the Nancy Hoefs Memorial and send to Neil Vail, 3401 Ruby Ave., Racine, WI 53401.

Remembrances of Nancy Hoefs with WCTE and as a dedicated English teacher are things I will never forget! Nancy and I "grew up" with WCTE; it was she who managed to bring our organization out of severe fiscal problems. It was she who devoted her time and effort to help better our organization. All of us will remember her devotion at the innumerable conventions at which she tirelessly managed the registration table. She is a person we will miss dearly.

Neil J. Vail
THE NOTE 1990 ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS IN WRITING

The Achievement Awards in Writing are conferred by the National Council of Teachers of English to recognize the accomplishments of high school juniors as writers. Winners must demonstrate ability at writing under two different sets of conditions: they must offer a piece of their "best writing," in any form or genre, drafted and revised over whatever time seems necessary; and they must write a short essay, completed under supervision within seventy-five minutes, on a subject set by the Achievement Awards Advisory Committee and responded to by all candidates for the awards in any particular year. The candidates' samples of their "best writing" are written under conditions chosen by them and their teachers; the "impromptu" paper is written under test conditions that are uniform nationwide. Since some students write better with ample time and others write better under pressure, the Council believes that determining winners fairly requires judging candidates' performance under both conditions. Above all, the Committee encourages distinctive approaches from students that will reflect their intellectual attainment and their ability to express their thoughts and feelings with honesty and with language and style appropriate to their purpose.

Accordingly, the Achievement Awards Advisory Committee, along with the individual state coordinators and high school and college English teachers who serve as judges, commends to colleges and universities the winners listed in this booklet, believing that they have demonstrated not only superior ability but also notable versatility in writing.

The Achievement Awards in Writing program has been fortunate to have the continued interest and support of teachers, administrators, parents, and students. This year over 4,000 students from the fifty states, the District of Columbia, and American schools abroad participated in the highly competitive program. The number of nominees from each school was based on the school's total enrollment in grades ten through twelve: one nominee per 500 students. The number of winners from each state was determined by doubling the number of the state's representatives in Congress. The 1990 program was supported by grants from the Maurice R. Robinson Fund and the New York Times Company Foundation.

WISCONSIN WINNERS

Blohowiak, Kelly J., Pulaski H.S., Pulaski 231 Glenbrook Drive, Pulaski 54162

Collins, Rebecca L., Neenah H.S., Neenah 1970 Oak Ridge Road, Neenah 54956

Degiovanni, Gina M., Edgewood H.S., Madison 295 Water Street, Prairie Du Sac 53578

Fleet, Katherine A., Rufus King H.S., Milwaukee 2568 North Prospect, Milwaukee 53211

Hamm, Rebecca A., Wisconsin Dells H.S., Wisconsin Dells 1621 East Broadway, Wisconsin Dells 53965

Wiersgalla, Michelle M., Burlington Senior H.S., Burlington 133 Duane Street, Burlington 53105

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State Coordinator

Sandra Ludeman, 430 East High, Milton 53563
THE THING'S THE PLAY
Marie Martini

English language arts teachers searching for innovative ways to incorporate reading, writing, speaking, listening activities into their classrooms should try teaching a drama unit that includes drama warm-up activities, play writing, and play performance. This unit is teacher generated and is enthusiastically received by students of most interest and ability groups.

Begin with a discussion of pantomime which includes a description of mime and some brief demonstrations of pantomimes. Discuss these basic mime rules:

1. Keep the story line simple and straight-forward.
2. Imagine a brief story with a beginning, a middle, and an end.
3. Be creative and let the imagination have full rein.
4. Be consistent in the sizes of objects and their placement.
5. Exaggerate expressions and gestures to make them bigger than life.
6. Remember exaggerated resistance—each action of pushing, pulling, piking, etc., has some resistance which depicts some physical effort.

After demonstrating some mimes, students draw a mime situation from several in a box and perform. It is important to stress that this experience should be fun to do and fun to watch, although each performer may feel somewhat self-conscious initially. Teacher participation in this activity helps in creating a comfortable working environment.

Some possible solo mime situations:
1. having a toothache
2. buying new clothes
3. car breaking down
4. coming home late
5. hunting
6. boating
7. finding money
8. making a meal
9. feeding a pet
10. doing ballet
11. going to doctor
12. painting a room
13. walking a tightrope
14. flying a plane
15. fishing
16. looking for a dog
17. swimming
18. ice skating
19. doing makeup
20. going bowling

After each student attempts one or more solo mimes try some group mimes in which two or more characters participate.

Some possible group mimes are:
1. a stagecoach filled with passengers
2. a mad scientist creating a monster
3. gunman holding up a bank
4. exercise class for beginners
5. a rock concert
6. a politician and a crowd
7. teenager at a family reunion
8. a new student at school
9. various circus performers
10. a teacher in an unruly classroom

In each situation individual students assume separate personalities within the confines of the topic.

Following the two to three day mime unit, discuss improvisation which is a special kind of performance where the speakers or actors make up their actions and dialogues on the spur of the moment. Since there is no script to follow, this activity allows students to be very creative and spontaneous while still working within the confines of their specific topics.

Some rules for successful improvisations:
1. Begin with as much energy as possible and exaggerate the personality traits of the character.
2. Use exaggerated physical movement to express character and/or mood.
3. Try to vary vocal tones to express age and personality.
4. Keep talking.
5. In a group improvisation listen to the other characters and react to their actions and dialogue.
6. State a few initial details to briefly establish the scene and situation.
7. Create some complications and suspense.
8. Have some definite conclusion.

Like pantomime, teaching improvisation can begin with solo performances and then work into group efforts.

Some possible solo improvisations:
1. pilot over Bermuda triangle
2. skier stuck on mountain edge
3. a hospitalized football star
4. Santa Claus the week before Christmas
5. a young child accepting a dare
6. an old person fishing
7. a lost child
8. a clown preparing for an act
9. an advice giver
10. a person who sees an alien spaceship

When proceeding to the group improvisations stress that each person is to create his/her own dialogue and action within the group and remind them of classroom rules about courtesy, obscenities, violence, etc.

Some possible group improvisations:
1. senior citizens on a bird watch
2. students discussing a social event that was a dud
3. astronauts on a mission
4. family vacation in a car
5. people with sick pets in a vet's office
6. angry parents and their kids
7. babysitting for unruly kids
8. students waiting to see principal
9. students trying to get teacher to change rules, grades
10. two couples on a blind date

The situations generated for both the mime and improv activities are limited only by the teacher's time and imagination. The assignments are easily modified according to the interests and abilities of the students and the teacher's overall lesson plan.

After about a week has been spent on warm-up activities, introduce the various components of drama. Define and discuss characterization, plot, conflict, setting, dialogue, and blocking. Read some one-act plays aloud in class and act some out. This will lead into the last part of this unit: drama writing and performance. The students are now ready to write their own one-acts with each student writing his or her own part within the overall framework of the plot. Some general guidelines are helpful when undertaking this project. The teacher must decide whether to assign groups or let students pick their own. This depends on classroom chemistry and teacher judgment. The size of the groups should be no less than three and no more than five members. Since it is imperative that each student makes a significant contribution, individual grades are good motivators. Proceed by reminding students of classroom rules and establish the groups. The first task of each group is to select a general plot line that can be developed into a fifteen minute, or more, one act play. This plot should be cleared with the teacher first to avoid any duplication within the class and to avoid potential production problems and complications. It is helpful to give students some general plot outlines but make sure that each group selects a separate storyline.
Some possible plot beginnings:
1. young woman in bridal veil in deserted mansion
2. person insists that he/she is living a second life
3. mysterious light hovers over a section of road
4. a rich and spoiled teenager is kidnapped
5. a person wakes up in an unfamiliar dark room
6. leader of a group of campers becomes quite ill
7. Amy's boyfriend is not who he pretends to be
8. a childhood friend contracts AIDS
9. a group of kids are blamed for something unfairly
10. Mom and Dad don't approve of the new girlfriend

Since each student writes his/her own part all students must cooperate so the overall play makes sense. When the script is completed duplicate it so each actor has one. Keep a copy of the script in order to grade each student's contribution. From a time management standpoint it is helpful to set a deadline for the completion of the scripts (five or six class days is certainly sufficient) or this may turn into a semester project. Each student is responsible for his/her blocking, costumes, and props. Allow some practice time, establish a performance schedule, and arrange to video tape each play. The tapes are fun for the class to watch and they clearly establish the amount of effort that each student expended.

This drama unit has many positive qualities since it involves all students, it promotes reading, writing, speaking and listening, and it is enjoyable and exciting for both the students and the teacher. It is easily modified for individual classroom circumstances and can be done with minimal classroom materials. A considerable amount of work can be accomplished when it is presented as play. So set your classroom stage, light your video camera lights, and let your students work while playing.

Marie Martini, Rhinelander High School, Rhinelander, WI

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ENGLISH EDUCATION IN THE JAPANESE COLLEGE CURRICULUM
Michiru Hano with Jacqueline D. Cereghino

We are all aware that contemporary Japanese society still makes one's "academic career" the criterion of acceptance by prestigious companies, etc. However, I am optimistic enough to believe that just as we have moved from being a nation with an insular mentality to a people eager to be cosmopolitans, so—given a sufficient amount of time—Japanese will come to appreciate the true meaning of education. I am confident that in the future we will recognize that real education is the drawing out and developing of a person's complete human potential rather than fact-cramming activity leading to entrance to and graduation from "big-name" colleges and universities.

In line with my conviction that change is best influenced by action based on one's insight, I set about learning to become the kind of teacher who tries to motivate students to study for the kind of happiness that comes from discovering and using all one's talents. Since my field is English Language, I enrolled in the graduate school of Virginia State University to find out how native speakers approach the matter of "English Education."

Obviously, on the elementary, junior and senior high school levels, the situation of American instructors teaching native English-speaking American students to speak, read, and write English better is quite different from that of Japanese teachers introducing Japanese youngsters to a foreign language. Since my purpose here is not to discuss the revision of English teaching content and methods in Japanese junior-senior high schools, I will refrain from commenting negatively on the present system there. Instead, I will look positively at how we can build on that foundation to enable our junior college and university students to get the most out of our English programs.

My actual experience in college classes confirms my opinion that Japanese youth who seek higher education not just to get a diploma but for ongoing human development are really eager to learn as much about life as possible. If their major is English
Language, they expect their teachers to make that foreign language meaningful by using it to stimulate their thinking, challenge their innate creativity, broaden their horizons, and animate them to develop themselves and to contribute to making the world a better place.

