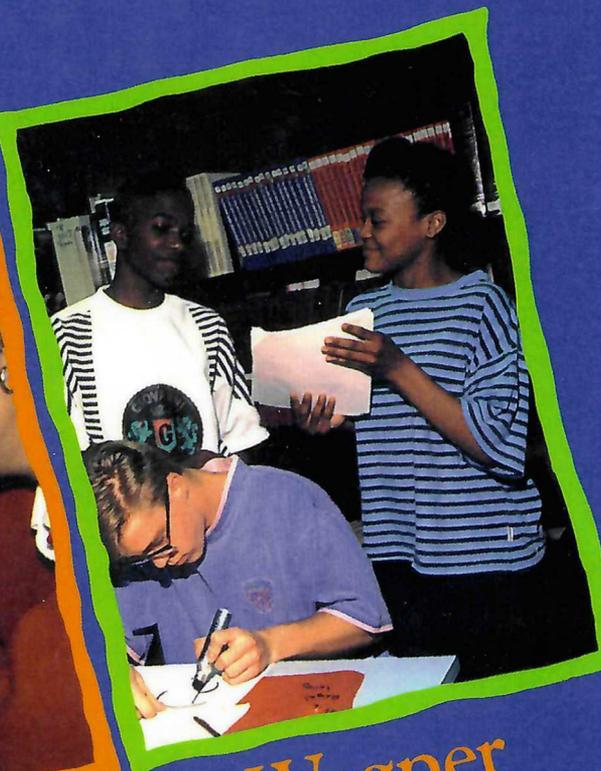
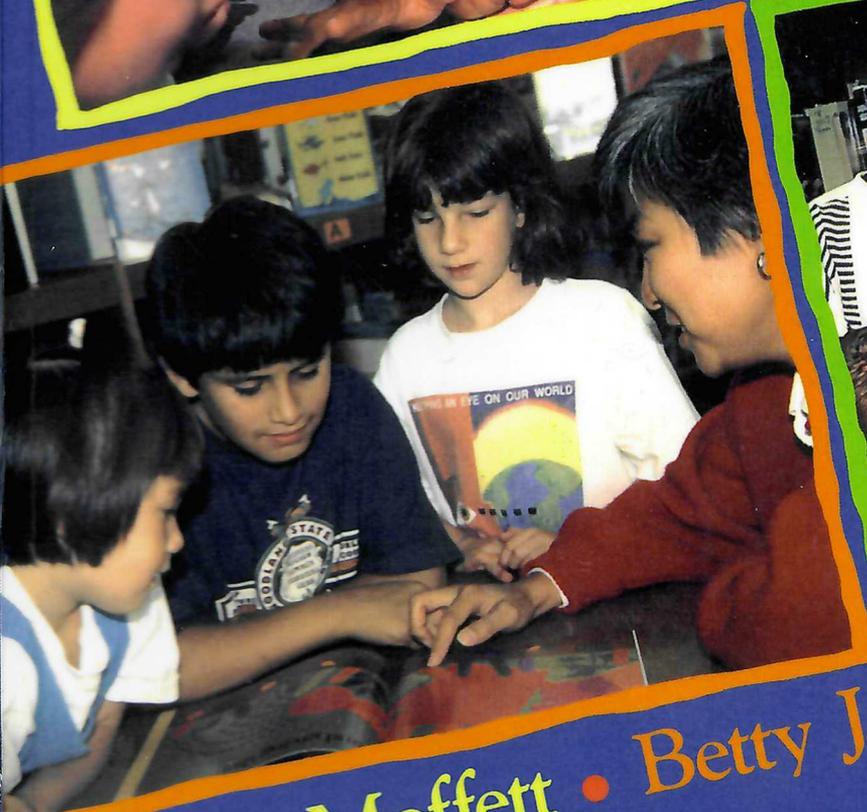
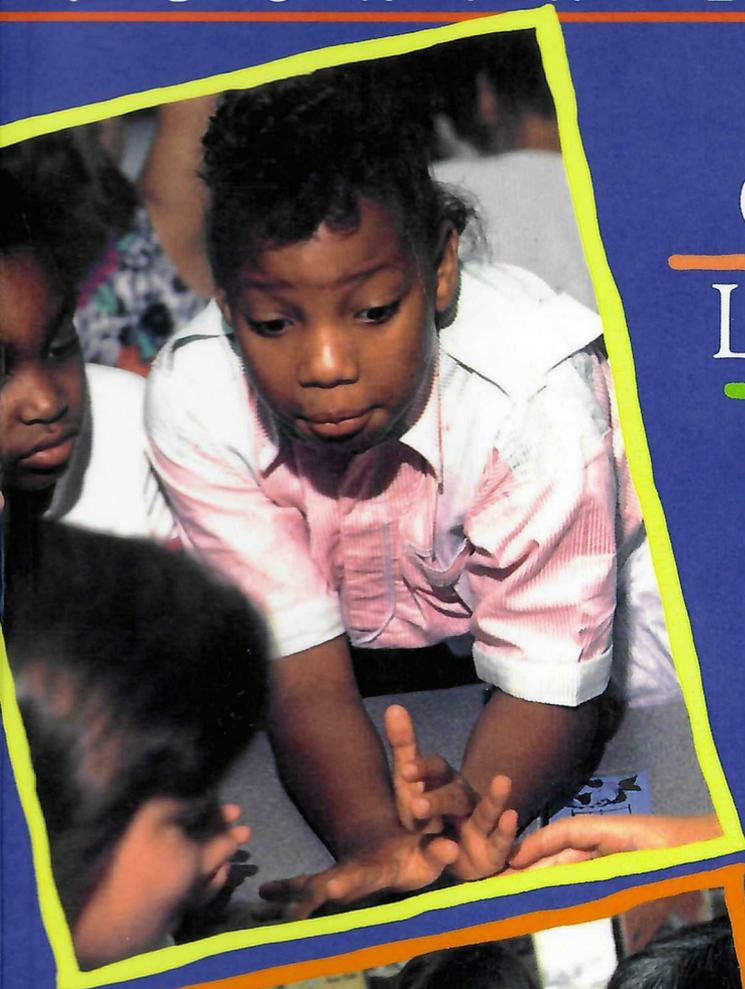


F O U R T H E D I T I O N

STUDENT-
CENTERED
LANGUAGE
ARTS,
K-12



James Moffett • Betty Jane Wagner

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James Moffett
and
Betty Jane Wagner

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One of these coauthors, Betty Jane Wagner, joined me at that point to help with succeeding editions. She brought experience in teacher training at the National–Louis University, and both of us have worked in the National Writing Project.

Acknowledging individual indebtedness becomes arbitrary. It could never cover the myriad of teachers, language arts coordinators, reading specialists, students, education professors, and other school or university people from whom we have learned much of what we feel we know. We gained valuable experience during countless workshops, consultations, professional meetings, teacher-supervision sessions, experiments with students, collaborations on school materials, responses to our work, and so on. To all those who see their ideas in what we say, thank you.

James Moffett

PART

ORIENTATION

I

This is a textbook for teachers in training and a handbook for use on the job. It treats curriculum and methods of language arts and reading for both elementary school and secondary school. We hope it will serve in many ways and at different times in its owner's training and career.

We have described developmental differences by students' capacities, experiences, and interests rather than by age or grade. Given the tremendous range of variation within any single classroom between primary school and senior high school, we judged that breakdowns not only by grades but even by grade blocs would be impractical. Consequently, parts of some chapters in Part Three may not apply directly to the growth stage of your students.

But most of the arrangements and activities recommended in this book apply equally to secondary and to elementary school, though sometimes it may not appear so because one associates things like group work and drama and games and integrated subjects with younger children. If these have characterized elementary more than secondary, that has not been because any of them are inherently childish. It is, rather, that having the same 25 or 30 students all day makes doing these much easier than having 150 students a day in batches for 45 minutes each. In teaching the whole child, the elementary teacher can work with language across all the subjects and in multiple ways, but the secondary teacher is ordinarily supposed to teach a *subject* and to "cover" it in a self-contained way.

For these reasons the approach we recommend proceeds more easily in the lower grades, before specialization of subjects fractionates the day—and the life of the student. If our way of trying to help you sounds at times as if we are talking only about elementary classrooms, please understand how this is not so. It's just that as language arts teachers in junior and senior high do arrange to offset the handicap of shorter, specialized, and depersonalized classes, their classrooms start in some ways to resemble those of elementary school, where the tenderer age *forces* the institution to respect more the individual, interactive, and integrative nature of learning.

RELATION TO CURRENT TRENDS

When the first edition of this book appeared in 1968 with its companion volume of theory, *Teaching the Universe of Discourse*, both were regarded as radical and experimental. Since then the mainstream of language teaching has shifted in their direction so that the recommendations made then and now in this book seem to partake of current trends.

Its integration of the language arts has become commonplace. Its emphasis on small-group process has come into classrooms under such names as “cooperative learning” or “collaborative learning.” Its insistence that learning units be whole, authentic speech acts or texts, not exercises with particles, now goes under the name of “whole language.” Its efforts to array the total repertory of types of reading and writing, even across other subject areas, corresponds to today’s “writing across the curriculum” and “reading in the content areas.” It also urged teachers to drop textbooks, especially basal readers, in favor of real literature, as now frequently proposed in the form of a “literature-centered” curriculum. In recommending that students choose and interpret texts for themselves, discuss them in small groups, and extend them through drama and creative writing, it has fostered “reader response” and “response to literature.”

Its phasing of writing into compositional stages done in workshop fashion has become almost standard practice in the National Writing Project and in many classrooms, where the “process approach” combines with “writing response groups” and “peer editing.” Portfolios and blanket assessment of writing are likewise increasingly accepted and are currently being advocated for assessment of reading and mathematics as well. The “conferencing” now common between young writers and teachers naturally arises when the classroom is decentralized, as we advocated, and the teacher sprung free to work one to one. Nongrading and heterogeneous grouping have made great gains on the basis of practical experience and no longer seem extraordinary, as when this book first recommended them.

Finally, though always practiced by some independent teachers, student-centering itself is now coming into its own. “Student ownership,” “student empowerment,” and “active learning” have become terms to conjure with. What this book has referred to as students building their own knowledge structures is currently referred to by such phrases as “making meaning.” Most of these positive trends in curriculum and methods have evolved in reaction to the failures of canned, teacher-centered activities and from the gradual recognition that building on each learner’s personal bents works best. Nurturing the whole person not only befits the goals of personal and social development, it turns out to be the best way to foster “critical and creative thinking,” which people learn only in the measure that they can make decisions about what they do from day to day. For students, this means learning to choose and sequence for themselves their learning activities and materials.

Precisely because professional thinking more nearly resembles now the views presented in earlier editions of this book, we co-authors are able to forego in this edition some of the explanation and justification previously required. We welcome this opportunity to shorten a work that by its very integrative nature ran to an unusual length. Besides a comprehensive view, moreover, this book has always aimed to provide plenty of practical how-to detail for the teacher on the job. This double role as both a classroom resource book and a methods-course textbook also made for a bulky work.

RELATED RESOURCES

For this fourth edition we have tried to solve the problem of length not only by eliminating some explanation but also by moving some material to other works. Many of the writing samples have been shifted into *Active Voice: A Writing Program Across the Curriculum*, now also revised. The long final chapter is forthcoming from Boynton/Cook as *Detecting Growth in Language*. Whereas previously we described a brief audio-visual presentation of English sound-spellings, which we recommended as a classroom resource for emergent literacy, we're now offering a one-hour videotape of letter animation titled *Sound Out* that fulfills this description and may be obtained for use in both schools and methods courses.

In condensing this book we have left further theory and further exemplification to other books. *Teaching the Universe of Discourse* and *Coming on Center: Essays in English Education* elaborate many of the ideas and activities. Samples of student and professional writing are essential to array the full repertory of writing and reading that students may engage in, but their inclusion in a comprehensive methods text and handbook becomes unwieldy. As explained further on page 263, for this repertory we hope teachers will consult *Active Voices I-IV* a series of anthologies of student writing, and *Points of View: An Anthology of Short Stories* and *Points of Departure: An Anthology of Nonfiction*.

We regard all these works as supplementing each other and forming collectively a pool of resources from which educators may select.¹

¹ All the works cited here are available from Boynton/Cook except for *Points of View* and *Points of Departure* (which are published by Penguin USA/New American Library, Mentor series) and *Sound Out*. For information on *Sound Out* contact James Moffett, 4107 Triangle Road, Mariposa, CA 95338.

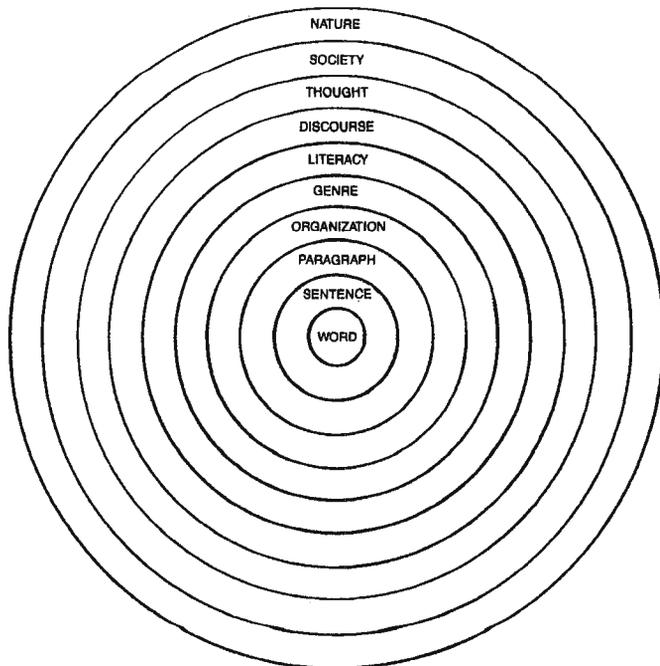
CHAPTER

UNDERSTANDING LANGUAGE ARTS

ONE

The society sponsoring public schools is one of several concentric contexts within which we will situate English education in order to talk most usefully about it in this book. Like nested boxes, every context is surrounded by another, more comprehensive (see Figure 1.1). School itself is a culture within a culture, and a teacher can ask no more pertinent question than what *kind* of a culture schools should generate. Learning never exists in a vacuum but issues from and feeds back into some particular society. And nothing is more integral to culture than

FIGURE 1.1 SUCCESSIVE CONTEXTS



language. American civilization, for example, is multicultural and multilingual and demands a pluralistic school culture.