Most young people desire to travel abroad and make friends in foreign countries, so their primary interest is in learning to speak English. I also heartily support that priority, but I am quick to point out that meaningful communication is possible only when one has something worthwhile to say. Therefore, reading is extremely important for gaining knowledge and for acquiring an extensive English vocabulary. Writing in English is not a matter of merely giving practice in using the grammatical and other structural skills previously studied, but an opportunity to clarify personal views and values by committing them to paper to be read and shared by others.

In order to be able to speak in English, students must also be active listeners, so they need much input in English from their teachers. In other words, I have to talk to my class members in English about things which interest them enough to hold their attention, naturally adjusting the speed of my mini-lecture to their ability to understand. At the same time, I tell them that I don't expect them to catch everything I say. The important thing is for them to try to follow the thought the best they can. Constant effort will be rewarded. This practice in listening comprehension can be followed by both oral discussion and written composition.

Acting out original dialogues with other students and carrying on an impromptu conversation with the teacher playing one of the roles will hold the attention of the whole class. In this case, a perceptive, affirming, and encouraging teacher can make a less-than-expert student look good in front of his/her peer group.

Having students in small groups write and perform their own short, original dramas gives them the chance to express their ideas with the help of gestures and facial expressions. In such lively and pleasant situations, practice in pronunciation, intonation, stress, etc., becomes less of a chore than an experience of feeling the emotions of other people.

On the college level, students are also capable of giving brief, but frequent talks in front of the class on current topics, cultural matters, impressions of movies, books, etc. The class audience becomes active listeners, and the speakers all gain skills in eye contact and audience rapport, voice projection, and most of all, confidence in the ability to speak publicly in the target foreign language.

In reading classes, the emphasis should be on human growth through the assimilation of informative, interesting material. Books and articles with long, boring sentences should be avoided. Translation and concentration on grammatical structure are not the aim here. At least to some extent, students should be allowed to choose their own reading material, and they should be encouraged to read without looking up every word in the dictionary. Then reading in English will be pleasurable as well as thought-provoking. The element of choice will stimulate self-motivation, increase active participation in the learning process, and result in a feeling of satisfaction and achievement.

Success in teaching composition depends a great deal on the instructor’s approach. For the six years of junior and senior high school Japanese students have been taught the language principles governing English. They have learned grammar, correct usage, and sentence structure. The role of the college teacher is to guide them in putting into practice what they have already learned somewhat theoretically.

First of all, the right atmosphere in the composition class is very important. Experience has taught me that students succeed best when they feel comfortable with the subject matter to be written about and when the teacher gives encouragement and constructive feedback. Therefore, I consider the following to be my teaching aims: (1) to focus on actual writing practice (performance) rather than on theoretical explanation; (2) to create interest by allowing students to express their own ideas,
thoughts, and experiences rather than spending time on artificial
drills; (3) to encourage students by showing positive interest in
the contents of their papers, as well as by pointing out ways to
improve their style.

As a guide of their written work, I must help students relax
and recognize that I am more interested in their gradual progress
in the use of language and in their growth as individuals than I
am in perfect grammar or mistake-free essays. If I read their
papers conscientiously and make positive comments about them,
they will like writing, realizing that their thoughts are worth
expressing. After all, in real life situations, people
communicate best when they know they are being listened to with
interest. In the same way, students will write eagerly in
proportion to the amount of interest they know they are evoking
in the teacher and in their classmates who read their papers.

I sometimes have my students proofread each other's papers,
so they have the experience of writing for more than just me. At
first, they hesitate to make any written corrections, but
gradually they come to enjoy showing their reactions and making
comments. Obviously, if learning is to take place and
improvement is to be made, mistakes have to be pointed out in an
encouraging and constructive way. Never to make any corrections
is unfair to students because it allows them to practice in error
and reinforces poor language habits. Nevertheless, the emphasis
must be on convincing them that we value what they write. A
climate of receptivity is a basic requirement for any kind of
real communication, including acquired writing fluency.

At the beginning of this article, I said that I studied in
the United States to find out how native speakers approached the
matter of English Education. The following quotation from the
book Decisions About the Teaching of English by English educators
Simmons, Shafer, and West states very clearly what I learned and
what I truly believe:

Particularly in adolescence, when so much growth
is determined by the quality of interpersonal
relationships, particularly with peers, we need to
change our schools in to places where adolescents
can have encounters that center on the development
of values for selfhood and personal survival.
English classes will then hopefully be places
where students can learn to reflect upon their
experiences and where they can integrate the
development of cognitive skills, human values, and
social ideas.

As the proverb says, "The proof of the pudding is in the
eating." In the same way, the best way to convince anyone that a
method or curriculum is good is to put it into effect, not just
talk or write about it. Moreover, we learn as we go along. At
any rate, I know that nothing is more satisfying to a dedicated
teacher than to know he/she has helped students to grow humanly,
not merely in the mastery of skills and techniques. Nothing is
more fulfilling for students than to discover their own
individuality and worth as persons. Properly designed and
carried out, a good English program can make that possible.

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Instructor Michiru Hano teaches Japanese at University of
New Orleans
ESSAYS FOR PUNISHMENT: A PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION
Thomas Pribek

William Irmscher, author of Teaching Expository Writing, comments, "Obviously, writing should never be used as a penalty. A good many writing assignments are given in the spirit of punishment. As a result, students begin to attach unpleasant associations to writing." Such advice would seem common sense: as Irmscher notes, "obviously" a teacher does not cultivate dislike of a basic skill by converting it into a medium of discomfort. Nonetheless, some teachers do assign writing projects as punishment and their students do respond negatively, as my survey of college composition classes suggests. I had thought that punitive writing had not endured beyond my own years in grade school and high school; now, however, I suspect that my students' occasional misunderstanding of the tone of essay assignment, correction, and grading may still have a partial connection to assignments given in the spirit of personal correction.

Of nearly two hundred writing students I questioned during four semesters, close to half had written essays particularly as penalty for classroom behavior or violation of a student conduct code. A similar number had copied pages from a dictionary or entries from an encyclopedia or textbook. The topics given seem to be largely time-consuming "busy work," although some appear deliberately laborious: for example, a paper assigned with the prohibition against using the article "the."

Since these approximations may appear exaggerated, or provocative, I must state some qualifications. I cannot estimate exactly how widespread is the practice of assigning writing as punishment and trying to make it unpleasant. In fact, I can offer no more than personal impressions about the responses I have received to questions of my students. Neither a statistician nor a canvasser, I regard my data, as the title notes, as "preliminary." Nonetheless, I do consider my findings significant and cause for further study.
One limitation, for example, is that I have questioned only university students—people who, for whatever reasons, have stayed in school and who have been able, perhaps, to hold off incurring disciplinary tasks. Of course, I know that universities get more than just the so-called "good students"; on the other hand, teachers in higher education rarely have to deal with the challenges of chastising and motivating students who clearly do not want to be there. If I poll secondary students sixteen years and older, perhaps I may find an even higher percentage of students who have written for punishment.

I gathered the information with an anonymous dittoed question sheet. Some students were still defensive and reticent; "I behave" is all that one person wrote. I used the form at the beginning of each new semester, when students did not know me, and when I could not know them; and I did explain the purpose of my inquiry, so that few people would feel they were admitting to any disreputable character history that would be remembered at grading time. I have now surveyed nine classes, seven of a required introductory writing course in basic studies at the University of Wisconsin-LaCrosse, and two of an upper-level professional writing course drawing on a variety of majors outside of English. Thus, the responses should represent the student population as a whole at this university, as well as the number of people surveyed can (169 useful responses).

Most questions about familiarity with punitive writing exercises required only a check, although a brief description of the actual assignments was also requested. With this descriptive passage, I could set aside responses from students who might not have understood my questions and responded to projects like repeating sentences, or ones who might not have differentiated a punishment from an instructional project (one person characterized a paper to remove an "Incomplete" grade as a penalty for extended absence and missed work).

Some questions did not draw sufficient information for any conclusion. For example, I cannot say for certain whether the responses predominantly reflect public schools in Wisconsin, because students often provided only a name for their schools, but no city, and very often left blank the question of "public" or "private" school. In addition, many people did not fill in their class rank, probably again from uncertainty of what I was asking.

Prevalence and Frequency of Punitive Writing

During their high school years (including junior and senior high), 27% of all students had written punitive essays, and another 37% who had not were familiar with others having been assigned such work. For grade school (elementary, primary, and middle schools), 42% had written themselves, and 38% knew of others. The responses for college experience were negligible. These assignments seem more common at lower grade levels, as are the punitive copying tasks. Only 18% of students had copied from a dictionary or text in high school, but 42% had at a lower level.

Although the use of writing as penalty might seem fairly widespread, it could not be characterized as common, according to the experience of my students. 51% note only one to three such assignments in their school careers; only 6% indicate a half dozen or more. Nevertheless, 18% checked off "slightly negative" to describe their attitude toward writing as a result of these kinds of experiences; 9% marked "never liked it anyway" to describe their feeling toward any writing, so that a disciplinary writing exercise might only have confirmed a dislike for the work. All of the above percentages are figured for the total of 169 students, not just those with personal experience in punitive composition. Some students who had no direct experience with the practice still recorded negative reactions.

Significantly, English teachers were not singled out for their use of punitive writing. Only 10% of the students knew just of English teachers who penalized pupils with extra writing projects; 44% said such assignments could have come from any teacher, including coaches and administrators, and 20% said the assignments were exclusively from teachers of subjects other than English.
The majority of students could not recall their topics in detail, just as most of them tended consciously to shrug off the possible negative influence of their experiences. Assigned length was most commonly all that people remembered. In fact, most punitive projects were brief; 24% said they wrote one or two pages (100 to 500 words); 16% said they did from three to six pages. However, some students noted filling as much as eight, ten, or twelve pages. Furthermore, one reported 20 pages, and still another 40! I hope those people mightly exaggerated their penalties. Other people reported indefinite duration, such as "write until I tell you to stop." One person had to write during lunch period for a week; another was given a full day!

The assigned topics, if any, generally fall into three categories: the "extended apology," "busy work" or nonsense writing, and, perhaps most potentially pernicious, the particular class topic or some related material. Many assignments were no more than a "sentence" to manual labor, as it were; students could choose their own topics, provided they fulfilled required length or time. Several teachers and schools were formally prepared to assign punitive writing projects; one teacher reportedly kept a fishbowl of topics, and one institution actually printed a list of topics which teachers kept in their desk for quick reference.