CURRICULUM REFORM

Originally intended as part of the curriculum reform movement of the 1960s, this book has spanned into a new period of school reform so far focused more on “restructuring” administration than on changing curriculum. This shift of emphasis since the sixties from learning to the learning institution no doubt acknowledges the hard fact that many curricular innovations now being urged were proposed earlier but died out because they entailed more institutional “restructuring” than the public or profession was prepared for. During the twenty or so years between the Anglo-American Seminar on the Teaching and Learning of English, held in Dartmouth in 1966, and its later counterpart, the English Coalition Conference of 1987, national awareness grew considerably about how political and economic forces operating in the societal context of schools determine what can happen in the classroom.

The reforms of both the sixties and the nineties began in alarm about the U.S. losing in international competition—the first to Russia over the space race, the second to Japan over commerce. Since Russia’s launching of Sputnik implied a technological edge in the military confrontation between opposed economic systems, it was nationalistic economic competition that inspired that reform too. This is why both stressed math and science and also why the first effort failed and the second may face a hard struggle. Reforms have to happen for the right reasons.

But citizens and educators are calling for reform for other reasons than economic. To a great extent “restructuring schools” takes the turn of de-politicizing them, which as a crude start means decentralizing them by shifting decision-making from remote authorities down to the learning sites. Overcontrol from the top causes the bottom to drop out, as the communist countries discovered. Besides, our increasingly pluralistic society demands a more various schooling, to resist which the old ethnocentric notion of “cultural literacy” has been resuscitated.

The contradictions between our goals and our methods are borne in on us too forcefully to ignore any longer. You can’t spoonfeed youngsters for twelve years in a cookie-cutter curriculum and then seriously expect them to think for themselves, take responsible initiative, and develop their individual capacities. Government and business want graduates who can solve problems and collaborate well with colleagues, but students who have been plugged into programmed learning systems and not allowed to work together will not answer this need. Nor do you learn to participate in democracy and exercise freedom when you grow up being herded and prodded along a track. Either institutional manipulation or the democratic ideal has to yield.

Reform needed to improve learning coincides with changes needed for humanitarian reasons and social betterment. Most children don’t want to be in school, which seems like a prison. You can seldom do anything you want to do because you can’t choose what you do. Incessant testing and grading and criticism keep you in a chronic probationary state that breeds low self-esteem. Starved for some gratification, you may turn to drugs or to thoughtless sex. The boredom and depersonalization may make you crave the excitement of violence and crime and at the same time blunt you to the effects of it.

Any institution may dispirit the individual if it plans its activities so specifically as to drive out spontaneity and vitality. This can especially devastate children if they have no other resources to fall back on, as increasingly few do today. Schools need to treat children far better, to take seriously their human rights, and even become their advocates. More than any other change, honoring the democratic ideal in deed will help them learn better.

Reorganizing education must take account of *both* curriculum and the institution, both of which are drastically overcontrolled. If too much is laid out and predictable, life looks bleak and makes children, and even their teachers, feel powerless and hopeless. If school district authorities buy packaged curricula that are in reality managerial systems spelling out classroom behavior, students and teachers lose initiative, will, and independent thought.

■ NO TEXTBOOKS, NO LESSON PLANS

School reform will certainly include the insistence that schools, not profit corporations, put together curriculum. Teachers have to prepare themselves for this by breaking their dependence on the ready-made, usually impertinent procedures that these materials install in the classroom and by learning how to conceive and orchestrate learning activities themselves with colleagues. Buying a curriculum in a package conflicts with the goals of the language arts because it falsifies the very nature of verbal learning. It is a common observation that the more experienced, confident, and successful teachers become, the less they rely on commercial programs, if they can avoid them. These textbook series or other programs are produced and purchased by people outside the classroom for economic, bureaucratic, and political purposes that inevitably spoil them for educational purposes. Increasingly, professional organizations like the National Council of Teachers of English are warning teachers about commercial programs. In 1990 its Commission on Language said

Even the newest editions continue to artificially separate the strands of the language arts, disproportionately stressing formal grammatical terminology and prescriptive usage. They misrepresent the true, complex, and fascinating nature of language, and they steal time from valuable class activities such as reading, writing, and talking about language.²

Some state departments of education are refusing to adopt publishers' offerings in certain areas as a kind of consumer revolt and are making their curriculum guidelines more independent of commercial materials. Basal readers, for example, seem definitely on the way out in the movement away from "reading instruction" to children's literature. Likewise, at secondary, grammar-composition textbooks will no doubt phase out also in favor of learning to write by writing via a process approach and writing groups.

The truth is that the conditions and practices that professionals in language education are agreeing on don't lend themselves to incarnation in prepared mate-

² Stephen Piazza and Charles Suhor, comps., "Trends and Issues," in *English Instruction, 1990—Six Summaries* (Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English), ED 315 793, p.10.

rials. *Functionally* learning grammar and vocabulary, word recognition and spelling, through direct practice of the language arts themselves, can no more be programmed in advance than, say, reader response to literature, which is incompatible with the thematic organization and guiding questions of literature series. Textbooks and other commercial packages did not take over classrooms for educational reasons but for institutional, political, and economic reasons that school reform must acknowledge and correct.

For decades schools have tried to teach language by engaging students with materials instead of with other people. Given the social nature of language, this is not rational and has distorted the education of literacy, literature, and composition more than any other factor except oppressive institutionalism itself.

In this book we have striven for a rationale and practices that will enable you to run an effective, humane, and democratic learning environment without materials especially fabricated for schools and without resorting to a single lesson plan per day and a single curriculum per year. Teachers are operating this way and have done so in the past, whether or not they have begun yet in schools you happen to know. As President Albert Shanker of the American Federation of Teachers has been saying about school reform, it will take far more than merely adjusting present circumstances, and if teachers don't help it happen, public schooling may collapse totally.

THE CONTEXTS OF LANGUAGE LEARNING

For convenience we began our discussion of the succession of contexts arrayed in Figure 1-1 at the societal or cultural point, but human life partakes of a broader surrounding existence. The most comprehensive context of all is not culture but nature.

■ NONVERBAL GROUND OF VERBAL LEARNING

Language itself begins and ends in silence, the silence of the unspeaking and unspeakable nonverbal world that language can only symbolize. The interactions between material reality and mental reality should magnetize the field of language education. But schooling has tended to ignore these interactions and swirl students around in verbal circles much as dictionary definitions can sometimes shunt a reader about among synonyms until she³ returns to the original word without ever breaking through to the nonverbal referents of the words. In this case, vocabulary seems to increase, but without the meaning underlying the synonymy, the words create a hollow verbalism, and knowledge itself only appears to increase. Meaning lies *between* mind and matter. If you focus on the symbols to the virtual exclusion of what is symbolized, you can't understand the relationships between the two that constitute knowledge.

Any school reform must make room for these interactions between raw reality and language. No longer engaged with the artificial verbal materials of curricular packages, students can engage more with both other people and physical things.

³The means we have chosen in this book to indicate both genders at once is to alternate gender pronouns from one chapter to another.

Actually, raw reality includes not just nonhuman objects but the nonverbal aspects of human experience, much of which is social and emotional. “Raw,” in other words, means unsymbolized or nonverbal. Many educators complain that the time children spend watching television is time not spent interacting with other people and the rest of the environment—a great experiential loss. Very true and important. But school itself has tied children up in the same way as television inasmuch as it has interposed its own institutionalism between students and the social and material worlds that they have to know before language means much.

The other concentric contexts, going from more to less comprehensive, are discourse, literacy, and the various sub-structures of language such as paragraph, sentence, and word. Each governs those it comprises, as with any set of nested contexts, but all interact with each other. For example, schooling acts backward to influence society even as the society is legislating it, just as writing acts backward on the oral speech from which it derives. We will often refer to this principle of interaction among contexts but for now will just sketch discourse and literacy as other contexts by way of defining language arts as a learning field.

DEFINING LANGUAGE ARTS

“Language Arts” is what the language arts *are*—speaking, listening, reading, and writing. It is a set of two productive and two receptive activities—one pair for oral speech and one pair for literacy. Any verbalizing implies thinking, of course, since it is putting thought into, and taking it out of, language—that is, composing and comprehending. So thinking inevitably grounds all four language activities and hence must be considered part of language arts, which are forms of verbal thinking.

■ DISCOURSE, THE MASTER LANGUAGE CONTEXT

It is handy to have a concept for verbal thinking that comprises at once all four language arts. It is “discourse,” which designates any communication in the medium of language, oral or written. “Discourse” catches the four-way nature of verbal communication: we send and receive, orally and in writing. By embracing at once both orality and literacy, comprehension and composition, the term commits us to integrating the language arts and to considering this totality as the master context of the language domain.

A single instance of discourse is any complete speech act or text, that is, any communication having a sender, receiver, and message bound by intention. A discourse, for example, can be a conversation, a lecture, a letter or journal, poem or short story, ad or label. Because a discourse is the largest language context possible, it is the best learning unit, a central point in a student-centered curriculum. Treating the learner as a whole person means treating language as whole discourse, because only a language act complete for its purpose enables a practitioner to compose or comprehend meaningfully and authentically.

Just as an organic gardener grows different plants mixed together so they feed and protect each other, the language teacher needs to interweave all the language arts so that each will stimulate, follow up, and develop the other. Creative dramatics is one of the best ways to deepen and check reading comprehension.

Creative writing teaches literature. Discussing and improvising teach how to take things and how to put things—the real basics of reading and writing.

■ THE SCHOOL IMBALANCE OF DISCOURSE

Considering listening and speaking, reading and writing, as just different ways of discoursing helps us to realize that schooling has not treated all of the language arts equally. It has heavily favored listening and reading over talking and writing—student reception over student production—despite periodic efforts in the profession during the last century to point out and to right this imbalance. It persists no doubt because student production of discourse cannot be uniformly programmed, processed, and tested the way that material fed into students can be.

Within this bias schools have, for presumably the same reason, preferred reading and writing to listening and speaking although most educators piously agree that literacy builds on oral language development. It is telltale that not only creative writing and journalism tend to be electives but also speech and drama. Aside from being too spontaneous, oral language activities are too hard to test in the customary ways. Since things not tested tend not to be taught, talk has been tremendously slighted even in elementary school, where reading rules the roost at its own expense.

If production is not put on par with reception, and orality with literacy, the present curriculum reform will not have significantly affected the teaching of the language arts. The more reading is singled out, the harder it becomes to learn, because it needs both talking and writing. The same for the other language arts. Growth in discourse moves forward best on all fronts at once.

■ DIFFERENCES IN DISCOURSE

The universe of discourse is broad indeed and ranges from utilitarian and scientific uses of language to the most artful and playful literature. Likewise, it extends from public communication to private self-communication. Students need to learn how to compose and comprehend across the spectrum, as recognized in the concept of “writing and reading across the curriculum.” Issues of composition and comprehension vary with the kind of discourse. You need to know what all the kinds are and how they relate to each other so that you can help students to practice composing and comprehending in a variety of ways and eventually to experience the whole universe of discourse.

Differences in discourse derive essentially from varying relationships among sender, receiver, and subject. This basic triad of first, second, and third persons constitutes the superstructure of discourse, as it does for other media of communication. Distance among them, in one sense or another, often makes the difference.

The basic shift, for example, from speaking to writing occurs when speaker and listener are removed from each other in time and space. A conversation is defined by the fact that communicants occupy the same space-time (are face to face) or at least occupy the same time (are connected electronically) and hence can reverse roles as sender and receiver to exchange unplanned speech. A letter is a letter because the correspondents do not share the same space. Time-space distance forces a shift from oral to written discourse and hence from immediate, spontaneous exchange to more pondered, longer range dialogue-at-a-distance.

Entailed in this shift is the replacement of vocal characteristics by some written equivalents.

Various kinds of discourse differ according to whether the speaker is also the subject (autobiography) or whether a true third person is the subject (biography). Similarly, the distinction between soliloquy and dialogue depends on whether first and second persons are the same person or different people (talking to oneself or to another). Not only may one “person” coincide with another, but each may be singular or plural. When the sender is *we*, the discourse may be some committee report or joint memo. The difference between biography and chronicle or history is the difference between *he/she* and *they*. The difference between the social sciences and the physical sciences, however, is the difference between *he/she/they* and *it*, between humankind verbalizing about fellow human beings, to whom it has access by both empathy and speech itself, and verbalizing about things, to which it does not have the same kind of access.

■ LANGUAGE NOT A “SUBJECT”

A language is a very different subject from others in the curriculum. It is a symbol system, not a body of content, and when someone learns a symbol system, she learns how to operate it. In this respect, English or Spanish is more like math than empirical subjects like history or biology. To learn to operate a language well, over the whole range of its possibilities, takes a long time, because it involves the intricate relations of thought, speech, and print. By not including formal information about language, the English teacher can concentrate on teaching youngsters how to speak, listen, read, write, and think about *any* subject. Languages are to say things with. They have no *particular* content, because *everything* is their content.

The tendency to convert the realistic use of language into information *about* language makes of language arts a history or science course—the chronological development of English language and literature, formal grammatical analysis or modern linguistics, and literary-critical terms and analysis. Teaching the history and science of either language or literature cannot be justified in elementary school and in required secondary courses. It is based on a false analogy with other subjects.

Terms, concepts, and generalities about language and literature should have no priority over terms, concepts, and generalities in other domains of interest. No evidence exists, either practical or scientific, that learning formulations about language such as formal grammar will improve listening, reading, speaking or writing. What students need is not knowledge about how English has been and is used, much of which they observe for themselves if allowed to talk, read, and write enough. What they need is massive practice, which the informational approach displaces.

Ironically, the facts of language are best learned via practice of the language. The only way, for example, that speakers of a minority dialect learn “correct” or standard usage is by hearing and reading it and using it themselves in authentic discourse situations calling for it. Except for trivial slips, so-called grammatical mistakes are communal, not personal. Mistakes that are personal are communicative errors of reason and judgment not treatable by concepts and precepts about language. Versatility with vocabulary and sentence structure comes from speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

Likewise, canned intellectualizations about literature short-circuit the intellectual work that the learner should be doing. Defining myth or satire for students merely closes their minds before they have had a chance to respond. Concepts from literary theory prejudice and preinterpret fiction for young readers not yet used to judging and interpreting for themselves. Far too many youngsters in this country can name the parts of speech but can't put them together to say what they mean, can tell you what onomatopoeia is but hate poetry.

The proper definition of the language arts for school purposes, then, is a set of *activities*, not a set of *contents* like those of subjects like biology or history. Language, literature, and composition have to be construed as what authentic practitioners of these really do, not as bodies of information. This fits the principle of using only whole speech acts or whole texts as learning units. Within these authentic communication situations of listening, speaking, reading, and writing students can most effectively develop their command of compositional organization, paragraph construction, sentence structure, and vocabulary. Super-structure governs sub-structure.