By far, the "apology" seems most common: a comment on or explanation of the offense, for example, "why I should not [do something]" or "why I should." More specific forms are "how to be polite," how to be a "good student," and "what punishment I deserve." 22% of all students once, at least, had to write something or this general character: rubbing their noses in the offense, as it were. To be fair to the probable intent here, the topic might be expected to foster self-examination or understanding of the problem and so be corrective in a positive manner, although someone might still question whether the writing skill itself is being misapplied.

The pure busy work, however, may have greater potential for creating ill feelings towards the task of writing. Students recall such items as the history of the ball, their recent summer vacation, pest moss life cycles, the hand, the history of cabbage, famous people, friendship, insurance, and the question of why there are frogs. (Actually, I cannot be sure that one or more of these was not intended as relevant course material, although none was characterized as such.) A frivolous topic might be intended to reflect and comment on someone's conduct—although irony is a dubious tone to take in discipline—or it might be intentionally difficult. Does cabbage have a history, and where would I find it, if I had to write about it? Did I ever have a worse time trying to make an essay out of my summer vacation? In addition, my own recall brings to mind such topics as "my life as a doorknob" and "life inside a ping-pong ball," both assigned and later forgiven when my frustrated eighth-grade classmates confessed their inability to fulfill the tasks and begged—right word—forgiveness of the teacher. If those projects were intended to create abject public humiliation for the offenders and inspire fear in others, they worked; I was terrified.

Forcing someone to write on a current class topic may superficially seem constructive, although not if it is still given in a spirit of vindictiveness, such as one person's example of "why I love accounting class so much." Could not this teacher reasonably expect that each statement received in response would be a lie and that the topic would aggravate any existing dislike or ensure antipathy where none had existed before? Some students report essays given as penalty for reading undone and assurance that it then would be done; some had extra work added to an assignment, such as greater length, or the use of a dictionary, encyclopedia or a library source. Additional knowledge might then be acquired, just as a necessary project were completed; however, the inherent danger would be making the subject matter itself painful to recall, as well as the writing tasks—passing a test later could be no pleasurable experience, and receiving a high course grade could even seem more like a personal "pardon" than an educational achievement. For example, photosynthesis,
one topic noted, is a difficult enough chemical process to comprehend, without making the acquired knowledge itself a target for resentment.

The special conditions occasionally attached to the assignments seem sometimes good advice for writing, if dubious pedagogy, and other times pure nastiness. A few students were instructed not to use contractions, not to start sentences with "and" or "I," and to use only complete sentences— all might be required for good reason, and no one would question avoidance of sentence fragments. However, some other directions would be hard to portray as anything but intentionally distressing, like adding "hard labor" to some legal sentence. For example, one student was allowed exactly ten commas (and all correct—but not all comma use is cut-and-dried) and five uses each of "this," "was," "were," and "we." Other students were prohibited the use of "the," "a," "like," and "man"; one student was restricted to words or five letters or more, which directions would effectively prohibit all articles and most forms of "to be." These assignments seem like torturous corruptions of what could have been an instructional project. In addition, a pupil was simply told that he was now absent and that no homework or tests would be accepted either until his assigned punishment was submitted.

Some of these mechanical tasks would be nearly impossible, without reducing the composition to a completely meaningless bulk of words. Indeed, though I have previously described paper length in pages, many students estimated only required amounts of words. I did not ask specifically if these essays were reviewed, but I doubt many even were readable. (In my grade school, classmates and I dared greater penalties by slipping insults of the teacher into the punitive essays, assuming no one could really want to read these papers.) These projects would not create words that "mean" anything more than discomfort or dislike— of course, that "message" may fully serve the purpose of the particular assignment.

Some Tentative Conclusions

I can accept most college students' assertion that they have no strongly negative feelings remaining from their experiences. Many cannot recall much about the punitive projects they did; certainly, the recollection is not prominent to many students who choose to seek college degrees, although it was a conversation with a recent student that reminded me of this practice and started my inquiries. Moreover, some people did remember detailed directions or lengthy assignments; I might expect some exaggeration, of course— the displeasure suggested still would be significant. Indeed, I am surprised, occasionally, by the exaggerated defensiveness some people have about their writing and the hypercritical approach others take to evaluating their peers' work. Certainly any number of causes may be suggested for the misperceived tone of evaluation; however, when teachers see themselves parodied as nagging, censorious, reproachful creatures, they ought to consider carefully how much that reflection may reveal themselves or their profession generally, if only to be more conscious of avoiding stepping into some stereotype.

For example, I recently moved up the due date for a project when, in one class, no one raised any question or made any comment in response to a routine inquiry about the progress of the paper; revising the schedule was convenient for me then, but this action might appear sarcastic and indicative, in response to a lack of immediate activity in class—or maybe I am too sensitive now. In addition, I can recall an earlier instance of a writing requirement which could easily send the wrong message about the intent of the assignment. In my first semester as a teaching assistant, I tried to stimulate class discussion and independent thought by having students take turns bringing to class specific questions about a text, offering answers, and then requesting class response. If anyone forgot, showed ill preparation, or fumbled the presentation, or if a class simply did not respond, I sometimes substituted an impromptu essay on one of the questions, so that I would have something to evaluate
for the required "class participation" grade that supplemented the professor's tests. I told people that I was convinced they really had ideas to relate; however, I am sure that more than once I was demonstrably unhappy—not personally angry, but disappointed that my expectations of class accomplishment were not fulfilled and my own over-preparation underemployed. Therefore, my attitude could easily be perceived as reproachful, and the writing itself as a threat realized when people did not do as I had expected.

In a recent editorial on this subject, Joe Kincheloe and George Staley suspect that there is often more than just an appearance of punitive assignment-making; they suggest that writing as punishment has been revitalized, as it were, by "recent emphasis on restoring order and discipline in the schools." Somehow, punishment has been preserved as a "basic" component of traditional, structured education, to a number of people. Ironically, Michael Hogan infers that most teachers consciously disapprove of the practice: some 86% of the English teachers whom he surveyed. Why might there be such inconsistency between practice and belief?

One implication of Hogan's article is worth considering as plausible answer. He suggests "a possible study of those making such assignments to determine their backgrounds/experience with the practice." His suggestion seems to be more than an examination of pedagogy, but a review too of personal experience as students. Indeed, my own suspicion is that some teachers' disciplinary practices are modeled in part on their own learning experiences in addition to their professional training and work. I know from my own background in school how effective can be certain forms of punishment, and I am occasionally uncomfortable with the echoes of former teachers whom I do not particularly want to imitate. I can hear such echoes in my tone of voice, sometimes, and in my actual language, if not conduct. As with child-raising, perhaps, people may deal with immediate, difficult situations by identifying and duplicating former experiences—with roles reversed—rather than deliberating; parents and teachers both may still do things which they do not consciously approve, just as students may embody disliked role models when they are called upon to evaluate another person.

At any rate, causal reasoning here is, at most, as "preliminary" as the other inferences I draw. I would hope for more professional study of the regularity of punitive writing within institutions and among grade levels, as well as personal investigation. As Hogan notes, some conscientious teachers were not even "aware" of the practices in their own schools and the experiences of students in their classes. It is worth examining, as best we all can, our pedagogy, our colleagues' views and practices, and our students' preparation.

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IN LOVING MEMORY

Our first experience with being left
Was the Milwaukee Braves.
After all the afternoons and evenings
All the twighters and extra innings
All we'd lost and won,
They were gone.
They loved us, too.
We knew it, could feel it,
Saw it in their stances and prances
Playing to full houses, houses we filled.

Henry (not yet the legend) Aaron, Warren Spahn, Del Crandall,
Billy and Red and Johnny and Eddie,
Joe Adcock, Wes Covington, and Lew Burdette,
Even Fred Nancy.

Still, we have our memories.
Spahn's throw, Bruton's dive, Aaron's swing.
The crack of wood reaching the bleachers
As batter, tossing bat aside, turned to run.
Bright hometown flannels with tomahawk and scripted Bravado,
Chunky white N on midnight caps.
Grass, genuine green, neon
Signs for real Milwaukee beers.
Snapping flag, pennants, peanut shells.
Gaudy glossy scoreboard on sticky kneas--
Smudged record of hits and errors, runs earned and sacrificed.
Clapping the irresistible organ beat,
Chanting Billy to second,
Spyglassing the gloves of Hank and Wes,
Daydreaming Eddie's eyes.

Busing home with the Knothole Club.
Telling Dad about it,
About the scoreboard part.

Ellen Last, English Language Arts Consultant,
Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

ENGLISH SPELLING AS A MORPHOPHONEMIC SYSTEM:
A SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Don L. F. Nilsen

PART I: ENGLISH SPELLING AS CHAOS:

Most people believe that English has a chaotic spelling system. It takes us many years to learn the correct spelling for difficult English words, and we have spelling bees and prizes for those who do best in accomplishing this difficult task. We attempt to develop rules that will explain some of the relationships between English sounds and spellings, like, "change y to i and add es or ed;" or "when two vowels go walking the first one does the talking;" or "vowels before double consonants are pronounced short while those before single consonants are pronounced long;" or "g and c are pronounced soft before front vowels (e, i, a) and hard before back vowels (a, o, u);" or "when a word ends in silent e, the vowel is long." But sometimes these rules get rather long and complicated, as in "Double the final consonant before a suffix that begins with a vowel if both of the following conditions exist: 1) the word has only one syllable or is accentuated on the last syllable; 2) the word ends in a single consonant preceded by a single vowel."

Even when the rules are not complicated, there are frequently many exceptions to the rules. Consider a simple rule like "i before e," for example. This rule has to be expanded to account for the most common exceptions. It therefore becomes "i before e except after c." Then the rule has to be expanded again to account for some additional exceptions to become "i before e, except after c, or when sound as A, as in 'neighbor' and 'weigh.'"

So there are some problems with the English spelling system. In answer to these problems, some people propose spelling reforms; others propose special phonemic alphabets for use in linguistics classes or elsewhere; others propose special teaching alphabets like "Words in Color," or "i.t.a." for use with young
children; others propose that we use vernacular language (like nonstandard black English), and spell words the way they sound, for teaching reading to young children.

Still another approach is to exaggerate the chaos by concentrating on the examples that break the rules most flagrantly. George Bernard Shaw, for example, said that "fish” should be spelled "ghoti": gh as in "enough;" o as in "women," and ti as in "nation."