Literature rightfully belongs within this definition. But it must be offered as a live tradition that students can enter into and renew, not as a corpus to be historicized and scientized. On the other hand, students should read and write it in juxtaposition with utilitarian and scientific discourse. Though literature is not exclusively the province of language teachers, they usually know it best. As the most artful and humanistic use of language, literature offers the best models and the best means of personal understanding available in any discourse except sacred scripture itself, from which it derives.

Language arts or English should be a kind of epistemological homeroom, where a student can see the totality of her symbolic life. It is the one place where all forms and contents can be learned in relation to each other—the fictional and the actual side by side, comprehending and composing as knowledge-making, spoken and written speech interplaying, language competing with and complementing other media. If the rest of the curriculum is to be divided up mostly by topics, then language arts must be not only the guardian of literature but the patron of general discourse.

LITERACY

All four of the language arts make up discourse. Only two of the language arts make up literacy—reading and writing. Discourse includes literacy, which it surrounds. Literacy specializes discourse into the creation and interpretation of texts.

What are commonly miscalled the “basic skills” are not writing and reading in their entirety but transcription and word recognition, that is, putting speech into letters and taking speech out of letters. These constitute of course the literal meaning of *literacy*. But educators can't afford to think that literally.

■ THE RELATIONS AMONG THOUGHT, SPEECH, AND PRINT

The real basic skills of language are composing and comprehending, putting thought into language and taking thought out of language. These are done all the time orally and were done very well in preliterate cultures. Putting thought into

language—speech—may occur independently of literacy, as it did in history and as it does in infancy. In fact, composing and comprehending do not even depend on language. *Putting together* and *taking together* are fundamental features of intelligence. Putting experience into thought not only can occur independently of speech but indeed must at times, because limiting thought to language would restrict the full capacity of the mind to make sense of our world and make our way in the world. Just as literacy presupposes speech, speech in turn presupposes thought, the most basic skill of all. Put the other way, thought is the context of speech as speech is the context of print.

It's essential to keep in mind this priority of thought, speech, and print, because context governs text. Schools have usually reversed this priority by paying successively less attention to speaking and thinking in emphasizing the most derivative activity, literal literacy, coding between talk and text. But literacy is grounded in discourse; text in oral speech and silent thought.

As we said above, however, such a succession of embeddings sets up interactions among the various contexts, part of which is that the more derivative may act backward to influence its governing contexts in turn, as the invention of writing and later of the printing press altered consciousness. Both the priority and the circularity profoundly affect the learning of literacy.

■ THE CONFUSION OF CONTEXTS

When successive contexts interact—as thought, speech, and print do in reading and writing—they tend to fuse together. This fusion has caused tremendous confusion in literacy education. Imagine thought, speech, and print as superimposed layers, since each is ground for the next. If you try to trouble-shoot what's happening on the top layer, you will very likely assume that's where the problems lie. Because problems *manifest* themselves at the literacy level that students are most often asked to perform on—that is, in reading and writing—the problems *look* as if they are problems of literacy. Because the comprehension problem becomes evident in reading, or the composition problem in writing, does not make it the exclusive property of reading or writing. Thus we mistake problems of discourse for problems of literacy.

Compare this error with looking down through several overlaid transparencies bearing different graphics, not knowing which transparency contributes which graphic to the composite perception. One might easily attribute the whole picture to the top transparency and perhaps not even be aware that several transparencies were working together to produce the total effect, the equivalent of the text. Problems of conceptualizing and verbalizing merely arise in reading and writing as they do elsewhere. This means they can be dealt with elsewhere as well, in oral or even nonverbal activities. By calling these “reading problems” or “writing problems” we mislead ourselves about the kind of learning involved. Most problems facing language teachers do not concern transcribing and recognizing words nearly so much as they do thinking and speaking.

Whereas thought can be matched with speech in a great and creative variety of verbalization, speech can be matched with print only according to fairly fixed conventions of spelling, punctuation, and other typography. These conventions comprise truly new information; one is not born knowing them. Comprehension and composition, on the other hand, are deep operations of mind and spirit. Peo-

ple are born comprehending and composing, because these are part of our biologically given abstracting apparatus by which we make knowledge.

Peel back one layer at a time of the transparencies and you can reach the problem. Go below the text. When composing and comprehending are done orally, word recognition and transcribing can be ruled out, and the difficulties can be seen to be in the verbalization of thought or in the conceptualization of experience. This happens when someone talks with a writer about her subject until they discover that the text she created was unclear because, say, she couldn't summon exact enough vocabulary, phrasing, and sentence structures to express her ideas (verbalization) or she hadn't thought the whole subject through well enough to organize it understandably (conceptualization). She would have had these problems had she been talking instead of writing on that subject. Likewise, a student might have trouble interpreting a text because the vocabulary and sentence structures employed in it or the concepts involved in the subject are unfamiliar to her. Were the text read to her she would understand it no better.

Inevitably, to consider the *succession* of contexts is to become struck by their *simultaneity*. How thought, speech, and print interact in practice must be the focus of the deepest reflection in a language arts curriculum. Most of the controversy about teaching literacy owes to the fact that in the act of reading or writing several different activities are going on at once that coalesce into the appearance of but one, the textual one. A person reading is translating print to speech at the same time she is translating speech to thought. Once habitual, this double process becomes virtually one, so that it becomes impossible to pull print, speech, and thought apart. Similarly, someone writing is translating her thoughts into language at the same time she is translating this language into letters and punctuation. This ambiguity produces controversy about learning methods and is reflected in the very concept of literacy itself, which sometimes means "emergent literacy" or "beginning reading and writing" and sometimes simply what proficient book lovers and authors do when they read and write.

■ THE UNIQUENESS OF LITERACY

Learning to read and write is not an arcane specialty requiring all sorts of exercises and materials found only in school. So long as literacy is defined so as to make comprehension and composition appear exclusive to it, the confusion runs rife and seems to justify all sorts of special "instruction" in "reading comprehension" and "composition." This in turn rationalizes specialized personnel and material and a whole professional establishment. What is unique to reading and writing is very little—the manifestation *in text* of thought and speech.

If thought and speech, composition and comprehension, make up the deepest part of reading and writing, what is left to learn in order to create and interpret texts? What is unique about reading is not the interpreting of what is being said, the comprehending, which characterizes listening also, but the visual processing of letters that must go on simultaneously with the comprehending. According to a widely held misconception about the nature of the reading process, reading comprehension is somehow distinct from general comprehension and thus can be concentrated on as a set of "reading skills."

But if we raise our gaze beyond language we realize that both visual processing and comprehending play a major role also in interpreting nonverbal experi-

ence, in reading reality. A long list of mental activities that any psychologist would consider general properties of thinking that occur in many different areas of human experience have somehow or other all been tucked under the skirts of reading. Recalling, comprehending, relating facts, making inferences, drawing conclusions, interpreting, and predicting outcomes are all mental operations that go on in the head of a nonliterate aborigine navigating his outrigger according to his visual processing of cues from weather, sea life, currents, and the positions of heavenly bodies. Not only do these kinds of thinking have no necessary connection with reading, but they may have no necessary connection with language.

This basic similarity between reading and other sorts of interpretation is critical for education. It means, first, that learners don't need any new skills or activities concocted especially to teach reading but actually competing with it instead. Second, it means that beginners are already learning to read and write when they are talking and making sense of the environment.

Though people can compose and comprehend meaningfully in independence of literacy, the opposite is not true. "Decoding" text into speech or transcribing speech into text when one is not really trying to comprehend or compose is meaningless. Print can be sounded out and speech spelled out with no reference to meaning at all. Some people can "read" out loud a foreign language from knowledge of its sound-spelling correspondences and still understand nothing of what they are pronouncing. Stenographers can transcribe the dictation of executives and creative writers without comprehending the text they are creating. So recognizing and spelling words *can* be divorced from meaning. The cause of most quarrels about the methodology of literacy learning concerns whether they ever *need* to be so divorced when first learning to read and write. Should phonics, for example, be emphasized or even included at all as a learning method?

■ BEGINNING LITERACY

From the viewpoint of the beginner, oral language is the known, the indispensable bridge *at first* to the unknown of text. Unlike the proficient reader and writer, for whom the task has become second nature, she cannot bypass oral mediation. However much sight and thought—text and meaning—may fuse in the adept, the *novice* must link the new visual medium of text to the old oral-aural medium of speech, to which meaning is already attached. Reading to children and taking down their speech are known to help children become literate, and these activities link speech to print. Failure to make this distinction between adept and novice has increased the initial confusion caused by the melding of sight, speech, and thought. The more recent concept of "emergent literacy" acknowledges the need to distinguish the nature of the early stages from the *second* nature of literacy proficiency.

The practical question for initial literacy is how best to link a new medium (print) to an old one (oral speech) so that meaning may henceforth be conveyed in either medium. For blind learners this means associating oral speech with a tactile medium such as Braille. For deaf learners this means matching hand signs or pictures with written words—that is, one visual medium with another visual medium. A person who did not learn to symbolize thought by any prior sensory symbol system would have to associate meanings directly with graphic symbols, as chimpanzees are now being taught to do in a very limited way. If every person

learned literacy this way, then print could convey meaning independently of speech right from the start. But most people will have to match print with speech until, by association with oral language, print too takes on for people the meanings that speech conveys.

Literacy education has been torn apart long enough by needless polarization into the “meaning” camp and the “decoding” camp. It is most important not to confuse what is unique about literacy with the broader things it partakes of by virtue of being grounded in speech and thought. The chief practical issue of dispute comes down to whether visual processing and transcribing of text make enough of a difference between literacy and other mental activities to warrant some sort of unique learning activity for it that matches off sounds and letters in units smaller than a complete text. This is a question we will pursue in *BECOMING LITERATE*. As final preparation for the deliberations there and elsewhere in this book, let’s finish now the journey proceeding from more to less comprehensive contexts, taking up those smaller than a whole discourse.

SUBSTRUCTURES OF LANGUAGE

The overall organization of a letter, fable, interview, or essay is the most specific unit of discourse that is still a whole speech act or text. A speaker or author may give any number of organizations to a letter, fable, interview, or essay according to numerous compositional options concerning logic and rhetoric. Any particular organization of a whole discourse contains parts or sections that develop the subject in some sort of stages, but by the individual nature of composing, these organizations vary too much across both genre and author to describe generally. Sometimes authors choose to label these sections with subheadings as we have done in this book.

The substructure within such a section or part is the paragraph or stanza.

■ PARAGRAPH

Like all other language structures, a paragraph is nested within the one above it, which governs it. This means that the number, sequence, and makeup of paragraphs depend on the kind of discourse in which they occur and on the particular organization as determined by the author’s intent and content. As regards intent, whether a writer structures a certain paragraph from details to large view or from large view to details depends on which strategy seems best to orient her reader or would best lead in and out of neighboring paragraphs. As regards content, the structure of a narrative paragraph may follow chronology; that of an essay paragraph, some logical relation such as cause and effect or statement plus instance.

■ SENTENCE

The next smallest context or language unit is sentence structure, which is the set of relations among words making a statement, question, or command. Now we’re in the domain of grammar, which consists of word function, word order, and word endings. A sentence governs the choice, form, and position of each word in it. One cannot assign a plural or tense ending to a word without knowing the rest of

the sentence in which it plays its part. Whether *read* is pronounced with a long or short *e* depends on whether the rest of the sentence makes it past or present. A choice among synonyms like *decline*, *refuse*, or *demur* depends on the sense and style of the rest of the sentence. Sentence structure also governs punctuation, which in fact has no meaning without relationships among words. Punctuation groups and relates words as cues to their function in the sentence.

■ WORD

Any single word is itself a structure or context, since it also contains parts related to each other—letters, phonemes, syllables, morphemes, roots, prefixes, and suffixes. Again, the whole word governs choice within it. A spelling may relate two or more letters into a blend of sounds (*che*), but we do not know which sound values until we know what the whole word is (*ache* or *chess*). Phonetic rules operate within the word structure, as for the short-vowel-to-long-vowel transformation of *mad* to *made*.

For curriculum, what's important is the chain of governance reaching all the way down to the lowliest particle of a word from the ultimate language structure that is the final authority—the relations among sender, receiver, and message. Composing and comprehending words, sentences, and paragraphs can be done intelligently only within the framework of a complete discourse. Except in those relatively rare cases, noted in *WORD PLAY*, *LABELS AND CAPTIONS*, and *IDEAS*, where an isolated paragraph, sentence, or word constitutes a complete discourse unto itself, none of these substructures should ordinarily be used as learning units, because as fragments they lack context on which to base judgments about creating and interpreting discourse. So students had best work with word particles, words, sentences, and paragraphs only through reading and writing whole discourses except in some game situations mentioned later.

GOAL STATEMENTS

Another way of defining language arts is to frame statements of goals. The following aims proceed from the more comprehensive goals for all communication and information to more specific ones for discourse and literacy.

■ COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION GOALS

These goals encompass all media, subject areas, language arts, and other arts to create a common ground for an interdisciplinary curriculum.

1. Heed signals from all sources.
2. Gain access to all sources of information, inside and outside oneself.
3. Open all channels to memory, perception, and feeling.
4. Find out what the environment shows, what other people know, what records store, and what media convey.
5. Discriminate different sources and abstraction levels of information and understand what each is worth.

6. Tailor messages for differentiated audiences.
7. Enlarge to its fullest the range of what one can conceive, transmit, and respond to and of how one can conceive, transmit, and respond.
8. Find out what various media can and cannot do—language, body expression, graphic arts, the lively arts, movies, and television, competing with and complementing each other.
9. Become familiar with all roles—sender, receiver, subject—and with the varying distances and relations among them—communicating to oneself, to known individuals, remote audiences, for example, or communicating about oneself, firsthand subjects, abstract subjects, and so on.

■ LANGUAGE ARTS GOALS

These discourse goals further specify, in the medium of language only, what many of the goals above stated more comprehensively. They cover all composition and comprehension, orality and literacy.

1. Make language choices wisely—considering how to put things in the light of purpose, audience, and the resources of language, and considering how to take things in the light of the source, intent, and form of discourse.
2. Expand to the maximum the repertory of language resources one can employ and respond to—from vocabulary and punctuation, phrasing and sentence structure, to style and dialect, points of view and compositional form.
3. Extend to the maximum the fluency, facility, pleasure, and depth with which one can speak, listen, read, and write.
4. Expand to the maximum the range, depth, and refinement of the inborn thinking operations—classifying, generalizing, inferring, problem-solving, and intuiting.