In the West Virginia Hillbilly, of January 3, 1970, Doug Willis proposed an entire new alphabet:

A as in Aetna
B as in Bedellium
C as in Charlatan
D as in Dneiper River
E as in Buchre
F as in Philadelphia
G as in Gnash
H as in Hors d’oeuvres
I as in Ingenue
J as in Jaialai
K as in Knead
L as in Llama
M as in Mnemonic
N as in Nganwei
O as in Oedipus
P as in Psychosis
Q as in Qatar
R as in Rhythm
S as in Syzygy
T as in Tear
U as in Ulgurs
V as in Vlissinger
W as in Wrext
X as in Xmas
Y as in Ypres
Z as in Zamora (thamora)

In Bolinger and Sears’ Aspects of Language, J. D. McClure gives a riddle whose answer is based on British place names. The question is, "How do you pronounce 'athvenzavce?'” and the answer is: "You don’t pronounce it at all, because they are all silent letters: ath as in Strathaven; v as in Manning; ren as in Cirencester; z as in Culzean; av as in Abergavenny; ce as in Leicester” (283).

Victoria Fromkin and Robert Rodman tell what it would be like if a Martian linguist came to earth and discovered our English spelling system. Supposed she happened upon a sentence like "Did he believe that Caesar could see the people," in which the /iy/ sound is represented by five different spellings: e, ie, ae, ee, and eo. To add to the Martian linguist’s confusion, the second sentence she encounters might be "The silly amoeba stole the key to the machine," in which the spellings y, oe, ey, and ice are added as possible representations of the same /iy/ sound (52).

In "Those Spelling Demons," which originally appeared in the Journal of Business Education, Ralph Dornfield Owen does the same sort of exercise for the /ow/ sound. In the sentence, "Our chauffeur, although he stubbed his toe, yeomanly towed four more boards through the open door of the depot." In Owen’s sentence the /ow/ sound is represented by eleven different spellings: au, ough, oe, oo, ow, ou, oce, oai, o, oo, and ot (185-91).

Still other spelling critics wax poetic. So many of Hugh Rank’s Danish students had difficulty pronouncing his name that he made up a poem, which doesn’t necessarily help a lot, but at least it makes us smile:

Hugh rhymes with Zoo
Or with Gnue or with Sioux
Or with Two or with Blue
Or with Pooh or with Through.
    What’s so rough
    Or so tough
    about
    that?

And in Dwight Bolinger’s Aspects of Language, Richard Krogh writes a poem about words which are as difficult as "Hugh” in their spelling structure. Again, he sheds a lot of light on the problem, but very little light on the solution:

Beware of heard, a dreadful word
That looks like beard and sounds like bird.
And dead; it’s said like bed, not dead;
For goodness sake, don’t call it deed!
Watch out for meat and great and threat
(They rhyme with suite and straight and debt).
A moth is not a moth in Mother,
Nor both in bother, broth in brother. (480).
There are certainly some problems in our spelling system,
and it's all because of our ancestors. As Willard Espy stated it
in Another Almanac of Words at Play:

The venerable Bede
Could read.
It's a pity he couldn't spel
as wel. (53).

PART II: ENGLISH SPELLING AS A MORPHOPHONEMIC SYSTEM

In the recent work being done in chaos theory, scientists
are discovering that normally chaos only appears to be chaotic.
In most chaos there are underlying patterns and symmetries. This
is true in the English spelling system as well. In an article
titled, "Reading, Writing and Phonology" published in the
Harvard Educational Review, Carol Chomsky points to the chaos of
English spelling with an anecdote:

TEACHER: How do you spell "sign?"
STUDENT: s-i-g-h-n.
TEACHER: What do you call it when you sign your name?
STUDENT: Your signature.
TEACHER: How do you spell "signature?"
STUDENT: s-i-g-n....
TEACHER: So how do you spell "sign?"
STUDENT: s-i-g-h-n.
TEACHER: But you just told me that "signature" begins with
s-i-g-n.
STUDENT: So what's one got to do with the other? (287-309)

This anecdote does two things. It points out that English
is not a phonemic system, but is rather a morphophonemic system.

It also points out that people may not realize this important
fact. And this is a shame, because such people generally view
the English spelling system as chaotic rather than systematic.

To alleviate this situation, we need to do what Robin Lakoff
is doing in the anecdote above--force students to look for
patterns in the English spelling system. It is true that in the
ideal phonemic spelling system, we look for one-to-one
correspondence between the sounds and spellings, and we become
annoyed (or perhaps amused) when we don't find this
correspondence. In a morphophonemic system, on the other hand,
we do not expect to find this one-to-one correspondence between
sounds and spellings. That's not the way a morphophonemic system
works, because a morphophonemic spelling system takes into
account not only the sounds, but the meanings of the words and
morphemes as well. The plural -s ending, for example, is written
as s in "cats," "dogs," and "horses," even though it is
pronounced as /s/ in the first, as /z/ in the second, and as /ez/
in the third. The same is true with the -ed ending in "played,
"walked," and "putted" where the same ending, -ed is pronounced
three different ways (/d/, /t/, and /ed/); or the c in "critic"
and "criticize: which is pronounced as /k/ or /s/; or the g,
which is pronounced in "signature" but not pronounced in the
related word, "sign."

I could concentrate on either vowels or consonants to
illustrate how a morphophonemic system works, but let me choose
vowels, because they are a little trickier, and because the
patterns are more exciting once the interrelationships begin to
emerge. Because the patterns are subtle, let me make my
presentation deductive rather than inductive.

Since English vowels are morphophonemic, and since they must
therefore represent both the meanings and the sounds of words,
the phonetic representations of the symbol is frequently
sacrificed in favor of its semantic representation. This is done
through a system of vowel gradation, as the chart on the next
page illustrates:
In a phonemic system, each individual word has its own integrity; however, in a morphophonemic system, words don’t operate by themselves. They form patterns and relationships with other words in the system. This may be a more complicated system, but it is also a system that provides important insights into form-meaning relationships—insights that are not provided by a simple phonemic system. Using the chart above, I will address these insights one at a time.

**INSIGHT ONE: WORD FAMILIES:**

In the Robin-Lakoff anecdote mentioned above, the teacher recognized that "sign" and "signature" belong to the same word family, but the student didn’t. We have a lot of silent consonants and silent vowels in English, but typically these vowels and consonants are silent only in certain words, but are fully pronounced in other related words. If children have difficulty spelling "sign," they need to be taught to relate this word, in which the g is silent, to other words in the same family, in which the g is pronounced.

Now let’s look at the chart. Suppose someone doesn’t know how to spell "grenadier," "telegraphic," "naturalization," "photography," and "suppose," because all of these words have schwa sounds. The child should be taught to look for related words in which the syllable under consideration is stressed and therefore has its full value—words like "grenade," "telegraph," "naturalize," "photo," and "supposition."

**INSIGHT TWO: VOWEL NEUTRALIZATION:**

Certain consonants have a profound affect on vowels which precede them. The consonant /r/ is notorious in this regard, as can be seen in such words as "heard," "herd," "bird," "word," and "absurd." The spellings of such words must be learned by rote memory; nevertheless, by referring to the chart above, a person can be made aware of the fact that vowels preceding /r/ tend to be unstable, or r-colored, and that sounds cannot be relied on in such situations for determining the correct spellings. In the i.t.a. alphabet there are two letters for the single sound /r/, one with a tail to indicate that is coloring the preceding vowel, and the other without a tail to indicate that the preceding vowel has its full value.

**INSIGHT THREE: REGIONAL VARIATION:**

This instability of the vowel preceding /r/ sounds can result in regional differences. In New England, for example, the three words "Mary," "marry," and "merry" have distinct pronunciations for some speakers. In other parts of the country, r-coloring occurs to neutralize this distinction, and these three different words have only two, or frequently only one, pronunciation. There are also other consonants which can color the vowels in this same way. Throughout the United States, for example, the /l/ sound of "pit" is contrasted with the /R/ sound of "pet." For some American speakers, however, this vowel contrast is neutralized in front of an /n/ sound. For such speakers "pin" and "pen" are pronounced without distinction, while "pit" and "pet" are differentiated. Notice that r-coloring is represented in the chart above, while n-coloring is not represented. This is because r-coloring is a much more common phenomenon than is n-coloring, and neutralizes certain vowels for all English speakers ("bird," "word," "absurd," etc).

Now consider another word from the chart—"laboratory." This word contains five distinct vowels, each separated from the other vowels by a consonant. In American English the second syllable is lost, and the fourth syllable receives primary stress,
so that the word is pronounced /ˈlæbrətɔrɪ/, while in British English the reverse of this is true—the second syllable receives primary stress, and the fourth syllable is lost, so that the word is pronounced /ˈləbəratɔrɪ/. The word "secretary" (also from the chart) is similar. The British pronunciation of "secretary" has only three syllables (the fourth syllable is lost—/ˈsɛkrətərɪ/), while the American pronunciation of "secretary" has four syllables. Both British and American writers spell "laboratory," and "secretary" the same even though British and American speakers pronounce the words quite differently. In the case of "secretary," the spelling reflects American pronunciation, and there are good reasons. In the first place, the "a" of the third syllable is historically correct. In older forms of British English, the word "secretary" had four syllables (as it still does in American English). But historical accuracy is not the only issue here. The spelling reflects American pronunciation, because American pronunciation reflects the full grade of the vowel in the third syllable. It is possible to generate the reduced grades if we know the full grade by knowing phonetic rules that relate to ease of articulation. Such rules work regularly in all languages to simplify pronunciations resulting in schwas, deletions, assimilations, etc. If we are given the zero grade, we have a one-in-five chance of guessing what the vowel is (A, E, I, O, or U). But if we are given the full grade, and if we also know something about British and American stress placement, and vowel reduction, we can always predict zero grade for words such as "laboratory," and "secretary" in British English, because British English always deletes the next to the last syllable in such words.

INSIGHT FOUR: LANGUAGE CHANGE:

In general, morphophonemic systems like English are not proposed by spelling experts, but rather they emerge or evolve. In this evolution, a language begins with a phonemic alphabet, but then the sound system changes so that the spelling system in many cases represents an earlier form of the language. At this point the spelling system would have to be "corrected and revised" to adapt to the historical changes if a phonemic alphabet is to be desired. Many spelling reforms suggest just this. But these spelling reforms fail, and they fail because a morphophonemic spelling system is actually just as good as a phonemic system, if not better.

A morphophonemic system gives us a sense that the language is dynamic rather than static, and it tells us some fascinating stories about word origins. It tells us, for example, that the word "knight" once had five sounds instead of the three sounds it has in modern English. It also provides clues that the vowel was once a short vowel, and that it became a long vowel when the /g/ sound was lost and the length of the vowel was increased to help fill the time that was once occupied by the consonant. And once it became a long vowel it was eligible to be affected by the Great English Vowel Shift.