These are very compactly stated and so might be parceled out into a larger number of separate statements. Note that they emphasize the individual nature of learning by taking a learner where she is and moving her as far as she can go. The chapters in Part Two treat the language arts one at a time as basic activities and therefore correspond to these general goals.

■ DISCOURSE OBJECTIVES

We shift down now to a lower level of generality where statements of aims must break down language learning into some categories practical for organizing curriculum. The following objectives differentiate discourse into ten familiar kinds covering the whole range of utilitarian, expository, and literary use of language. Students practice each kind by speaking, listening, reading, and writing it. Each kind is defined and detailed in a chapter of its own in Part Three that proposes specific activities for practicing it. This specializes comprehending and composing in ten different ways. (There are only eight such chapters because we treated three kinds together in *ACTUAL AND INVENTED DIALOGUE*.) This book, in other words, crosses the language arts (Part Two) with the kinds of discourse (Part Three) as a way to set forth the learning field of language.

Students should be able to send and receive effectively in oral and written form:

1. Word Play (riddles, puns, tongue twisters, much poetry)
2. Labels and Captions (language joined with pictures of objects, graphs, maps, and so on)
3. Actual Dialogue (discussion and transcripts)
4. Invented Dialogue (improvisation and scripts)
5. Letters and Memoranda
6. Directions (for how to do and how to make)
7. Invented Stories (fiction, fables, tales, much poetry)
8. True Stories (autobiography, memoir, biography, reportage, journals, and so on)
9. Information (generalized fact)
10. Ideas (generalized thought)

These discourse objectives include and go beyond traditional discourse and literacy objectives. Each kind of discourse has traits of its own that will involve students in different ways of informing, communicating, thinking, and using language. The ten areas are such that while working in them students will also be fulfilling the larger liberal arts and communication goals. The discourse areas are multimedia, for example, which means that True Stories might be told not just with words but with a combination of words and drawings or on film with a cued narration. For another example, the data-gathering required to produce discourse in all of these areas will necessitate students opening all channels of information—observing, interviewing, experimenting, consulting sources—and activating all their inborn logical capacities. They will receive and send language that informs, persuades, shares feelings, imagines, explores, reports, ritualizes, analyzes, generalizes, theorizes, and plays with the medium itself.

These kinds of discourse cover the three grammatical modes—declarative, interrogative, and imperative—and the four traditional types of discourse—description, narration, exposition, and argumentation. True Stories and Invented Stories are narrative. Description distributes itself under several of the objectives—as Captions, stage directions for Invented Dialogue, details for Invented Stories and True Stories, as Information, and as certain kinds of poems. Poetry stretches across many of the goals, being not an area of discourse but a way of discoursing about many things. It may be, for example, a joke in verse (Word Play), a rhyming epitaph (Labels and Captions), an Invented Dialogue, a ballad (Invented Story), or lyric (Ideas). This shows its variety and offers many opportunities to come upon it. The other three genres of literature—drama, fiction, and essay—are directly covered by Invented Dialogue, Invented Stories, and Ideas respectively.

This list of discourse objectives corresponds roughly to a developmental sequence of growth if it is understood that students (1) add but never drop kinds of discourse, (2) spiral endlessly among these kinds, and (3) gradually shift the emphasis of their *capacity* toward the more abstract kinds while valuing all equally. (See *Detecting Growth in Language*.)

■ OBJECTIVES FOR WORD RECOGNITION AND TRANSCRIPTION

In order to read and write at all in any kind of discourse, students need to recognize spoken words when written and be able to spell and punctuate spoken

speech. In contrast to the discourse objectives, these aim at transferring meaning between oral and written language, whatever the type of discourse.

1. The student will be able to sight-read aloud with meaningful intonation any text that she can understand if read to her.
2. The student will be able to transcribe whatever she can say or understand orally so that someone else can sight-read it with meaningful intonation.

Stated relative to a student's general development in thought and speech, the objectives can apply at any age. By not following these up with sub-objectives, we wish to discourage breaking them down into sub-skills.

In fact, we recommend that no objectives for language arts be stated more specifically than those here. In the first place, objectives are inevitably translated into tests of some sort and then in turn into materials and practices for teaching to those tests. So if based on discourse fragments, they will spoil the curriculum. Second, the more concretely objectives are stated, the more they say *how* to teach, not merely *what* to teach. Third, the more specific, the more numerous they must necessarily be. The sheer quantity of them may so bureaucratize a classroom that actual learning is seriously crowded out. Teachers are reduced to testers who administer, then score, record, and report on student "mastery" of a vast quantity of bits and pieces. The net effect of this specificity is to focus on low-level skills, such as the surface features of writing, because they are the easiest to test. Teachers have time for little else, and higher language development suffers.

It is certainly possible and desirable, however, to specify further the details of learning to comprehend and compose, read and write. Indeed, the rest of this book does precisely that.

CHAPTER

INDIVIDUALIZATION, INTERACTION, AND INTEGRATION

TWO

From the experience of many teachers in many places, we've concluded that learners must have three things for learning to use language well—individualization, interaction, and integration. Together these three I's constitute an effective school language program. They also define *student-centered* in a triple way. A student-centered curriculum

1. teaches each learner to select and sequence his own activities and materials (individualization);
2. arranges for students to center on and teach each other (interaction);
3. interweaves all symbolized and symbolizing subjects so that the student can effectively synthesize knowledge structures in his own mind (integration).

Discussion of the three I's will outline the main methods of this curriculum, and much of this book will elaborate details of the methods.

INDIVIDUALIZATION

Learning language is *personal*. We start learning it in the first year of life within the family circle, and for the rest of our lives it permeates everything we feel, think, and do. It is intimately connected to our individuality. Because individuals vary a great deal, we must expect them to go about learning the specifics of language in very different ways.

■ VARIATION

Individual variation is no doubt the toughest fact of life in the classroom. If students were all ready to learn to read and write the same things at the same time in the same way, some major problems would dissolve overnight. But individuals vary enormously across many different dimensions, even in so-called homogeneous groups. In actual fact, every class is heterogeneous.

People vary because of two main human givens—group background and individual makeup. They come from different racial and ethnic communities, where they may have learned first a different language than English or may have grown up speaking a nonstandard dialect. In any case, they will have inherited the language habits of a particular social and economic class. Groups vary in how much they use language for social communion, for sport, for problem-solving, and for intellectual analysis. Group attitudes toward language vary from contempt to worship.

Each person has learned the same words in different connections and has private as well as public meanings for them. Each has a different notion about what language, especially written language, is worth and what it can do for him. Youngsters the same age want to read very different things, and any one class may have a spread of reading maturity ranging over six to ten years.

Personal learning styles have dominances toward the physical, the emotional, the intellectual, or the intuitive. Some individuals gravitate toward visual media, some toward auditory, some toward manipulatory, and some toward the kinesthetic (the body itself as medium). Some learn better from peers, some from elders, some from the same sex, some from the other sex, some from certain personality types, and so on.

Another critical variation in individuals is *timing*. People not only differ in *how* they learn the same things but in *when* they can or want to learn them. Something that may seem uninteresting or impossible to a child at one time suddenly seizes him and is easily learned when it comes up in another connection. Such right connections are the triggers of learning and often have nothing to do with child development, the predictable growth from one level of difficulty into the next. These connections are simply personal, which makes them unpredictable.

The longer youngsters have been in school, the more they vary. They know different facts, have read different books, misspell different words, have mastered different vocabulary and sentence structures, and have had different writing experiences. Families move a lot in the United States, so a locally standardized curriculum can't control this. We can try to standardize more on a national scale, but eradicating differences not only goes obviously in the wrong direction for learning but also violates the basis of a free society.

■ THE POWER TO CHOOSE

Accommodating individual variation is only part of true individualization. The other part concerns *will*. Will is the energy that drives learning. It is personal force taking the direction of some intent. If it is lined up behind an activity, it will sooner or later realize itself even if handicapped by bad circumstances. If it is missing, no approach seems to work, and teachers are forever shopping among methods and materials and asking, "How can I motivate so-and-so to do such-and-such?" Asking the question at all shows that the learner has not been allowed to exercise his will. (Motivate should not be a transitive verb, for it makes no sense to speak of someone motivating somebody else.)

So individualization means not only accommodating differences in learners but allowing the individual to make decisions about how he is to spend his time. In other words, if other people or programmed materials habitually make the deci-

sions for him, he doesn't take on the responsibility for his own education and put his will behind his efforts. Results then are poor, and educators may decide to program his schedule even more rigorously. The problem is that he feels he doesn't belong to himself and takes the attitude that since "they" want me to read, let them worry about it. As soon as others want the results of learning more than the learner, the game is over. Even if a youngster means to comply with the arbitrary tasks others assign him, he may sabotage his own efforts unconsciously. Personal integrity must be preserved by whatever means.

The argument against student choice is usually that youngsters don't know what there is to choose from or how to make wise decisions. This is truer than it should be because schools seldom teach students to choose. The longer a student has been in school the harder it often is to help him make decisions. He may be conditioned to obey, not to exercise his will and make decisions. He may even resist doing what he wants to do, because it is so painful to decide. But to use crippling conditioning as an argument for further infantilizing of students compounds the problem and fulfills its own prophecy. The point is that decision-making is the very heart of education. It can occur only from practice in making daily decisions about how to spend one's time. This is what exercises the will so that motivation ceases to be a problem and activities succeed.

It is the essence of the school's job to show learners what there is to choose from and to give them every opportunity to understand how wise decisions are in fact made. Personal choice is at the center, not only so that the learner cares about what he is doing, but so that good judgment will develop—whether the option is which book to turn to next, which activity to select, which medium to say something in, whom to ask for help, which phrasing to express an idea in, or which way to interpret a line of poetry.

But personal choice does not operate in a vacuum; in school or outside, it's influenced by peers, elders, the environmental array, and intrinsic connections among things and actions. Thus, the student-centered curriculum is never "permissive" or "unstructured." It is not based on some empty and faddish notion of "doing your own thing." Any individual anywhere is always a force in a field of other forces and very hard put indeed to separate his actions from those of others.

Learning to operate a language simply demands constant choosing, and if students can't make decisions, they will fail. From the lowest to the highest levels of language, ability depends on selection of some sort or another. Recognizing oral words in print and transcribing speech to print are choosing, that is, choosing which sounds or spellings or punctuation marks are correct for a given situation. Comprehending and composing are choosing—how to take this, how to put that. The mind must be active and questioning. It must be aware of alternatives and of what difference it will make to select this rather than that. There is more than one spelling of the long *a* sound, more than one meaning of many words, and more than one way to cast an idea.

Furthermore, the options go even deeper. People have choices about what to perceive and what to value. These choices underlie their language choices. Knowledge-making takes place throughout the whole of human experience. Our behavior is very dependent on our information, on what we think is so, and on what we think the meaning of something is. The job of schools is to open for the young the array of options among what can be seen, what can be made of what can be seen, and what, consequently, can be done. Subtract choice from behavior

and you subtract it from perception, thought, and speech as well, because these all operate in circular continuity. Don't expect youngsters to learn to think critically and creatively if you're not willing to grant decision-making in daily activity. Exercise of the will and an active intelligence strengthen with habit and go together.

■ NOT ONE BUT MANY STRUCTURES

One may fear that when the teacher steps out of the "nervous host or hostess" role, the classroom becomes unstructured. Nothing can be "unstructured." When we use that word, we mean that we don't see in what we are observing a structure that we recognize or expect or want. Disorder is a structure we don't like. Preschool prattle, for example, does not lack structure; we just don't know what it is, not at least until we have lived with the prattle a while (like a psychoanalyst listening daily to his patient's free associations and gradually picking up patterns). A bystander observing a truly individualized classroom in action may not at first know what each student is doing, what he has been doing, and what structuring and restructuring is going on within him, but a teacher coaching and counseling daily in small groups can see the individual patterns of those students as they select and sequence different activities accomplishing the same general goals.

A classroom where all students are doing the same thing typically doesn't have *enough* structure, in the sense of enough structures. One lesson plan for all each day, one sequence for all each year—that is not to structure *more*; that is simply to let a single structure monopolize the learning field. This monopoly prevents individualization and makes it difficult for learners to develop judgment, which requires that they be *structuring* in school, not *structured* by school. Structuring is choosing. Judgment is choosing. Comprehending, composing, making sense of the world—these are structuring. For one thing, we can't *stop* a child from structuring. The wisest choice for educators to make is to place student structuring at the center of school life. School should be harder and more fun.

Take, for example, the child who wants to find out how baby turtles are born. He's not likely to cast his objective in the learning terms that schools need to monitor their operation, but he does have an objective. To reach it, he structures his next activities: he may consult an encyclopedia, look in the library, observe nature, or interview someone who knows. If we define our goals broadly enough, as number 2 on page 16, "to gain access to all sources of information," then we can recognize the student's structuring as valid for his own learning without imposing the same structure on all students. The others will be able to progress toward the same goal through different structuring. If we help each student structure learning according to his needs as influenced by a yeasty classroom environment, then individualization can take place naturally, and we can translate his activities into our learning goals for the purposes of counseling and evaluating.

It should be clear that truly individualizing means helping each student build his own curriculum day by day. Most uses of the term *individualization* are trivial and duck the issue. Individualizing is much talked about and seldom done. Most teachers know it is necessary and want to feel they are doing it, but very few know how, in conventional circumstances at least. It's not hard to understand the difficulty: it's just hard to face it. Honest individualizing requires nothing less than abandoning one lesson plan for all each day and one sequence for all each year. It means planning for the unpredictable, because individuals will not only be

going different ways, they will do so in patterns of decision you may influence but may not predetermine. Different structuring by individual students does not lead to undisciplined classes. Students who are making choices are *less* likely to cause disruption, not more.

■ SEQUENCING

Curriculum planning has assumed that specific sequences can apply to all students. What is the sense of trying to predict the right sequence of reading matter and the right sequence of writing for some mythical third-grade or tenth-grade class when you're certain to be wrong for the majority of its members? The kinds of talking, reading, and writing that twenty to forty youngsters of the same age are capable of and ready for range over six to ten years of any regular school sequence. This is a tough truth, because it frustrates any efforts to write a single sequence for all students so specific as to span a period as lengthy as even a year. The concept of "grade" levels thus remains a severe obstacle to curriculum development because it implies a similar learning advance for all students for each year. One sequence for all is possible but only over a much longer span of time and only in a general way.