When we see that there are thousands of word families in English where one word has a long vowel and the other related word has a short vowel, and the words have basically the same meaning, but are merely in different part-of-speech categories, we wonder two things: 1). If the words mean the same thing, then why are they pronounced differently? 2). Why is this difference in pronunciation so close, and so regular? 3). Could it be that in prehistoric times the words were actually pronounced the same? and 4). Could it have actually been different forms of the same word?

In modern English the first vowel of "nation" is qualitatively from the first vowel of "national." If we go back to Old-English times, however, we find that the only difference between these vowels was quantitative. Old English had a long and short A, a long and short E, a long and short I, a long and short O, and a long and short U. This quantitative difference became a qualitative difference as a result of the Great English Vowel Shift. The shift was necessary because the sounds were too close to each other and were frequently confused.

We can go back still further in history. My guess is that the quantitative difference was at one time conditioned by certain
endings. Let's say that there was just one phoneme each for A, E, I, O, and U, and that this phoneme was pronounced shorter when it was followed by a certain suffix than when it was not. By Old English times, the suffix had become lost, and this caused the phonetic difference between the vowels to become a phonemic difference (compare Germanic umlaut). By Modern English times, the length difference (quantitative), has become a diphthong difference (qualitative). This gradual dissimilation process was an aid to differentiating between the long vowels and the short vowels.

INSIGHT FIVE: VARIABLE RULES

In his *The Social Stratification of English in New York City*, William Labov developed the sociolinguistic concept of variable rule (240). Before Labov's article, it was generally assumed that there were sociolinguistic rules, and a particular speaker either did or did not follow the rules. What Labov showed, however, is that the application of these rules is a more subtle and sophisticated mechanism, and that a particular speaker may abide by the rule sometimes but not always. Labov showed, for example, that the rules are most often adhered to when pronouncing minimal pairs, slightly less adhered to when pronouncing word lists, less adhered to in a reading style, still less adhered to in careful speech, and adhered to least of all in casual or intimate speech (Kroch 234).

This principle can be applied to the language as opposed to the speaker. In a language which varies its stress from syllable to syllable (such as English), we would expect that a vowel would have its full value in a stressed syllable, and would have less than its full value in an unstressed syllable. This we find to be the case. We find the long grade contrasting with the schwa grade in such words as "grendae" vs. "grenadier," "naturalization" vs. "naturalize," and "photo" vs. "photography." We find the short grade contrasting with the schwa grade in such words as "telegraph" vs. "telegraphy." We find the long grade contrasted with zero grade in "busy" vs. "business." We find the short contrasted with the zero grade in "dexterity" vs. "ambidextrous."

And if we look at the word "supposition," we can see it reduced to schwa grade in "suppose," and to zero grade in the colloquial "s'pose."

INSIGHT SIX: UNDERLYING FORMS:

But when there are competing forms, how do we decide which of these forms is the most basic, the form from which all of the other forms should be derived. Our operating principle has to be that we always choose the full value (long or short grade) for our underlying forms and then derive the schwa grades, and zero grades, and r-colored grades from these full values by rules of assimilation and ease. We have to operate on the assumption that it is possible to derive reduced forms from full forms, but it is not possible to go the other way. This principle operates at all levels of language. We can derive pronouns from nouns, but we cannot derive nouns from pronouns. A large number of nouns therefore becomes a small number of pronouns, in the same way that a large number of vowel sounds (long and short A, E, I, O, and U) become a small number of vowel sounds (schwa, or by further reduction, schwa becomes zero).

A book which does an excellent job of exploring the nature of underlying forms is Chomsky and Halle's *The Sound Pattern of English*. As Chomsky and Halle searched for underlying forms they were continually discovering various serendipities. They discovered, for example, that many of the underlying forms that they postulated for English actually occurred in the language. For example, in the word "sign" the underlying form they postulated contained a g, an element which occurred in the written form, but did not occur in the spoken form. They furthermore actually found this /g/ in other related word, such as "signature."

Another serendipity is that most of the postulated underlying forms, even the ones which were not attested in Modern English, were attested in earlier forms of the language, or in cognates in other languages. They therefore proposed that synchronic reality is actually much closer to diachronic reality than we are normally aware of.
INSIGHT SEVEN: LANGUAGE PATTERNS AND RULE-GOVERNED BEHAVIOR:
In conclusion, treating English as a fully developed morphophonemic system, rather than as a defective phonemic system, allows us to see patterns in the language we would not otherwise be able to see. By looking at words as they relate to other words, rather than as autonomous and unrelated phenomena, we can see language as rule-governed behavior. In general ways, the rules can be used to explain and sometimes even predict regional differences, chronological differences, and formality differences. And looking at the English spelling system in terms of patterns and rule-governed behavior allows us to see English as the dynamic thing that it is, rather than the static objective thing we would like it to be.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


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Editor's Note: For the last issue of the Journal, Fall, 1990, in trying to handle material late in arriving, I hired two typists who worked on two different computers. Somewhere the system broke down, and as a result only part of Mary Louise Gomez's article was printed in the Journal. Following is the complete article.

WRITING THE FUTURE: ALWAYS BEGIN WHERE YOU ARE
Mary Louise Gomez

Recently, I have been puzzling about how to increase the writing skills and achievement of low-income students of color in U.S. schools. My musings are fueled, in part, by my participation in a joint university-local school district partnership designed to accomplish two goals: to increase the skills and achievement of poor children of color and to develop elementary school teachers with skills and dispositions to successfully teach this population of students. My puzzling is further spurred by memories of my father's humorous, yet bitter stories of his experiences and those of his siblings growing up in a small New England town unprepared, in the 1930's, to welcome immigrant children named Manuel, Carmen, Fernando, Angel and Amelia to their schools. Fifty years have passed since my father's belated graduation from high school (he required an extra year due to the accumulated time he had spent in the within-school detention room). Yet, in those fifty years, we have made little progress in equitably teaching writing to learners who are poor, learners of color, and those of non-English language backgrounds in the United States. For the most part, learners with these characteristics remain consigned to low skills tracks or compensatory education programs few opportunities to engage in the discourse required to develop skills of written expression.

For this discussion, I have chosen the word "puzzle" with deliberate care as there are a number of complex cultural, political, and socioeconomic barriers to
increasing the writing skills and achievement of learners in the United States who are not white, who are not middle class and who do not speak English as a first language. My purpose here is not to supply an analysis of the complex cultural and economic webs which bind so many people, as others have provided cogent such analyses (See, for example, the work of Michael Apple, Jim Cummins, Henry Giroux, and Peter McLaren). Rather, my purpose is to puzzle with the reader about how we might, as teachers of writing, contribute to increasing diverse learners' chances for school success, and in turn, contribute to their ability to fulfill dreams and goals which lie outside of classroom walls.

It seems especially urgent to engage in this sort of puzzling as we close one decade and enter another in which growing numbers of learners who have been poorly served by U.S. schools in the past will populate our classrooms. More learners of color than ever before will be enrolled in U.S. classrooms by the year 2000 (Haberman 1989, 771-773). Within two decades, 30-40% of all students enrolled in public schools are estimated to be persons of color. Numbers of non-English language background learners are also expected to increase; for example, the population of Hispanic Americans is expected to increase from 14.6 million in 1988 to 47 million in the year 2000 (Romero, Mercado and Vazquez-Faria 1987, 349). Yet, numbers of teachers of color are expected to decrease from 11-12% in the 1980's to 5% within twenty years as fewer persons of color enter the profession and higher numbers of teachers of color than White teachers leave the profession (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development Newsletter 1989, 2). Those who teach diverse learners are likely, then, to continue to be White, middle class females with few experiences to prepare them for the learners coming to the classroom door in the next decade (Haberman 1989, 772).

If, as teachers of writing, we are to provide all students, including those whose life experiences and language are unfamiliar to us, with skills of control of English mechanics, spelling and grammar as well as with opportunities to make their voices and experiences heard, we must use the best practices of teaching composition and we must become, as Lisa Delpit suggests, learners about language with our students; we must begin to work and think like ethnographers in our own classrooms. Delpit (1988) argues, . . . we must become vulnerable enough [as teachers] to allow our world to turn side down in order to allow the realities of others to edge themselves in our consciousness. In other words, we must become ethnographers in the true sense (297).

Without such a commitment to learn with and about our students, teachers of writing run the risk of continuing past inequitable teaching practices which pre-judge students' potentials to learn based on their family socio-economic status, skill, color or facility with spoken English. Teachers may also focus their curriculum on their well-intentioned projections of students' future occupational lives. Yet, in doing so we may unintentionally bound students' possibilities to achieve other than that which we predict for them, anchoring students to timeworn roles and expectations. I suggest, however, that there are alternatives to teaching and learning writing in these ways and in the next section, I explore three principles to guide such alternative practice.

THREE PRINCIPLES TO GUIDE OUR FUTURE PRACTICE

Teachers who do not share the cultural, language, and socio-economic background of their students can be effective teachers of writing if we dismiss ideals of transferring our subject matter knowledge of writing to our students and replace those with ideals of transforming ourselves and our students into the inquiry-oriented partners of whom Delpit speaks. The
poet Thomas Hornsby Ferril admonishes his reader to "always begin where you are," assess what needs to be done and move forward, to "work from here" (1970). In the case of teaching, Ferril's words tell us to go forward one step at a time, acknowledging and honoring the experiences, skills, and knowledge which diverse learners bring to the classroom and also those which we as teachers bring to school. As teachers, we should begin "where we are", we should put aside former assumptions and look anew at that which our students bring to school. We can start, then, one step at a time in learning and thinking with and about them.

Three differences stand out in the sort of teaching I describe and advocate and that which low-tracked learners of color have experienced in the past. First, teachers who embrace such a pedagogy teach writing in ways shown by classroom colleagues and by researchers to be effective—purposeful activities of writing linked to opportunities for feedback from genuine audiences of peers, parents and others—as opposed to the decontextualized practice of subskills commonly found in the writing curriculum of low-tracked learners. Effective practices of teaching writing have been labelled by George Hillocks as "environmental" in nature, characterized by:

1. clear and specific objectives, such as to increase the use of specific detail and figurative language; 2. materials and problems selected to engage students with each other in specifiable processes important to some particular aspects of writing; and 3. activities such as small group problem-centered discussions, conducive to high levels of peer interaction concerning specific tasks (1988, 144). Hillocks contrasts this mode of instruction with those he calls "presentational," the traditional school model of lecture followed by practice exercises graded by the teacher, and the "natural process" model, in which writing is student-centered and the teacher offers little structure or direction to students.