It is stages, not ages, that are important for sequence. Trying to anchor stages to grades or ages only creates illusion. Different students pass through stages at different chronological times. Even the body, mind, and emotions of a single person do not always grow in step with each other. What may hold for different people is the *order*, regardless of the timing. So growth descriptions can only say when some learning will occur in relation to when other learning occurs for the same individual. Even graded classrooms necessarily throw together people undergoing different stages of physical, social, or mental development. This mixture is actually good for learning, because people mature faster when in contact with others more advanced. They also grow in language as they attempt to teach what they know to those less advanced. So efforts to segregate students by maturity level are not only futile but ill-advised.

Virtually all commercial learning materials pay only lip service at most to individualization though they may bandy the term about a great deal. A packaged curriculum can hardly exist as such and still allow for personal differences, because its lessons or activities have to be conceived and sequenced on assumptions about some generic student they are aimed at. Textbooks and workbooks constitute the most rigid format. Computer programs can allow for individual differences when menus are set up like a set of unsequenced activity cards that students can route themselves among at will. But schools will have to push for self-sequencing software or create it themselves.

When school people talk about sequence, it is almost always *group* sequence that is understood. What chain of activities will be right for students of such-and-such age or scoring ability or maturity level to go through together? But to improve language education we have to start thinking of sequence as an individual matter. What sort of activities would this learner most benefit from next? That key question cannot be answered before the year starts or before the child walks into the room. Or even the week before. It is a day-to-day question for each learner. That may sound difficult, but nothing is more difficult than trying to fit a roomful of youngsters to the Procrustean bed of a single prepackaged sequence. Besides, school should be harder and more fun for teachers as well as for students.

■ MAJOR MEANS OF INDIVIDUALIZING

In addition to the other two I's themselves, individualization requires (1) the widest possible array of options to choose from, (2) some way to learn how to make good choices, and (3) some way of getting personal tutoring and counseling.

MAXIMUM ACCESSIBILITY

In order for students to put together unpredictable language courses while interacting with others doing the same, it is essential to allow each student to gain access at any time to any activity, book, person, medium, material, and method. Let's call this the principle of maximum accessibility. Different schools and teachers will approximate the ideal more or less, depending on many local circumstances. Accessibility may be gained by various kinds of pooling—pooling students, teachers, materials, time, and space. Certain kinds of team teaching and some building arrangements such as “pods” of rooms can help. Scheduling language in the same time block with other subjects permits pooling. So does allowing students to pass from one room to another to get to certain material or human resources.

But learners need far more mixing across a broad range of ages. In segregating students by grades, schools have unwittingly broken up what is perhaps the most powerful kind of learning—rippling. Rippling is the informal passing down of knowledge and skills from the more experienced to the less experienced in an unceasing wave so that people of all ages are at once teacher and taught. This can be effected for language learning by multi-age partnering and grouping within a school or across schools but also by bringing into schools various aides or visitors. For *maximum* accessibility, however, learners need to go out of school as well—to visit and interview, research and apprentice. This permits full participation in the ripple effect. Public education is moving more and more toward using the whole community for a classroom.

A CHARTING AND COUNSELING SYSTEM

A student who has access to many possible activities and resources must have some way to learn to make good choices among them. He needs to keep track of what he's doing and of what he still needs so that the teacher can help him and he can learn more about helping himself. The idea is for teacher and student to chart the past together so that they can plan the future. The student keeps some kind of record of which activities, materials, and people he has worked with. Periodically, the teacher looks at this and talks it over with the student, translating his record into the objectives for discourse and literacy and making suggestions for coverage. Thus a teacher might say, “Most of your work so far has been in reading. I think you should try more writing now.” Or, “You've been reading for a long time in adventure and mystery stories. I think you would enjoy some science fiction and some sports stories.” Or the counsel might be to do certain activities to improve spelling or punctuation. See page 248 for details about charting and counseling.

A one-to-one relationship with individual students seems an unheard-of luxury in a conventional classroom. To believe it, you have to realize that what usually prevents this is the traditional emcee or host role of the teacher, which ties you down to presenting lessons to the whole class or to one subgroup at a time. When students are all doing the same activity at the same time under your direction, you

are never free to work one-to-one, whereas real individualization frees you to give attention to small working parties and individuals. Important changes in management must free teacher as well as student, for students learning how to take over their own learning will need more personal help than those just slogging their way through a cut-and-dried sequence. When free to circulate, you can closely observe individuals daily and feel confident of being able to offer good counsel when it's needed.

COACHING

The other major part of the one-to-one relating now opened up is coaching. You can listen to a student read aloud to you and point out things to work on. Or you can read with him something he has written and offer your responses. You can show individuals how to diagnose and correct their own spelling and punctuation errors. As students become truly involved in activities they have chosen, they invite advice because they care about results and come to trust you as a real coach who helps them achieve their aims instead of merely judging final products. During rehearsal of a reading or preparation of some media presentation you can coach them on technique. You can sit in on their discussions and improvisations and writing workshops and feed back to them what you think they are doing and what you think alternatives might be.

The beauty of all this is that the more self-directing you help them become, the freer you are to counsel and coach them to higher realms of language learning. A common misunderstanding about self-directed individualization and peer interaction is that the teacher becomes suddenly bereft of function. Letting students choose and letting them interact requires a great deal of skill and work from the teacher. The difference is that you commonly work with small groups and individuals rather than with a whole class at once. Coaching, counseling, consulting are really what make education work. They're precisely the roles that teachers have always wanted but have seldom found a way to arrange for.

Individual variation is not just something to put up with. It is something to value. The fact is that people learn from their differences, whereas their similarity merely sets up the possibility of their learning from each other. Having to communicate across differences in style, attitude, knowledge, point of view, dialect, and so on develops all aspects of thought and language, from vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation to clarity, comprehension, and intellectual sophistication. The exploitation of differences, then, is the bridge between individualization and the second concept, interaction.

INTERACTION

Learning language is *social*, because language is social in origin and in purpose. It is learned through people in order to communicate with people. Like the personal nature of language, this is an inescapable fact that often becomes invisible for the very reason that it's so obvious. It is all well and good to look at mature reading and writing and say that those are solo activities. But reading and writing entirely on one's own represent ends, not means. Soling rises out of collective effort. Monologue, the basic act of writing, is born of dialogue. Comprehending

what someone wrote hundreds of years ago in Greece comes about from understanding first what some contemporary is telling you face to face.

■ THE ORAL BASE

Social interaction is necessary in the classroom to develop vocal speech into an instrument of communication both for its own sake and for the sake of reading and writing. Practice in vocalizing will develop pronunciation, enunciation, fluency, confidence, and expression—all those skills usually called “speech” in school. And reading and writing can progress little further than the limits of their oral base. If a learner cannot understand something said to him, he will probably not comprehend it in a book. If he cannot say something to himself at least, he will not be able to write it. Hard pressed to teach apparently reluctant students to write, some teachers question an oral emphasis, saying, “Oh, they’ll talk all right—that’s not the problem.” But most speech remains very undeveloped, however talkative a person may be, and until it becomes a more mature instrument of communication, many students will have difficulty reading and writing.

Like dramatic play, conversing is something the child does before he comes to school, a fact that implies two things. First, it’s something that the school can build on from the outset, a familiar medium to extend and use as a substratum for reading, writing, and thinking. Second, since children learn to talk out of school, their talk within school should provide additional learning not easily acquired anywhere else.

School should be a place where children talk at least as much as outside, for fostering speech is the business of the language classroom. Too often there is the hidden inscription above the door that says, “Abandon all speech ye who enter here.” The kids get the message: “Here you sit quietly and don’t socialize; paper-work is what they care about except when they want you to read aloud or answer a question. Talking to other children is bad behavior.” So long as talking is excluded from the curriculum and not utilized within, peer conversation can only appear as a disciplinary problem, whereas actually it can become one of the mainstays of the curriculum through processes described in *TALKING AND LISTENING* and *INFORMAL CLASSROOM DRAMA*.

Fortunately, work with one or several partners is now being recommended in all subjects, even in math and science, but unfortunately this “collaborative learning” is often set up in such a formulaic fashion that much of the value is lost. Too much teacher control cancels the main value of it, which is the unplanned interplay of minds.

■ POOLING KNOWLEDGE

It may not be obvious how peer youngsters can learn from each other when none of them seems to know any more than his fellow students. First, as we said before, peers don’t share the same knowledge and ignorance. Interaction is necessary in order to pool what kids do know, to exchange spellings, factual information, views and insights, or know-how in various skills. The value of letting kids pool what they know is obvious. What’s harder to see is how unskilled readers or writers can otherwise help each other improve. They can do so in several different ways.

■ STIMULATING AND SUPPORTING EACH OTHER

Many youngsters who would never crack a book or write something alone will do so with pleasure if they have partners. Collaborators give language tasks a social incentive until the individuals get involved enough to find their own reasons for wanting to do them later alone. This gets some learners over a hump posed by fear, timidity, dependence, lack of confidence, bad previous experience, etc. Problems that would overwhelm any one student alone can be solved with partners. If not, no one of them feels like a failure, and they can more easily seek outside help together. Colleagues stimulate, complement, and sustain one's own ideas. Part of what makes this work is the sheer pleasure of socializing, but part of the trick is the reciprocal emotional support peers can give each other.

■ PLAYING GAMES OF LANGUAGE AND LOGIC

One of the best ways to sharpen logical powers and decision-making is through games, as we know from chess or even checkers. Game theory is a whole area of modern mathematics, because the strategies of games depend on combining logical steps or "moves." Card games can embody splendidly the logic of classes and hierarchies. And a game context can permit focusing on substructures of the language such as sound-spellings, vocabulary, and grammar without violating communication integrity, because games frankly substitute their own rules for the sender-receiver-message relations as a basis for making decisions.

Most games are social, of course, and require students to interact. The interaction entailed in playing learning games with cards or boards accustoms players to participate in other sorts of groups that also have no adult leader, that are structured by a reading or writing task rather than by game rules and materials. It also generates a lot of very good discussion along the way as students follow directions, interpret rules, and bring out the game's possibilities.

■ SERVING AS AUDIENCE FOR EACH OTHER

In order to put their will behind what they're doing, speakers and writers must have authentic audiences, and listeners and readers must become authentic audiences. The more often outsiders such as adults or younger children can serve as audiences the better, but practicing discourse constantly requires more audiences and feedback than can be arranged with outsiders. Classmates must serve for each other. This fits an individualized classroom because if different parties are doing different things at the same time, they have reason to be interested in receiving each other's offerings. Performers can do a rehearsed reading of a text for the rest of the class. Members of a group writing together serve as audience when they exchange and read each other's papers or take turns reading them aloud. Without handy audiences for one's language productions, little reason can be found to do them, and language practice lacks the force that should drive it.

If students produce language only for the teacher, they may lack motivation or they may substitute grades and pleasing the teacher for authentic reasons to talk and write. Lack of authentic audience is in fact a major cause of school language difficulty. An authoritative adult, parental substitute, and dispenser of grades simply cannot alone suffice for audience, because he's a loaded figure

about whom youngsters have too many attitudes irrelevant to composition. Other human resources have to be called on as well, inside and outside the classroom. Interaction may be with other classes, community people, teacher aides, and so on, but must rely as a staple on classmates. This allows all students constantly to reverse roles of sender and receiver and to learn from both sides.

■ COOPERATION TO OPERATION

The *cooperation* of groups becomes internalized as the mental *operation* of individuals. Talking provides far more exercise in trying to formulate thought than actual writing does and permits speaker and listener to identify and work out communication problems together. Eventually individuals internalize the reader's needs and amend thought and speech without external aid. Similarly, performing becomes the chief means of deepening and checking reading comprehension: enacting, reading aloud, and translating reading matter into another medium become internalized so that individuals "play out" and visualize any text in their heads to actively "grasp" it when they are reading solo and silently.

Internalization works in many ways that will be detailed in later chapters. As a general process it works by imitating physical or social behavior on an inner, mental level. The developmental psychologist Jean Piaget has described how children gradually internalize concrete operations into logical operations. In this way, manipulating weights on a balancing scale prepares for "manipulating" algebraic equations. Internalizing group exchanges into individual habits of thought and speech also illustrates Piaget's concept, which was shared by Lev Vygotsky.

Members of a group begin to think and discourse separately in the same way they have done collectively. This internalization is in fact the main way everybody becomes socialized and acculturated. It may work for good or ill. If a group spends its time heaping scorn on outsiders, its members will tend to think in simple additive accumulation and to shift negative feeling onto absent scapegoats. If a group splits constantly into win-lose conflicts of teams, the thinking of its individuals will tend to dichotomize issues into simplistic either/or polarities. The first group is stuck with "and ... and," the second with "but ... but." Another group may pick up each other's ideas, images, and wit and build on them—pursuing, testing, elaborating, amending. Their process of expatiating is obviously very desirable for helping the individual to become thoughtful in both the intellectual and social senses and to think alone with more logic, imagination, and wit.

Expatiation encourages the qualifying use of "although," "if," "unless," "whenever." It alone would justify small group process, but consider too that when members of a group challenge and qualify within a sustained spirit of collaboration, this teaches the individual to entertain differing ideas and viewpoints within himself alone, without resorting to simplemindedness to keep peace of mind.

■ FEEDBACK

If we think of the main way human beings master any skill, we realize it is by practice, coaching, and trial-and-error. Think of learning to ride a bike, play a guitar, throw a ball. We practice through trials and get coached on the errors. If language arts are actions that we *learn to do* and not information that we merely *learn*, then

they aren't basically different from musical and sports skills. But how does practice cause improvement? Practice provides *feedback*.

Feedback is any information a learner receives as a result of his trial. This information usually comes from his own perception of what he has done: the bicycle falls over, the ball goes over the head of the receiver, or the guitar notes sound untrue. The learner heeds this information and adjusts his next trial accordingly, and often unconsciously. But suppose the learner can't perceive what he's doing—doesn't, for example, hear that the notes are wrong—or perceives that he has fallen short of his goal but doesn't know what adjustments to make in his action. This is where the coach comes in. He is someone who observes the learner's actions and the results and points out what the learner cannot see or figure out how to correct for himself. He is a human source of feedback who supplements the feedback from inanimate things.

But, you may say, learning to write is different from learning a physical skill. Writers manipulate symbols, not objects, and they act on the minds of other people, not on matter. Yes, indeed. But these differences do not make learning to write an exception to the general process of learning through feedback. Rather, they indicate that in learning to use language, the only kind of feedback available to us is human response.

Let's take first the case of learning to talk, which is a social activity and the base for writing. The effects of what we do cannot be known to us unless our listener responds. He may do so in a number of ways—by carrying out our directions, answering our questions, laughing, looking bored or horrified, asking for more details, arguing, and so on. Every listener becomes a kind of coach. But of course a conversation, once launched, becomes a two-way interaction in which each party is both learner and source of feedback.