Timothy Donovan notes the work of good writing teachers is demonstrated by the opportunities they create for tentative and searching discourse by their students, opportunities to establish perspectives on people, objects and ideas, opportunities to act as writers (1978, 13-16). In a recent paper, Martin Nystrand also focuses on the significance of the activity of learners of writing. He concludes that teachers need to think about writing as a verb rather than as a noun, "that writing best makes sense to students in the context of the activity itself" (17). Susan Florio-Ruane and Saundra Dunn (1987) argue, however, that traditional school practices of teaching writing do not conform to Hillocks' "environmental" model, do not reflect Nystrand's metaphor of teaching writing as a "verb", nor do school practices allow students to generate meaning. Florio-Ruane and Dunn describe current school-based models as encompassing teaching practices which are focused on teachers' responses and evaluation and are not accompanied by technical support (53). These are disappointing findings for all learners as they echo those of researchers Arthur Applebee (1981) nearly a decade ago.

A number of researchers, including Donald Graves (1983) and Martin Nystrand (1990), have noted that the relationships between members of a discourse community are significant ones for novice writers. They comment, for example, that the relationship of the student to the teacher of writing and of the student to her peer writers influences both the student's attributions of the meaningfulness of her work, her motivation to write and the quality of her work. Yet, few student-writers appear to have opportunities to talk seriously about their work with interested others. Further, chances to engage in sustained discourse with teachers or peers appears much reduced for those learners who are placed in low-skills classes (See, for example, Nystrand and Gamoran for a discussion of the correlation of students' ability
grouping with writing instruction focused on "clerical"--
editing and fill-in-the-blank type tasks--rather than on
"compositional" activities of writing).

Opportunities to learn to control mechanics and grammar
must be offered to all students in meaningful contexts.
Yet, this is not enough. Meaningful contexts can be
construed as helping learners who need to apply for jobs
practice writing job application letters, or could mean
that writing teachers should assign low-track learners
the task of practicing five-paragraph themes to ready them
for community college entrance tests. Both assignments
move away from insidious worksheet practice of correcting
spelling and mechanics, yet they remain instrumental and
short-term solutions to complex problems. While neither
assignment can be viewed as particularly harmful to
students, they do not engage writers in becoming what
delpit has called "authentic chroniclers of their own
experience" (1989, 297), nor do they move writers beyond
short-term goals to becoming inquirers about language.

The second way that the pedagogy of which I speak
distinguishes itself from traditional models of teaching
writing is that teachers look to the lives and concerns of
their students for topics and problems which will engage
them in learning more about language as a whole. What
does this mean? Teachers who work in this way listen
first to their students, honor that which they bring to
school and stretch themselves as teachers to find ways to
incorporate their students' worlds into the world of
school. The words of Cynthia Chambers Erasmus (1989),
speaking about teaching native peoples of North America
(whom Chambers Erasmus refers to as aboriginal peoples)
also ring true when we speak of teaching other learners of
color: "If we are truly listening, we can extend, rather
than limit, the possibilities these children bring to
school." (274). As teachers, we need to hear first our
students' voices, then decide on a course of curriculum
and instruction which wed effective practices of teaching
writing to the knowledge, skills and needs of diverse
learners.

The third way in which such a curriculum is recognized
is that teachers focus on the different uses, purposes and
forms of language used in the homes, community and world
of the learners; these become the ties that bind the best
practices of teaching writing to the lives of the
students. Whether the learners be primary school
children, elementary school learners, or secondary and
college-age students, the theme of their work becomes
investigation of the nature and variety of uses of
language which surround them. In every case, students are
taught to honor the speakers and writers of the languages
in their community or culture and to study the intentions
of individuals and those interactions between community
members as they use language. It is difficult to imagine
what such a curriculum might look like without specific
learners to whom we can refer; perhaps the most effective
means of explaining what such a curriculum means in
practice is to share stories of teachers who have
conducted such classrooms.

TEACHING AS CLASSROOM ETHNOGRAPHERS

The first of these stories is a familiar one, that of
Sylvia Ashton-Warner, a New Zealander who taught reading
and writing to Maori youngsters by building a key sight-
word vocabulary based upon concepts which were meaningful
in the children's home lives and community. Sylvia
Ashton-Warner conducted this work over thirty years before
Denny Taylor's and Catherine Dorseys-Gaines' 1988
publication of Growing Up Literate: Learning from Inner-
City Families, at once a celebration of the literacy
activities of poor black families and a damning critique
of American schools' failure to link the children's home
lives with their schoolwork. While Ashton-Warner worked
decades apart in time and continents away in distance from Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines (1988), she would concur with her American colleagues' call to teachers: Children need to be able to create public and private text worlds with continual opportunities to use their expressive abilities to generate new meanings and maintain personal and shared interpretations of the social, technical, and aesthetic types and uses of literacy. It would be hard to dispute that, in most of our schools few such opportunities currently exist (201).

There is no prescribed way that a curriculum such as Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines suggest should be enacted. Rather, the three particular principles mentioned earlier should guide the development of materials and instruction. These include: (1) attention to effective practices of writing instruction for all students, including opportunities to draft, engage in peer response groups and edit while writing for real purposes and genuine audiences; (2) a focus on the lives of the students as sources of topics and materials for instruction and (3) the intention that the investigation of language, its variety of forms and uses, be the theme that ties together the writing curriculum and learners' lives.

In addition to the well-known work of Sylvia Ashton-Warner, three other examples of fine teachers whose work draws on these principles come to mind. First, Shirley Brice Heath's (1983) inquiry into the habits and patterns of language use in the Carolina Piedmont led to her engagement of teachers (enrolled in her graduate classes) in similar activities of language investigation; they, in turn, engaged their students in studying the patterns and purposes of the language of those around them.

Brice Heath's purposes for drawing teachers into studying language as ethnographers was her personal concern for children whose home and community language skills and needs were different than those required for success at school. Consequently, many of the children became discouraged and left school with neither the skills nor the credentials necessary for social and economic mobility. Teachers enrolled in Brice Heath's courses were earnest middle-class teachers who wanted to help children, yet were often frustrated by their students' apparent deficits. Through working with Brice Heath, they learned that, as a teacher, one could "begin where you are" and look closely at the rituals, patterns, and habits of language students brought to school and use these as a basis for teacher and student inquiry.

One especially fine example of such teaching was one teacher's work with a small group of black boys who, for a science project, collaboratively investigated the gardening practices of community members. Following their interviews with good local gardeners, the children analyzed both the different activities of gardening which adults used, and the varied ways in which the gardeners used language to explain their endeavors. The children effectively used writing and speaking in different forms and for different real and useful purposes, described and analyzed the language of community members, shared the work with interested others, as well as scored, for the first time, passing grades on tests regarding knowledge of science concepts.

Terry Dean (1989), a teacher of English as a second Language and Basic Writing courses at the University of California-Davis, provides a second example of teaching that draws on effective practices of teaching writing and honors the knowledge and culture of learners while engaging students in inquiry about language and culture. Dean's classes, often populated by students who must bridge for themselves a home culture and the alien culture of the university, purposefully honor the diverse cultures of the student body and link them with the culture of the university via activities of learning to write--drafting, peer revising, and publishing. Dean structures topics for writing focused on issues of language learning and use, provides opportunities for students to share their work in culturally diverse peer response groups and asks students to write class newsletters focused on generating knowledge about multicultural experiences. Dean explains the importance of
structuring writing courses around topics focused on issues of language and culture as facilitating mediation between home and school cultures and as providing windows for the teacher into the diversity of cultures in her classroom.

While many writing teachers have been challenged like Terry Dean, few have responded to the challenge of teaching and learning about language with greater gusto than poet June Jordan (1988). Like Dean, Jordan taught students who were bridging very different worlds of home and university campus life. In Jordan's case, Black students in her new English literature course, "In Search of the Invisible Black Woman" were embarrassed and disturbed by Alice Walker's use of Black English Vernacular (BEV) in her novel The Color Purple. Rather than choosing to transfer understandings of Walker's purposes to her students, Jordan chose instead to transform herself in a learning partnership with her class. Together, they translated Walker's characters' conversation from BEV to "standard English." This led to inquiry into the rules which govern BEV and requests from the students for Jordan to teach another course with a focus on language. The result was Jordan's commitment to teach "The Art of Black English."

In the weeks following her decision, Jordan joined her students in investigation of how written BEV encodes its spoken form as well as how BEV differs from "standard" English. In so doing, Jordan and the class learned the rules by which BEV is governed and wrote 19 "Guidelines for Black English." The students gained an appreciation for differences between speaking and writing as well as discovered a pride and pleasure in language they had learned as "incorrect." As they worked, they discovered "...three qualities of Black English--the presence of life, voice, and clarity--that intensity to a distinctive Black value system" about which the class "became excited" and "consciously tried to maintain" (367). Further, the class drew on their collectively discovered voice to write newspaper editorials (in BEV) decrying the murder of a Black classmate's brother by White policemen. They coupled their new understandings about language with their rage at the police, writing for real purposes and genuine audiences which lay beyond teachers' gradebooks and classroom walls.

Writing the Future

How might teachers of writing increase their diverse students' skills and achievement of writing? To begin, as teachers of writing, we must in poet Ferril's words, "Always begin right where you are And work out from here," embracing what Henry Giroux has referred to as a "language of opportunity," teaching which does not predetermine or slot learners according to others' expectations, but which taps and builds upon the knowledge they bring to school. Teaching from a "language of opportunity" cannot be accomplished when teachers ignore differences in learners, or when they blame learners or their families for being lazy, uncaring or lacking in mainstream cultural knowledge and experiences. A language of opportunity and possibility cannot exist unless the experiences of diverse learners are examined within programs of teacher education and staff development and in relation to subject matter--in this case writing--which teachers share with their students.

I do not suggest that such dispositions regarding language learning and students are easily acquired. Yet, opportunities for such investigations and experimentation can be made part of teacher education for novices and experienced teachers and be encouraged by school administrators. As writing teachers, we can respond to the challenge of teaching diverse learners by joining our classes in becoming language learners; we can, indeed, help to write the future. Taking the risks of becoming language learners with our students can secure the outcomes which Delph (1988) eloquently argues must occur if diverse learners in U.S. schools are to be well served.

...I suggest that students must be taught the codes needed to participate fully in the mainstream of American life, not by being forced to attend to hollow, inane, decontextualized subskills, but
rather within the context of meaningful communicative endeavors; that they must be allowed the resource of the teacher's expert knowledge, while being helped to acknowledge their own 'expertness' as well; and that even while students are assisted in learning the culture of power they must also be helped to learn about the arbitrariness of those codes and about the power relationships they represent (296).