Learning by heeding feedback depends on plentiful trials and accurate, timely feedback. Paramount, of course, are the quantity and quality of response a student receives to his speaking and writing and to his expression of what he understands others to mean. The teacher's job is to arrange for both trials and feedback—to *teach the students to teach each other*. This is where teacher expertise comes into play.

■ TRIAL-AND-ERROR

Trial-and-error may seem haphazard and time-consuming, but it does have an aim, and it does work. Without help, however, the individual alone may not think of all the kinds of trials that are possible, or may not always see how to learn the most from his errors. (Of course, by "errors" we mean failures of vision, judgment, and technique, not mere mechanics.) And if it's a social activity he is learning, like writing, then human interaction is in any case indispensable. So we have teachers to propose meaningful trials (assignments) and to arrange for a feedback that insures the maximum exploitation of error.

The teacher doesn't try to prevent the learner from making errors. He doesn't preteach the problems and solutions. The learner simply plunges into the activity, uses all his resources, makes errors where he must, and heeds the feedback. In this action-response learning, errors are valuable; they are the essential learning instrument. They are not despised or penalized. Inevitably, the person who is afraid to make mistakes is a retarded learner, no matter what the activity in question.

In contrast to the exploitation of error is the avoidance of error. The latter works like this: the good and bad ways of carrying out the assignment are arrayed in advance, are pretaught. Then the learner does the assignment, attempting to keep the good and bad ways in mind as he works. Next, the teacher evaluates the work according to the criteria that were laid out before the assignment was done. Even if a system of rewards and punishments is not invoked, the learner feels that errors are enemies, not friends. As a learning strategy, avoiding error is inferior to capitalizing on error. It's like the difference between looking over your shoulder and looking where you are going.

Nobody who intends to learn to do something wants to make mistakes. In that sense, avoidance of error is assumed in the motivation itself, and this is why exercise of will is critical. But if the learner is allowed to make mistakes with no other penalty than the failure to achieve his goal, then he knows why they are to be avoided and wants to find out how to correct them. Errors take on a different meaning. They do not demonstrate failure but, rather, define what is good.

■ UNDOING EGOCENTRICITY BY COMPARING

What students need is not information but awareness. A major movement of growth is toward decreasing egocentricity, which we define as assuming that others see, feel, and think the same way we do when this is not so. For examples and further discussion see *Detecting Growth in Language*. Years of analyzing language learning have convinced us that egocentricity is the biggest single cause of problems in comprehension and composition. For speaking, reading, and writing, egocentricity manifests itself in very practical ways that conventional teaching has noted in its own way but has not done much about because it has not afforded the student enough means of *comparing* his understanding of a text, or his way of saying something, or his way of seeing something, with that of another.

Believing that lack of information or advice is the cause of comprehending and composing problems may be the greatest mistake of all language teaching. A reader failing to put together all the meaning cues of a text cannot merely be *told* to do that, because he already *thinks* he is doing so. He's unaware of what he is omitting or how he is distorting or tuning out. You can score him wrong as often as you like on comprehension tests, but he will continue to misread, despite good word recognition and vocabulary, if he's unwittingly adding to and subtracting from the text. A writer failing to lead his reader, to give information in the needed order, to elaborate detail, to tie things together, to emphasize and subordinate, to put punctuation where he would if he were vocalizing, and otherwise neglecting to guide the reader with cues will never improve merely from being told to avoid these failures or from studying rules and models for good sentences. Like the egocentric reader, he *thinks* he is doing these common-sense things.

The reason conventional reading and writing programs are usually so ineffectual is that students don't learn from the dos and don'ts of prescribing and proscribing. The problem is somewhere else utterly. What they need is insight about their own outlook.

How do they get this? By constant comparison. Because the problems of composing and comprehending are problems of matching minds, the main solution to egocentricity is to do something together and compare results. A light goes

on in the head of a youngster who discovers that his peers understood a story differently from the way he did or that they don't connect two ideas that he believed everyone naturally associates. *The youngster doesn't realize that what he said or read could be taken another way.* He is unconscious of alternatives. How do we know what to assume people share and what to assume they don't?

We know people are alike to a point, but where is the cutoff? That is the information the learner needs to know. And the only way he can find it out is to try to understand or express something and heed others' reactions—to compare. Even if he decides that a whole group is wrong except himself, at least he now knows he can't assume they share his mind set. And that breaks his egocentricity. The basic *I* is not reduced, of course. Rather, to broaden understanding is to enlarge the *I* from a point to an area. The learner can stay centered, as he should, but centered in a larger field than the isolated ego.

Undoing egocentricity occurs best with peers. If students match understanding and expression with more advanced people, as happens when comprehension is tested or compositions marked, too often they just feel wrong and attribute the discrepancy to the maturity gap. This is a common way of dismissing adult responses or standards and defending against loss of self-esteem. It follows that to correct the problems they should try to figure out what the adults have in mind. But the main issue is not matching their minds to those more advanced but to those of their own maturity.

Anything a student misunderstands or expresses badly should be perceivable as such to peers. If peer consensus sides with the student—if the student and his peers misunderstand a text together or don't have trouble following what one of them has said—then you have to question whether the text is inappropriate for the group or whether the composition can, in fact, be fairly called unclear. So interaction with peers will provide the most useful comparison for breaking egocentricity. Where you as teacher help is to get them comparing and to open up alternative solutions when peers establish the mismatching. This takes you out of the negative role of judge, where you can be discounted, and puts you in the positive role of expert consultant, where you will be sought out. Make *them* judge. Constant comparison ties in with good judgment about language, because knowing one's own mind in relation to others' will guide decisions about how to put and take things.

Yet, interaction is not limited to peers. Although comparison within the peer groups proves to be of great practical importance, youngsters need to compare across age differences as well. Younger children should know what older students think and how they react. This is one good argument for arranging buddy partnering between students several years apart or for multi-age project groups. Comparison should extend to adults also in situations where older people's views are not forced on youngsters or used to judge them but are simply asserted. Youngsters really do want to know what their elders think because they want to exploit their knowledge for growing up.

Teachers, teacher aides, parents, visitors, and other community people should have occasions to influence young people who are not their own children. Non-parental adult opinion is very valuable. It helps bring to youngsters the viewpoints of the world beyond the home and the immediate peer group. Many activities suggested in later chapters, such as polling and interviewing, direct students to seek out the views of adults. Anyone can help deliver people from egocentricity, and

everybody should be used. So the wise teacher doesn't jealously guard the teaching role for himself. This merely shows insecurity. A real teacher is someone who can show people how to learn from everything and everybody.

■ SMALL-GROUP PROCESS

The best facilitator of interaction is small-group process. Most group work in conventional schooling fails to foster exchanges between peers because the group is too large or the teacher dominates. A tradition in elementary school, for example, is for the teacher to take one group aside at a time and to direct it so that all interaction occurs between the teacher and one student at a time. Meanwhile, the rest of the class is doing "seat work" or "busy work." In secondary school, teachers often lead discussion by an entire class at once, a practice that fails to allow enough participation for each student. Both procedures tie up the teacher and put off the day of self-direction.

For most effective classroom management you should shift more direction to groups and make students address their words and deeds to each other. Then when you want to coach or counsel individuals, do so one-to-one, and when you want to consult with a group, just move in and out of it. In this way all students get maximum benefit of both you and each other.

Sheer quantity of participation is a critical feature of small-group process that may be overlooked in emphasizing how peers can learn from each other's differences and from collaboration. The inborn human faculties for abstracting raw experience into orderly symbols must have huge quantities of data, as the infant has when he infers basic grammar from hearing thousands and thousands of other people's utterances and their emendations of his own utterances. School has to offer equivalent quantities of grist for a child's intellectual mill. Whether the youngster is still working on auditory and visual discrimination, spelling and punctuation, or ideas and forms, he needs numerous instances. He must have both variety and volume of intellectual and language experience. Individualizing provides much of the variety. What provides most of the volume is the high participation that small groups afford.

If learners don't process each other's work in groups, they can't gain enough experience with the language arts to become good at them. When a teacher has to process everything that's written, students can't possibly write enough. And when the teacher has to monitor and read everything the students read, they don't read nearly as much as they might. This problem of control and management of numbers keeps students from practicing sending and receiving language enough. Since large quantities of reading are the main means of acquiring correct spellings and larger vocabulary, both suffer along with the more difficult matter of learning to interpret text. With the amount of writing held down, students have little chance to practice composition, spelling, and punctuation, and consequently all those skills loom as gigantic problems for which teachers may feel they must have special methods and materials.

The only limit to how much kids can talk, read, and write in small groups is the amount of time in a day, because a teacher who only oversees the processing of talk, reading, and writing facilitates it instead of becoming a bottleneck! A high volume of practice is simply more effective in the long run than controlling the flow of language to a rate you can handle alone. Besides, your other role of

coaching and counseling counters very well any likelihood of students not getting the benefit of your expertise.

In a small group, an individual can talk more and can get more response to what he says or writes, because the group can take plenty of time for each member. He can read more because the small group he's reading with doesn't have to pace itself by the lowest common denominator of a whole class and doesn't have to hold back to accommodate the administration of a large group. The individual can also play more learning games, improvise more, and perform texts more in small groups. The give-and-take of small groups goes further faster, handles tasks more efficiently, and gets more work done. Each member is motivated to be more active because he is more involved and has more control over the direction the group takes. Eventually, each student can take advantage of the total membership of his class, for he will belong to many different groups in one year, and groups can exchange ideas and feed back to each other. And a whole class can always meet as such when it makes sense. The strategy is to take advantage of both large numbers and small focus by constant flexible groupings.

In sum, interaction furthers the main language arts goals because it exploits individual variation and employs social resources to solve what are social problems when correctly understood. Pooling knowledge, playing learning games together, stimulating and supporting each other, using each other as audience—these are all practical ways to give individuals the advantage of numbers. Internalizing, feeding back, and comparing mental sets go deeper. They are three major learning methods. By means of them we all learned to speak and to master other skills as well.

INTEGRATION

Language learning is integrative. We build interior knowledge structures as we grow, drawing on all sources and kinds of knowing. Since integrity of the organism is a biological necessity, we must always remain whole no matter how much we may change as we grow and no matter how incoherent the environment may be. A human being is made to synthesize all forms of experience into one harmoniously functioning whole. If experience is too incoherent to integrate, we may mentally or physically negate what we can't assimilate, as when some students tune out or drop out of school because they can't fit it into the rest of their life. An individual is meant to be indivisible.

Language learning is different from other school subjects. It is not a *new* subject, and it is not even a *subject*. It permeates every part of people's lives and itself constitutes a major way of making meaning. So learning language raises more clearly than other school courses the issue of integration.

■ INTEGRATING SCHOOL WITH HOME

Since people learn language outside of school and before they enter school, you should think of it as a continuity that you will try to help youngsters develop while they're passing through your hands. The best teaching strategy is to extend language learning as much as possible from what youngsters already know and can do. This is why goals should be stated as expansions of and elaborations of

language facility, and this is why the oral base is all-important.

More specifically, school must accept widely varying dialects, lifestyles, values, and cultural heritages. A student takes both home and school seriously. If they are made to conflict, he is caught in the middle and has to reject one or disguise the conflict from himself. Either choice makes for terrible education. America is and has always been a pluralistic nation made up of mixed cultures. Appreciating and accommodating differences has been a necessity from exploration and colonial times to the present assertion of minority identities. School should foster the interplay of differences so that youngsters will come to know, among other things, what other lifestyles, values, languages, and cultures there are.

Even if the school doesn't try to force a student to abandon his heritage and way of life, a student of a minority culture may find little to identify with if the books and other materials are drawn excessively from the majority culture. Or if the methods and media available to learn through don't accommodate the learning modes of his ethnic group, then the student still feels when he comes to class that he is entering a foreign land.

Much of the reading material, for example, that youngsters like to read depends for interest on the reader identifying with the figures and settings in stories. The less a youngster has been around, the harder it is for him to identify across differences of culture and life-style and language style. If someone comes from a heritage that sings and dances its poetry, he may find it very hard to get involved in silent reading of poetry followed by analysis of imagery. A classic cause of neurosis in Native Americans is said to be the conflict between their cultural tendency to collaborate and the white schools' emphasis on competition. Certainly every minority member finds himself living in two cultures at once, one at home and one at school. This is unavoidable by the very definition of being in a minority, but whether this double life enriches the student or splits him down the middle depends on whether the classroom contains enough breadth to include methods and materials he can build a bridge with.

For the dramatically increasing number of students who first learn a language other than English but are embedded in an English-language culture, the problem is naturally more acute. So in addition to suitable content and approaches they may need to use or at least sometimes hear their first language in an English context while they're becoming bilingual.

■ INTEGRATING CLASSROOMS

It should be very clear from the needs of individualization and interaction that different students must be mixed, not separated. The main way to do this is to avoid so-called tracking and ability grouping in favor of heterogeneous classes. When segregated, slower students tend to get a negative image of themselves that makes them actually perform worse than they might and advanced students get an elitist, inflated feeling. But more serious, each suffers from lack of variety and gets a limited curriculum. The fact is that few youngsters are uniformly good or bad at all the many possible language activities involved in speaking, reading, writing, and performing the whole variety of possible discourse.

Homogeneous grouping is usually based on test scores in reading comprehension and grammar or on facility with limited kinds of expository writing. But

when taught and evaluated over a broader range of language activities that include oral comprehension and oral composition, performing and improvising, and the full gamut of types of reading and writing, different students prove to be good at different things. Based on bias, homogeneity is more apparent than real. There's no evidence that ability grouping enhances long-range learning.¹

Segregating by "ability levels" is actually designed to make feasible one lesson plan for all each day and one sequence for all each year. Crudely, it allows for variations among students only by recognizing, say, two or three levels of test achievement in a couple of high-priority areas. This actually thwarts individualization, since segregation drowns differences in a limited similarity and fails to utilize even the acknowledged differences in ability. Homogeneity, then, maintains the inefficiency of the conventional approach to classroom management and limits severely the options of teachers and students.

Grouping by test scores in a couple of kinds of language learning undoes most of the benefits that might come about from racial integration. Aside from elemental moral issues, racial integration serves the best interests of language learning for all. The youth of today's world will surely have to "speak each other's language" in more ways than one. Not only must they understand each other's life-styles and viewpoints, but they should annex each other's dialects and language styles and literature.

Many adults worry that mixing their pupils or offspring with children who speak little English or nonstandard English will "corrupt" their language. This is a needless fear, for neither party loses the language learned in the family. Youngsters exposed to peers of other cultures and languages simply know more than youngsters restricted to their own kind. Again, it is difference that teaches, not similarity. Having to talk across language differences, to accommodate differences in thought and speech, is excellent education. And growing together will certainly ensure domestic tranquillity better than growing apart.