By linking effective practices of the teaching of writing with the home and school lives of students and binding these together through the study of language, its purposes, rituals, and patterns, we can as writing teachers liberate ourselves as well as learners of all colors, socio-economic classes and language backgrounds to write the future.

NOTES

1 Ann Bastian, Norm Fruchtman, Marilyn Gitten, Colin Greer, and Kenneth Haskins, Choosing Equality: The Case for Democratic Schooling. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1986, offer the following statistics to highlight the crisis of inequality in U.S. Schools:

50-80% of all inner city students drop out of high school, one million teenagers cannot read above third grade level, 13% of all seventeen year olds are functionally illiterate, 28% of all students do not get high school diplomas, 50% of college entrants drop out in their first year, one third of all adults are functionally or marginally illiterate.


3 See Martin Nystrand and Adam Gamoran, "A Study of Instruction As Discourse," Madison, WI: National Center for Effective Secondary Schools for a discussion of the differences in writing activities offered to low-tracked learners and their peers in other tracks.

4 Read Susan Urston Phillips, The Invisible Culture: Communication in the Classroom and Community on Warm Spring Indian Reservation, New York: Longman, 1983, for an analysis of school and community communication patterns for one united States group.

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**ORWELL AWARD TO AUTHOR OF SELLING AMERICA'S KIDS**

Atlanta, November 16--Charlotte Baecher, author of a Consumers Union report, Selling America's Kids: Commercial Pressures on Kids of the 90's, received the 1990 George Orwell Award for Distinguished Contribution to Honesty and Clarity in Public Language. William Lutz, chair of the Committee on Public Doublespeak of the National Council of Teachers of English, made the announcement at a session of NCTE's Annual Convention at the Atlanta Hilton. Lutz commended Baecher for making "an outstanding contribution to the critical analysis of public discourse."

In her report, Lutz said, "Baecher analyzes the ways in which products are marketed directly to young people between the ages of 8 and 14." She looks beyond "the 30,000 television ads" aimed at children aged eight to 14, to probe five types of promotion "heavily used to sell products to children." Her disturbing conclusion, Lutz said, is that "promotional campaigns and commercial messages permeate most waking hours of children's lives. Many of these advertising messages are hidden, appearing to be a school lesson, a kids' club, and entertaining movie, a magazine game or puzzle."

Quoting from the report, Lutz said that "the overwhelming message" of advertisers' increasingly subtle campaigns "is that things make the person; that what's important is what you have, not who you are." Disguised ads encourage 'continuous consumption and acquisition at the expense of reasoned decision making.'

Selling America's Kids, Lutz noted, "calls for making schools ad-free zones, for higher standards for any advertising directed at children, and, most importantly, for schools to educate children about the nature of the commercial messages directed at them so they can build their ability to resist sales pitches."

In her report, Baecher warns that today's advertisers "are attuned to kids' developmental stages--to their need for peer approval, status, independence." Selling America's Kids follows
typical children from the time they wake up in the morning until they go to sleep at night, highlighting five types of indirect advertising appeals designed (in the words of Grey Advertising executive Carol Herman) "to become part of the fabric of their lives."

In the first type, licensing, firms to use popular, commercially created characters such as Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles to decorate T-shirts and other clothing, lunch boxes, and innumerable other products, in "the epitome of 'emotional sell.'" Licensing now pervades children's lives, Baecher writes, "producing movies, toys, . . . TV shows, . . . whatever captures kids' fancy," causing them to extend their attachment to a character to a common product, and outweighting issues of quality, price, and "need for another T-shirt."

In school, Baecher reports, children face a new set of promotional pitches: a 12-minute Channel One news program with two minutes of ads (viewing required); containing product ads, and "health" or "environmental" information promoting such products as NutraSweet and the Styrofoam packaging of McDonald's hamburgers. Baecher quotes a producer of such promotional devices as telling firms that "School is . . . the ideal time to influence attitudes, build long-term loyalties, introduce new products, . . . promote . . . trial usage and--above all--to generate immediate sales." Chronically short of funds, she observes, schools are easy prey to offers of "free" video equipment and teaching materials.

Celebrity endorsements in which products are associated with idolized personalities are big business for firms seeking adolescent buyers, the Consumers Union report points out. Baecher notes their "particular appeal to kids" experiencing conflict "as they separate from their parents and start to forge their own identities." Using status appeals to sell products, she adds, firms push their prices up and up.

Kids' clubs introduced last year by Nickelodeon, Fox, Burger King, Sassy, MTV, and Disney, Baecher's report says, use popular entertainment as a handle enabling firms to sell merchandise and a sense of belonging to kids through "no holds barred" appeals, including discount coupons. Placement of products in movies, a device for which firms pay heavily in order to tie in multimillion dollar promotions, influences teenagers more than the rest of the population, Baecher points out, because they "attend movies twice as often as the over-18 crowd."

Finally, advertorials--product promotions in magazines, disguised as games, puzzles, comics, or advice columns, "make it harder for kids to be skeptical of advertising messages."

Selling America's Kids (23 pages) was prepared for Billions Consumer Reports for Kids, a publication of the Consumers Union, and is available through that organization's Education Division (256 Washington St., Mt. Vernon, NY 10553).

The Orwell Award was established in 1975 to enhance public awareness of the need for critical reading and critical listening and viewing of the messages of public spokespersons. It is named for author George Orwell, who in his writings called attention to what the NCTE committee giving the award has dubbed "public doublespeak." The Committee on Public Doublespeak is made up of NCTE members who teach in schools and universities throughout the United States. It monitors public language as reported through the news media, and also announces the annual Doublespeak Award.
For using public language to waffle and obscure his intentions, President George Bush was named winner of the 1990 Doublespeak Award by William Lutz of Rutgers University, Camden, New Jersey, chair of the Committee on Public Doublespeak of the National Council of Teachers of English.

Second place went to Mobil Corporation for calling one of its trash bags "photodegradable" even when buried in landfills. Third place in the doublespeak derby went to U.S. Representative Newt Gingrich of Georgia for euphemistic statements opposing and supporting tax increases. The annual Doublespeak Award calls attention to language by public spokespersons which, in the view of the committee, is "grossly deceptive, evasive, euphemistic, confusing, or self-contradictory," Lutz said.

The Bush Statements

During his campaign, Lutz said, candidate Bush pledged "no new taxes," then last June, called for "tax revenue increases." During his campaign, Bush said, "We... need to assure that women do not have to worry about getting their jobs back after having a child or caring for a child during a serious illness. This is what I mean when I talk about a gentler nation... It's not right, and we've got to do something about it." But President Bush, Lutz noted, vetoed the Parental and Medical Leave bill "because, according to a statement issued by the White House, he 'has always been opposed to the federal government mandating what every business in this country should do.'"

A campaign pledge of "no net loss of wetlands," Lutz said, was changed by President Bush "to mean no net loss of wetlands except where protection or compensatory action 'may not be practicable,' that is, 'where there is a high proportion of land which is wetlands.'" Such a statement, Lutz said, threatens the Alaskan tundra and the Florida Everglades.

Citing ambiguous messages from the Bush presidency, Lutz quoted a White House statement two weeks after the June 1989 massacre in Tiananmen Square, announcing suspension of U.S.

"participation in all high-level exchanges of Government officials with the People's Republic of China." Lutz noted that President Bush said at the time, "It's very important the Chinese leaders know it's not going to be business as usual." The White House later admitted, Lutz added, that "barely two weeks after his public statement, ... President Bush had secretly sent National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft and Deputy Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger to China to meet with Chinese leaders."

President Bush termed the trip a "contact," not an "exchange," Lutz said, denied he had been misleading, and insisted, "I said no high-level exchanges." Lutz noted that the administration then resumed negotiations for an arms sale to China, authorized licenses for three communications satellites for China, allowed the sale of passenger airliners to that nation, and waived restrictions on the Export-Import Bank's power to grant loans to American companies doing business in China.

Throughout the invasion of Panama, Lutz said, "President Bush used doublespeak to avoid the word invasion." He named the invasion "Operation Just Cause," said he "ordered U.S. military forces to Panama," "directed our armed forces to protect the lives of American citizens in Panama," or "deployed forces" to Panama, "directed United States forces to execute... pre-planned missions in Panama," conducted "efforts to support the democratic processes in Panama" or to restore "the democratic process," assured "the integrity of the Panama Canal," and created "an environment safe for American citizen."

At a December 21 press conferences, Lutz, "President Bush used the word invade," then "quickly corrected himself" in this statement: "You could say, 'how come you didn't tell me that you were going down to invade the--send in those troops down into Panama?'"

"In the doublespeak of President Bush," Lutz concluded, "there was no invasion."
The 1990 Runners-UP

In announcing the language on trash bags which netted Mobil Corporation the second-place award, Lutz said the firm first insisted that competitor Glad's claim of biodegradability for its bag was false because plastic trash bags don't degrade. But as its own Hefty trash bags encountered sales competition, "Mobil brought out its own 'photodegradable' trash bag" and claimed it had an additive that would "break [it] down into harmless particles" if exposed to weather, and even if "buried in a landfill."

"Mobil admitted," Lutz said, "that in its own tests conducted in 1988, it took 30 days in the blazing sun of the Arizona desert for a bag to reach a satisfactory level of decomposition," and that in landfills, the "photodegradables" wouldn't decompose.

Lutz quoted the third-place winner, U.S. Representative Newt Gingrich, as defending President Bush's stand on "tax revenue increases' with this statement: "He very explicitly didn't say, 'Raise taxes.' He said, "Seek new revenues.'" Lutz cited Gingrich's support for a resolution opposing any tax increase, and noted that the next day, Gingrich announced he would "support and sponsor" such increases, with the following words: "I think I've said all along that I think there will be more revenues and that they will only be acceptable if they are pro-growth and include real spending cuts and real budget reform."

A Bumper U.S. Crop of Doublespeak

"The past year has produced a bumper crop of doublespeak," Lutz reported. The text of his roundup, presented at the NCTE Board of Directors Meeting, follows:

We learned this year that in today's schools students don't misbehave, they simply "engage in negative attention-getting." We learned also that nudism is "clothing optional recreation" and sewage sludge is "organic biomass." Bank tellers are "financial services specialists," grocery baggers are "packing agents," and the person who installs wood-burning stoves is a "wood energy technician."

Workers are not laid off, they're offered a "career change opportunity" or "voluntary severance," or the company will make "schedule adjustments." In the world of doublespeak, wood is "three dimensional biopolymer composites" and vinyl is "vegetarian leather." Old people are no longer senior citizens, nor do they live in a retirement community; now they are the "chronologically gifted" and they live in a "senior congregate living community."