Children of minority groups usually do not score as high on standardized achievement tests as middle-class white children for a number of reasons. English may be their second language, whereas the exams test English. They may speak a nonstandard dialect, whereas most reading matter is written in standard dialect, and the grammar tested for is that of standard dialect. In fact, "errors" in grammar are almost by definition deviations from standard or majority usage. Fewer minority families have enough money to belong to the middle class and consequently benefit less from the "hidden curriculum" of the middle class—the at-home language experiences such as being read to and talked with a lot by parents who are well educated. Middle-class children often learn to read at home, not at school, and they usually acquire from home many of the words, concepts, and sentence structures they might encounter on reading comprehension tests.

Poor or minority families often provide a very rich language environment at home too, but its assets are not the sort schools usually test for. Their language is mostly oral, but ability grouping usually depends on paper and pencil tests of literacy. Furthermore, their language may be directed more toward verbal games

¹ See Jeannie Oakes, "Keeping Track: The Policy and Practice of Curriculum Inequality," *Phi Delta Kappan*, 68 (September 1986): 12-17.

than analyzing, more toward poetic figures of speech than toward higher abstractions. Again, school tests do not attempt to measure what poor or minority children may do best. Considering all these factors, we can't avoid concluding that so-called ability grouping works specifically against racial integration as well as against more general integration of language resources.

It's unfair to say that "ability" grouping was designed to sabotage racial integration. Clearly, it has been a mainstay of conventional teaching even in all-white schools for decades. In fact, we think most teachers really believe in racial integration but believe also in tracking. One reason they don't see the contradiction in their beliefs is that racial integration creates problems of pluralism for them that conventional classroom organization and methods are impotent to solve. To say that ability grouping is a cop-out on racial integration is merely to say it is a cop-out on all handling of differences.

Students of like interest or ability should sometimes group together. This is allowed for in the freedom to form any kind of subgroups—homogeneous or otherwise—within the total heterogeneous group. If you envision small working parties forming, breaking up when finished with a book or other activity, and reforming on some other basis for some other activity, then you can see how it's possible to have the best of both worlds—to enjoy at once the advantages of both similarity and difference. There's no reason to settle for less.

■ INTEGRATING SUBJECTS

Language is not a subject like history, science, geography, or social studies, because it comprises all these. It is a symbol system. It is the medium into which these other subjects are cast. So we must distinguish between languages and contents, symbolizer and symbolized.

The real kinship is between English and math, because both are languages by means of which we symbolize experience, math being a special notation that purifies and extends ordinary language. This kinship is rightly expressed in the three R's. The native language casts experience qualitatively, in words, whereas mathematical symbols encode it quantitatively, in numbers. As with other languages, we can translate between math and English. We can read equations out loud in English, for example, even though none of the symbols are written in English, and sometimes when no equivalent symbol exists for a concept in math we have to talk around it until we explain it, just as we have to do for some Russian or Chinese expressions. And math, like English, can be applied to any subject matter. So a language is not just one more garment hanging among others on a rack. It's the weaving principle by which garments come into existence. This makes it the warp and woof of the whole discursive curriculum.

CONTENT

But what does integrating all "subjects" through language amount to practically? First, it means including as part of language arts materials many reading selections, periodicals, games, and visuals that draw subject matter from history and the behavioral and physical sciences. This does not have to be "presented" but merely made available within an individualization system. Without such content all goal areas of discourse cannot be covered and all students cannot find what

they need to read, write, and talk about. The movements called “writing across the curriculum,” “language across the curriculum,” or “reading in the content areas” are welcome acknowledgment of this truth. But as all of the academic disciplines undertake to reform how they are taught, they find themselves reaching out to each other to an extent that will go well beyond this movement “across the curriculum,” which was initiated by language arts teachers as they came to realize that teaching the universe of discourse has no content limits.

One thing all the academic subjects share is discourse: they are all conceptualized and verbalized into language. Math extends ordinary language into higher abstraction. The other subjects are not languages but content areas of empirical knowledge. Actually they differ not only in what they are about but in the level of abstraction to which their matter is symbolized. Thus history tells *what happened*, past fact. It is less abstract than science, which says *what happens*, general fact. Abstracting further from either of these produces higher-level generalizations and theories about people and things that carry history and science into philosophy.

As different topics, these different abstractive levels of discourse can be subdivided, but these topics just specialize *what happened* and *what happens* into more local focuses such as the history of democratic government or forms of life versus forms of inanimate matter. Because social studies and science grow as children grow, biology, physics, chemistry, astronomy, archaeology, government, geography, economics, psychology, sociology, anthropology must be open to learners every year of school.

Any subject is a good one if youngsters want to talk or read or write about it. English is about all these subjects as well as literature. Truly individualized learning cannot, in fact, take place without the choice that access to the whole universe of discourse provides. The language teacher can best help students become familiar with and distinguish among various sorts of discourse but need not be expert in the content of other subjects. Students learning to operate their language must learn to send and receive any sort of message, regardless of abstraction level or mode of discourse (such as fictional or factual). Furthermore, comparing one level or mode with another brings out the uniqueness of each. It is with subjects as with students: differences teach.

PROCESS

The social studies and science are not just inherited information. They are also processes or “disciplines” by means of which people today continue to create information and ideas in those fields. These data-gathering and knowledge-making processes are similar across different subject areas. Both behavioral and physical scientists, for example, have to observe a great deal and take field or lab notes. They may have to set up special situations to observe, which we call experiments. They may have to collate others’ observations with their own and hence have to poll, interview, and research previous literature on the subject. Then by reasoning, which may include mathematical thinking, they will have to pull all this together into some form of exposition or argumentation. Charting, graphing, labeling, and captioning may figure into any of these.

There isn’t one of these processes that should not be part and parcel of the language arts curriculum. In fact, if youngsters don’t do these same activities themselves, they will have no opportunity to produce or even understand much discourse in the range of True Stories, Information, and Ideas. (Plagiarizing

doesn't count!) In short, practicing the roles of sender and receiver means, among other things, role-playing the professionals—historian, scientist, and philosopher, as well as literary artist.

Certain realistic projects naturally integrate both the contents of different subjects and the common processes of making knowledges. Let's take the example of a consumer study of audiotapes. It can entail reading and shopping, computing price comparisons by some measures of dollar efficiency, analyzing the tapes physically, polling people for audiotape-buying habits, making charts and diagrams, taking photos, reading relevant information, discussing findings, writing up the data and conclusions, and presenting results as an illustrated book or a slide show with narration or a labeled and captioned exhibit. Such interweaving of processes and subject areas allows each subactivity to act as lead-in or outcome of another and hence to bring each to bear on all. Effects are far more powerful than when these activities are singled out and separately scheduled. Organizing around projects will do it, but we must change our notions of where boundaries are.

■ INTEGRATING LANGUAGE ARTS WITH OTHER ARTS AND MEDIA

A sad result of riding herd on "basics skills" has been to devalue the arts and even eliminate them from schools. How this strategy defeated itself has become apparent, and the arts are recovering. We cannot pluck language out and place it under glass. It is integrally related not only to the discursive subjects but also to a host of *nonverbal* activities that set it up, accompany it, or follow it up. Think of some sports, lively arts, and graphic media. Dance or pantomime may only parallel language by literally *embodying* experience, but even when totally disjoined from language, such alternative forms teach about language precisely by doing what it does but differently. From song lyrics to film narrations, most arts and media connect rather directly with language either by complementing or competing with it. Many students need these multisensory ties in order to find forms of language to practice that fit their individual learning modalities, in keeping with the now well accepted notion of multiple intelligences.

COMPOSITION

Besides being expressive and communicative, the arts share a common process—composition. Creating a poem or story, a dance, a piece of music, a film, a painting, or a sculpture always consists of putting together some elements of the medium into original relationships. Selecting and patterning material are similar processes whether one is working with words, bodies, images, tones, or masses.

The classic elements of verbal composition—selection, organization, emphasis, unity—that figure so much in problems of writing and reading are not peculiar to the language arts. By practicing the lively arts and graphic arts students can work with the same issues of composing and comprehending, and they can perceive language as sharing issues of patterning with other media (or other "semantics," as Susanne Langer calls them).

Those arts that move in time, like language, dance, music, and motion pictures, all share issues of sequence and pace. Many terms on musical scores, like "accelerando" and "crescendo," apply equally well to dance, literature, and motion pictures. Whereas the lively arts move in time, serially, the graphic arts of paint-

ing, drawing, sculpture, and still photography present their elements simultaneously. But part of the art of lively arts is to create some feeling of simultaneity while moving in time, and part of the art of graphics is to create some feeling of dynamics through the static. Thus people speak of direction, depth, rhythm, and animation in a painting or photo, and cubistic painting and sculpture get a time dimension by giving several views of the same objects. Form and pattern in composition link these arts to the language arts, as we understand from motifs or variations on a theme.

COMPREHENSION

Comprehending the nonverbal arts requires the receiver to do many of the same things he does in receiving language. He must put things together for himself in his own mind—"grasp" what is there. He must pay attention to the elements of the medium and how they have been ordered and become sensitive to the total effect that the parts create as they accumulate into a whole, by either the action of the medium moving in a sequence or by his own viewing action as he scans. He must open himself to another's composition and let all the cues work on him in combination with each other. All of this is required for reading comprehension, whether the text is a great work of art or merely a how-to-do-it set of instructions. Constructing and constructing share a common root activity—making something that means something.

■ TOTAL IMMERSION

The strategy that most facilitates integration is immersion of the learner in language by leaving intact the natural relations among different language activities, different subjects, different forms, different media, and different arts. If every learner can't find for himself these multiple points of entry into language use and multiple pathways to general goals, then individualization is a hollow slogan. A classroom has to be a cornucopia of opportunities so that no matter which way he looks a student can see interesting connections among things, words, ideas, and people. The reason free choice is sure to work in a total-immersion environment is that it makes little difference what a student chooses on any one occasion. The main thing is to keep practicing language with involved care. So saturating the learner with language reinforces the strategy of going for volume and variety. This strategy is essentially what the movement now called "whole language" has come to represent.

A group fascinated by animals can track them for weeks with great interest across folk tales, fables, true memoirs, poems, encyclopedic entries, newspaper and magazine articles, statistics, charts and graphs and maps, photos, animal card games, films, and so on. At the same time, they can interweave play-acting of animals, observing and notetaking, journals, keeping pets, telling and writing animal stories and fables, photographing and drawing and captioning, discussing, arithmetical calculation, rehearsed reading of animal stories, and so on. The secret of all this is the timely connection, and it can't be scheduled. But the constant possibility of timely connections can be arranged by making all sorts of language use available all the time.

In 1990, educators representing the arts, languages, sciences, and humanities established the Curriculum Congress for purposes of integrative reform. Like

other teachers, we in the language arts can expect increasing integration of learning domains, perhaps even some eventual fusion of what are now separate school subjects. In doing justice to these organic connections and overlaps among “subjects”, this unification of learning will make schooling far more efficient and comprehensible. Student-centering has always suffered from subject-centering, as can be seen in the slump in achievement and attitude after about third grade, when schools usually start departmentalizing learning into math, language arts, social studies, science, and art. A holistic reorganization of learning will naturally center more on the learner, who alone can synthesize all this into what we call education.

■ FRAMING WORK IN WHOLE COMMUNICATION STRUCTURES

Only when people work within a complete communication structure can they authentically practice literacy, composition, and comprehension and hence profit from volume and immersion. Context governs text. This too is what is meant by “whole language.” It naturally goes with centering on students, who can find meaning and motivation only in realistic speech acts and texts. The whole person needs whole discourse.

FAILURE OF THE PARTICLE APPROACH

Vocabulary drills, dissection of dummy sentences, labeling grammatical parts, and writing isolated sample paragraphs do not teach how to write. If they did, colleges would not be frantically increasing their remedial writing enrollments. Vocabulary lists actually misteach, because without context the learner has to ignore connotation, style, tone, and other aspects of good word usage in favor of absolute synonymy and abstract dictionary definitions. Words learned in context are better understood and better remembered. Similarly, practicing clause subordination or other sentence construction in a vacuum teaches students that clause subordination is somehow good for its own sake and that how one constructs a sentence can be decided apart from the logical and rhetorical demands of what one is trying to express. Neither of these inferences is true. And how can one learn to paragraph the flow of ideas when limited at the outset to a single paragraph? There is no such thing as a well-constructed paragraph when the paragraph is a fragment stripped of point and purpose or when the writer is forced to say what he has to say in only one paragraph. Faced with form for its own sake, a student rightly concludes that content is unimportant and fills the form with tripe. As for reading, many children test out on all the isolated parts—the separate sound-spellings and “reading skills”—but cannot or will not read.

When wholes are broken up and doled out to students piecemeal, it becomes an academic point as to whether students *can't* put them back together on their own or whether they simply don't care enough to try, since the approach can prevent either cognition or motivation from working.

But, you may ask, isn't it enough to surround a word with a sentence, or a sentence with a paragraph—each substructure with the one above instead of *all* those above? What's wrong, for example, with teaching vocabulary by using a word appropriately in a sample sentence? Though obviously better than word lists, this is still deficient to the extent that the unsituated sentence remains itself ambiguous or pointless as to intent, connotation, style, and so on. Furthermore,

using purposeless fragments as learning units conveys a bad message besides being boring.

ACCEPTABLE CASES OF FOCUSING ON SUBSTRUCTURES

Some single sentences and single paragraphs are real wholes unto themselves, complete discourses. A proverb is an example of a single-sentence discourse. Some captions are complete in either a sentence or a paragraph. Entries in dictionaries and encyclopedias legitimately call for isolated words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs. But the task must be to say something, not to tailor language and thought so as to come up with a paragraph when done. It should be the communication situation that calls for a single paragraph.

Another exception to our stance against particle learning may be certain kinds of games in which phonemes, syllables, words, phrases, and isolated sentences are treated entirely as play tokens, frankly as fragments not intended to communicate. Adults may take language too much for granted to appreciate that children can think of language as a play medium like any other, as matter to manipulate, the more so as its sounds, words, and sentence structures may still seem exotic to them. But it's essential that teachers not rationalize drills by calling them games. A game must be so perceived by students, who have no problem substituting a play context for a communication context.