In an age of increasing environmental consciousness, disposable products have become "single use" products. We learned also this year that we no longer have taxes, but we do have "user fees" and "receipts proposals." Others may call it a lie, but for some politicians it's just a "terminological inexactitude." People held hostage in a foreign country are "detainees," "restrictees," or "inconvenienced people," while a naval blockade is simply "sanctions" or "sanctions with teeth."
HOW GOOD ARE YOUR SCHOOL’S LANGUAGE ARTS TEXTBOOKS?
NCTE OFFERS GUIDELINES FOR EVALUATIONS

Language arts textbooks for elementary schools are currently the focus of conflict among educators. To help teachers, school boards, and curriculum planners bring more critical attention to bear on textbooks, the National Council of Teachers of English has issued Guidelines for Judging and Selecting Elementary Language Arts Textbooks. It lists eight criteria these language arts materials should meet if they are to serve the language learning needs of children.

Textbooks are widely used to teach grammar, usage, and punctuation skills. But they have also been widely criticized for limiting students' opportunities to learn about language by reading, writing, speaking, and listening, said former NCTE president Sheila Fitzgerald of Michigan State University, who chaired the NCTE committee developing the new guidelines. School districts spend a lot of money on textbooks, so teachers feel an obligation to use them. Yet many authorities in language arts recognize that children develop their language abilities not through drill on skills using isolated sentences, but through reading and listening to stories that interest them, and through talking and writing about subjects connected to their lives. Through these activities, students learn and practice skills in meaningful contexts.

If the textbook consumes the time available for language arts, the teacher has too little time to spend creating real language situations. Some of today's textbooks merely have students read about listening and speaking. They concentrate on getting children ready to write but leave them little chance to use writing to express their thoughts and interests.

"Our purpose is not to attack textbooks," Fitzgerald insisted. "We recognize they are and will be with us, and we want them to be the best they can possibly be. We want teachers and selection committees to bring some hard judgements to the materials they examine."

In pamphlet form, Guidelines for Judging and Selecting Elementary Language Arts Textbooks offers eight criteria, derived from current theory and research on language learning, which such textbooks should meet and explains the basis for each. Guidelines are as follows:

1. Language arts textbooks should center on children's own language.
2. Language arts textbooks should emphasize activities that focus on social uses of language.
3. Language arts textbooks should reflect the integrated nature of listening, speaking, writing, and reading.
4. Language arts textbooks should recognize broad patterns of developmental language growth.
5. Language arts textbooks should help teachers assess students' use of language.
6. Language arts textbooks should stimulate children's and teachers' thinking.
7. Language arts textbooks should be equity balanced.
8. Language arts textbooks should reflect the centrality of listening, speaking, writing, and reading for learning in all subject areas.

Free single copies of Guidelines for Judging and Selecting Elementary Language Arts Textbooks are available from the Membership Service Representative, NCTE, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801. Send a business-sized, stamped, self-addressed envelop with your request.
A new Summer Institute for Teachers of Secondary School English has been added to the 1991 calendar of professional development activities of the National Council of Teachers of English. Sponsored by NCTE's Secondary Section, it is set for Tuesday, July 16, through Sunday, July 21, at San Francisco State University.

"A Changing World: The Changing English Class" will be the theme for the institute. Sessions will focus on changes in content, pedagogy, and expectations for learning required for teaching an increasingly diverse student population in a changing society. The institute begins with an evening reception July 16. Each day opens with a writing session, followed by a general session and team activities.

Teams of participants will design projects defining their concepts of teaching and learning English in the future, describe changes needed in their own classrooms, participate in activities such as cooperative learning that can prove useful for their own teaching, consider alternative forms of student and teachers assessment, exchange ideas, and form links with other participants in similar teaching roles.

Institute enrollment is limited to 200 persons. The fee of $530 for NCTE members, $565 for nonmembers, includes tuition and materials, lodging in residence halls for five nights (shared room), breakfast and lunch each day plus two dinners, a barbecue, and reception refreshments. The San Francisco State University campus is in southwestern San Francisco near Lake Merced and the Pacific Ocean.

For further information and registration materials for the Summer Institute for Teachers of Secondary School English, write to Membership Service Representative, NCTE, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801.

Talk as a necessary but neglected element in the learning process is the focus of the third volume in the Forum Series from the National Council of Teachers of English. The series presents discussions of timely issues in the teaching of English by people well known in the profession.

In Perspectives on Talk and Learning, teacher educators and researchers show how classrooms come alive when talk is used constructively—and how they freeze into artificiality when teachers use sterile tactics for seeking responses from their students. The book is edited by Susan Hynd of Syracuse University and Donald L. Rubin of the University of Georgia.

The writers offer transcriptions of actual classroom exchanges showing how a teacher's questions and responses can either confine students to reciting "information bites" or invite exploratory, interactive discussion of the subject at hand. In his introduction, Rubin points out that taken to extremes, many time-honored teacher behaviors impose what Paulo Freire calls an oppressive "culture of silence," denying students the opportunity to reflect and develop critical consciousness and leaving them with nothing to say.

In the first section, "Learning to Talk and Talking to Learn," Judith Wells Lindfors and Douglas Barnes analyze the factors teachers must work with to create a classroom climate that supports talking to understand. In the second section, "Talk in the Learning Community," teachers from elementary school through college show how when students are treated as interesting individuals who know something about the world, they can be drawn into dialogue about the meanings of a literary work or the problems of a writing task. The writers also demonstrate how teachers may unwittingly terminate discussion or allow their own hidden agendas to preempt it. Among contributors to this section are Hynd, Cynthia Onore, Anne Haas Dyson, Muriel Harris, and Betty Jane Wagner.
When working with speakers of nonstandard dialects, teachers need to employ diplomacy in their classroom talk, say the contributors to a third section, "Talking across Cultural Boundaries." Lisa Delpit points out that even the very young notice differences between the linguistic codes of home and school and sense negative attitudes toward their home cultures. "Forcing speakers to monitor their language for rules while speaking typically produces silence," she warns, and causes students to "choose sides" linguistically, for their homes and against teachers they perceive as oppressors. Success in second-dialect learning, she concludes, comes from exposure and time to practice new speech patterns in an atmosphere of comfort. Other contributors to this section are Sarah Hugelmon and Jerrie Cobb Scott. All of the essayists provide bibliographies related to their topics.

(Perspectives on Talk and Learning, edited by Susan Hynds and Donald L. Rubin. 305 pages, paperbound. Price: $14.95; NCTE members, $10.95. Available from NCTE, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801. Stock No. 35242-0015.)

NCTE MEMBERS PASS RESOLUTIONS ON EDUCATION ISSUES AT 80TH ANNUAL CONVENTION

Members of the National Council of Teachers of English, at their Annual Business meeting November 18 at the Atlanta Hilton, Atlanta, Georgia, passed resolutions recommending the use of alternatives to standardized tests for assessing student learning and calling for new efforts to recruit, guide, and retain teachers from the nation's diverse cultural groups.

The NCTE members also urged that teachers should have the right to decide how--or whether--to use textbooks adopted by their state district. Finally, they called for guidelines to help schools deal with challenges to the content of videotapes and laser disc materials used in classrooms.

Background information and texts of the 1990 NCTE Resolutions follow.

On the Development and Dissemination of Alternative Forms of Assessment

BACKGROUND: NCTE members proposing this resolution stressed the importance of integrating teaching, learning, and evaluation. They cited NCTE's long history of concern about the use of certain forms of testing. They also restated NCTE's commitment to empower teachers to be confident evaluators and constructive critics of assessment strategies, and to work to develop alternative models of testing and assessment. Research, they said, now substantiates the view that some nationally normed standardized tests are a major barrier to student opportunity, to the professional development of school staff, and to sound curriculum.

RESOLVED, that the National Council of Teachers of English affirm that testing assessments should reflect recent advances in the teaching and learning of language arts; that NCTE urge the development of appropriate publications (for example, an update of Common Sense in Testing) that will provide students, parents, classroom teachers, school administrators, government officials, and the general public with test literacy for all school levels,
On Censorship and the Media

BACKGROUND: NCTE members proposing this resolution pointed to the important role that the NCTE statement The Students' Right to Read has played in recent decades, as a resource for educators facing challenges to the use of print materials in English language arts classrooms. They observed that increased use of electronic media, such as videotapes and laser discs, in classrooms is triggering new challenges from groups and individuals objecting to aspects of these materials.

RESOLVED, that the National Council of Teachers of English develop guidelines to assist teachers and school districts involved in censorship disputes concerning use of videotapes, laser discs, and other nonprint media.

On Textbook Adoption Procedures

BACKGROUND: The proposers of this resolution observed that in many American schools, methodology, curriculum, and teaching have been controlled by textbooks, especially in the English language arts. As an example, they cited the dominance of reading instruction by basal readers. But they pointed to a recent movement by school authorities and state agencies to reverse this situation. California officials, they noted, now judge text series by how well they support the state's curriculum frameworks, and are free to make no adoption if no text meets this criterion. This policy, they said, has led to changes in publishers' offerings and text adoption decisions.

The NCTE members observed that in many states, teachers are required to use state-adopted texts. They contended that many valid alternative classroom materials exist today, and that many teachers who use children's and young adult literature and other authentic resources neither need nor want the adopted texts.

RESOLVED, that the National Council of Teachers of English recommend that in all text adoption procedures, whether at state, district, or school levels, teachers as professionals have the right to decide how to use the texts which are adopted or, based on an agreed upon procedure, to choose not to use them at all; that NCTE recommend that in the case of state adoption, local
districts and individual schools within these districts have the 
option of choosing to use none of the adopted texts; that NCTE 
recommend that in state text adoption procedures, trade books, 
classroom library collections, and other authentic language 
resources be included for consideration; and that NCTE recommend 
that in the English language arts, district and school curriculum 
teams have the option of using state and/or district textbook 
funds to buy trade books and other authentic language resources.

SUMMER INSTITUTE 
NATIVE AMERICAN LITERATURE

The National Endowment for the Humanities and the Newberry 
Library announce a summer institute in Native American Literature 
for secondary English teachers from July 1 to August 9, 1991. 
Stipend is $3300.00. Application deadline is March 15, 1991. 
For additional information contact Native American Literature 
Summer Institute, D'Arcy McNickle Center, Newberry Library, 
60 West Walton Street, Chicago, IL 60610.

Native American literature is the oldest oral and written 
language legacy on this continent. Our institute will explore 
this legacy and offer strategies for presenting Native American 
literature to secondary English students. Literary works will be 
studied in their historical and cultural contexts. Participants 
will use the extraordinary Newberry Library collections to design 
lessons and units for their classrooms.

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