Wholeness is the key. The great principle of nature is unity—the harmony of many things in oneness, of parts within wholes. In both Western and Eastern civilizations unity has always been the highest ideal of education. In our own age of bureaucratization it takes a special effort to offset compartmentalization. So it is critical to integrate language learning in every possible way—the learner, the learning, and the learned. The individual's state of mind necessarily reflects in some measure the state of his surroundings. The environment for language learning must preserve the truth about language: as the main ingredient in our symbolic life it not only operates within every aspect of our lives but part of its very function is to integrate the diversity of experience into a harmonious whole. Keeping this always in mind makes teaching language far more successful.

MAKING SCHOOLING MORE EFFECTIVE

If one were asked to name three things that are the hardest for schools to bring about, the answer would most likely be individualization, interaction, and integration. This is because the trend of any institution, not just of schools, goes the other way—toward standardization, depersonalization, and compartmentalization. These are chronic problems of governments, corporations, and every other sort of private and public institution, not just of schools. Much of the call for school reform just expresses the citizen's frustration with the diminishing "payoff" of his institutions, which have rapidly grown larger and hence more inefficient.

The whole purpose of an institution is to gain the advantage of doing things as a group over doing things alone. But it's precisely the large numbers that cause institutions always to drift toward standardization, depersonalization, and compartmentalization. Is this a hopeless bind? In order to run schools at all, we must assume that a way out can be found. Any discussion of methods must take

account not only of how children grow in thought and speech, but of how the individualization, interaction, and integration required for their growth can be instituted in schools.

It is first necessary to acknowledge that in combating failure or inefficiency in language education we're not dealing with mere learning problems but with institutional problems. Practically speaking, there's no mystery about how people learn to read and write. It occurred successfully centuries before public schools existed, and it occurs frequently nowadays out of school. But in the old days or in a modern middle-class home a tutorial situation explains the difference—no large numbers to teach at once. The fact is that learning to read and write, despite the awful fracas it causes in schools, is easier than learning to speak. This is a critical point, because it means we have to quit ascribing failure to learners, or shopping around for new technical innovations in learning, and start changing schoolroom management.

■ ADVANTAGES OF HOME LEARNING

Let's contrast home learning and school learning, for a very important and universally successful kind of learning takes place at home that schools should emulate. Learning to talk is far harder than learning to read and write, and yet every child who is not defective learns to speak even before his nervous system is fully developed and regardless of any so-called underprivileged environment. Children learn to speak with no special instructor or curriculum or learning site—and also with no question of dropouts, under-achieving, or failure. If you doubt that learning to speak is considerably harder than learning to read and write, you should consider for a moment what it entails.

First, before its nervous system is even fully developed, the infant must distinguish human speech from all the other environmental sounds. Then he must classify together those speech sounds that are alike. At the same time, he is pairing off speech sounds with those things they stand for. But in order to pair words with things he has to analyze the heretofore indivisible world and conceptualize these things that people talk about. That is, he is mastering at once both conceptualization and verbalization. To utilize his growing stock of words and meanings, he infers from others' sentences the grammatical laws of the language so he can make up and interpret sentences he has never heard before. Generalizing for himself the basic grammar is itself nothing short of marvelous, but if we consider all the analyzing, classifying, and inferring that a child must do to learn to speak, we have to admit that what he did before school was an astounding intellectual feat surpassing anything normally asked of him in school.

We don't usually think of literacy as easy, or of learning to speak as difficult. More likely, we have the reverse impression. The home learning of speech occurs very spontaneously and successfully compared to the learning of literacy in school, where it seems to occur only by dint of tremendous strain, if indeed it occurs at all. We mustn't be deceived by the ease of one and the exertion of the other. Many people learned to read at home without knowing how or when it happened. The difference is not that reading and writing are harder but that they are usually attempted under what we can only call, comparatively speaking, adverse conditions, that is, in school. If it happened that human beings learned to write first and to speak second, in school, then we would be having crash pro-

grams in learning to speak. The only serious problem of learning to read and write is that it comes second and in an institution. This is quite different from a *learning* problem.

All the faculties that a child needs for learning to read and write have been well exercised in learning to speak—the very same abilities to analyze, classify, and infer. For literacy, a child has to pair spoken words with written words—a relatively easy task, since the stock of meanings is already attached to the spoken words, and the grammatical model has already been generated within. (In neither case is the learning explicitly formulated, nor would explicit formulation help operate the language.) If literacy learning then drags out interminably over elementary and even secondary school, that's because of institutional inefficiency.

One other factor results from literacy coming second—weaker motivation. In learning to speak, the infant is striving to join the human race. It is difficult to match such motivation ever again. Once able to communicate through speech, a youngster at ease in his small circle of family and friends probably feels little need to acquire a second medium. But the compelling reasons in our culture for wanting to read and write are precisely what should become apparent as the child moves out of the home into the larger world beyond. A major reason for the inefficiency of institutions concerns the difficulty of harmonizing their modes of operation with personal reasons for doing things.

A language teacher could do no better than study how speech is learned at home, because schools can beat their own institutionalism if they build methods of language teaching on the home model. Besides having the great advantage that the infant is powerfully motivated to join the human race through speech, the home has, precisely, the assets of individualization, interaction, and integration.

There a child learns language through everything, all the time, and with everybody. At home, learning is not thought of as a specialized activity and is not restricted to a certain time, place, people, and circumstance. The child constantly initiates speech efforts and gets feedback, on the basis of which he modifies his speech. Such parent-child interactions have been recorded and studied and demonstrate beautifully the action-response-revision model of learning that a warm, spontaneous, responsive environment gives.

The child himself sequences his activities and materials from whatever array he can avail himself of. People don't shame him if he speaks ineptly, so he dares to try over and over until he gets good. There's no penalty for error, and the total immersion allows him to get all the powerful benefits of feedback and trial-and-error. His trials are constant and copious and relatively uninhibited. No anxiety is induced by pressure for achievement and by incessant monitoring for progress—the notorious hallmarks of the institution, which has to ascertain who is doing his job well and which materials work best and which kids aren't getting their due. The reason home learning succeeds is that the natural learning processes of the growing child are not disrupted by extraneous factors.

■ ADVANTAGES OF SCHOOLS

Large numbers are not all negative, and the home has its limitations. School could in fact supply exactly what is missing at home—a larger volume and variety of human and material resources to interact with. Learning through differences certainly means getting out and mixing with the world. And wherever large numbers

congregate, there too can accumulate larger amounts of materials, equipment, and facilities than most families could afford. Further realization, in fact, of individualization, interaction, and integration can never come about within the physical and psychological constraints of the home. Its limits remind us indeed of why we bother with institutions in the first place. Their function is to take advantage of numbers without succumbing to the disadvantages. Schools need to make themselves pay off in human returns under the conditions of mass education that a democracy requires. The methodology offered in this book aims at utilizing numbers instead of being done in by them.

■ LEARNING BY DOING

We advocate learning to do a thing by doing it rather than by doing something else that is assumed to teach it. Learning to do A by doing A is a direct method of learning as opposed to learning B in order to do A, which is an indirect method. Examples of indirect methods are diagramming sentences in order to learn to speak or write better, or memorizing definitions or lists of words in order to read better. In both cases the first activity, B, is significantly different in kind from the second or target one, A. Furthermore, there's no evidence that learning B results in learning A. On the other hand, there is evidence from all sorts of human experience other than language that doing A leads to improving skill in A. A direct method of learning justifies *itself*, whereas an indirect method has to be *proved* effective. In language arts, indirect methods have not achieved the major goals; they have only been proved to lead to the mastery of B or the indirect process itself.

Practice of the activities of speaking, writing, listening, performing, and reading are not only the means to the goal but also the goal themselves. All five processes are goals, and yet each can be a means to the others. People can learn to write by talking, to read by listening, to talk by reading, and so on. Transference of this sort *does* occur; it is a way of learning A by practicing another A. Since both A's are goals in themselves, neither is merely a means to another end, as a B activity would be in the indirect-learning model. The relations among performing, speaking, listening, reading, and writing are relations of equals, of whole to whole. Their differences are differences of either distance (speaking and writing) or of direction (reading and writing), which are important differences indeed, but they do not impair the learning of literacy, composition, or comprehension. Rather, they enhance this learning, for distance and direction are themselves dimensions of the learning that must be understood by varying the form of the activity. Indirect learning has no such justification.

■ PROOF OF THE METHODS

No school program can truthfully claim to be proven by scientific fact. It's impossible to control experimentally all the variables at play in school except for activities too small to count. There are so many things going on at once in a language arts program, in a classroom, in an individual's life that we're at a loss to attribute good or bad results scientifically to some of these possible causes and not to others. Proof of the effectiveness of methods emerges informally from massive accumulation of experience in and out of school, where people close to daily activities

can gradually sort out what seems to be working best. This is really more valid and reliable anyway, because it distills greater quantities of evidence and distributes judgment over more assessors. Traditional practices of the indirect, particle sort have been tried for years by this test and found drastically wanting, as evidenced by the great discontent of the public, the high illiteracy rate, and the low level of general reading, writing, and thinking skills. The whole national school system has been the lab for this bit of experimentation.

For other reasons as well, we have rarely in this book tried to justify recommendations by citing research. Research dates fast, and trends in credence and acceptance change. Much research out of school, moreover, uses older subjects who are proficient readers and writers and are therefore functioning very differently from beginners. Applying its findings can be very misleading. Most of all, on the major learning issues, research so often splits that it doesn't seem honest to us to make a case for one approach on the basis of research when we know that you can find other findings to support another approach. Though we don't *rely on* research evidence about specific sorts of language learning, we have tried to learn from it. And we do think that the program we offer in this book concurs with the main findings of cognitive psychology about how people, generally speaking, best learn.

Direct learning, by doing, is so basic that evidence for it exists on every hand. Practice of target activities under conditions of awakened will, copious and various trials, and plentiful, relevant, nonthreatening feedback has been validated by centuries of successful learning in other areas, such as sports, arts, crafts, business, and government. And in the activity closest to reading and writing—speaking—we have the best evidence of all for the approach advocated in this book. We all learned to talk this way.

■ THE DIRECTION FOR THE FUTURE

Change is considered risky, but it is riskier to cling to proven failures. This seems to be the feeling behind the current calls from all quarters for school reform, a reform that ultimately involves restructuring of both curriculum and school management itself. Neither one can change without changing the other. Fully implementing some of the ways and means recommended in this chapter may require not only some restructuring of classrooms and schools but eventually even of districts in relationship to their community. But this is true of the most significant changes being urged by the English Coalition and by the equivalent professional organizations speaking for the other school subject areas. These recommendations accord remarkably well among themselves and go in the direction of those made in this book.²

² Richard Lloyd-Jones and Andrea A. Lunsford, eds., *The English Coalition Conference: Democracy Through Language* (Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1989).

Curriculum and Evaluation Standards for School Mathematics (Reston, VA: National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, 1989).

Building a History Curriculum: Guidelines for Teaching History in Schools (Washington, DC: Bradley Commission, Education Excellence Network, 1988).

Charting a Course: Social Studies for the 21st Century (Washington, DC: National Commission on Social Studies in the Schools, 1989).

Some of the curriculum proposed here, on the other hand, could actually be characterized as reactionary rather than radical. Individual programs, different working parties doing different things at the same time, kids teaching kids, rippling—these all went on in the one-room schoolhouse. Such “innovations” would in fact return us to an earlier American tradition abandoned not for educational reasons but simply because school populations got bigger. Maximum accessibility, charting and counseling, coaching and consulting, small-group process, total immersion, trial-and-error-with-feedback, and learning by doing—all work together to turn around the school’s institutional problem of numbers. They make the three I’s possible (not to mention the three R’s!). They convert a curse to a blessing. The large numbers and the individual variation that teachers usually despair of can further the very goals that these factors seem to impede.

The classroom should be a microcosm of what is most positive about America—its diversity and flexibility. The hybrid strength that comes from continual synthesis seems to be humanity’s chief adaptation now for survival in a very rapidly changing world. The youth of the nation that serves as the growing edge of that world culture cannot afford to be hung up at a rudimentary level of language development by unnecessary problems. There are simply too many other things that schools have got to start teaching that teachers can’t move forward on because of the inefficiency in teaching language. This curriculum is meant to overcome this inefficiency and to get on to the more sophisticated symbol usage that the twenty-first century will require of children.

An ancient Chinese doctor is supposed to have said: “There is only one diagnosis—congestion—and only one remedy—circulation.” This applies remarkably well not only to problems of digestive, pulmonary, cardiovascular, glandular, and nervous systems, but also to vocabulary, spelling, grammar, reading comprehension, and composition.

Project 2061: Science for All Americans (Washington, DC: American Association for the Advancement of Science, 1989).

Diane W. Birckbichler, ed., *New Perspectives and New Directions in Foreign Language Education* (Lincolnwood, IL: National Textbook Company in conjunction with the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, 1990).

CHAPTER SETTING UP --- THREE

Visualize a fully functioning student-centered environment. Most of the time, small working parties are doing different things at the same time. A working party is a pair, a small group, or an individual. Some may be silently reading or writing. Others may be discussing a text they have read, transcribing a tape they have made, or working out how to dramatize a story. Sometimes the whole class comes together for sharing products or carrying out large projects or doing other communal activities. Within this extended family small families and partnerships form and re-form in a warm, relaxed atmosphere of cooperation. Everybody tries to help each other succeed. Students take charge of their own learning.

They choose what to do from a full repertory of authentic language activities and materials constantly arrayed for them. Instead of following a packaged program, they make up individual programs with the teacher. This is a non-textbook approach. Instead, a classroom has its own library of books and tapes, to which is constantly added those that the students themselves create. Organization is decentralized so that activities and materials are not funnelled out from the teacher but made readily available to everybody at any time. Directions for how to keep a reading journal or write reviews or perform a text are posted at learning stations or placed on activity cards cross-referenced to appropriate materials. Students who know what they want to do and how to proceed often initiate their own activity. Everybody just picks up where they left off from one occasion to the next.

The classroom we envision participates in a larger learning network extending as much as possible throughout the school and into the community. Working parties can go during class to the school library, media center, or other facilities and areas. They have access to other teachers and specialists. Either the class is multi-age, or older and younger students are routinely scheduled for time together, as when eleven- or twelve-year-olds buddy up with primary children to play, read, and write with them. Adult volunteer aides slip in and out of the classroom at any time to facilitate working parties and tutor individuals. Storytellers, authors, actors, and other experts come in regularly or by special invitation. Students arrange to visit, interview, and research out of school. If fax machines and computers with modems are available, students can communicate rapidly with other knowledge sources and exchange writing with students elsewhere.

This learning environment pulls together a lot of practices that have been done or are being done separately but that would be more fully realized together.

Team teaching, learning centers, student contracts, and electives, for example, aim to individualize and integrate but will work better if they go farther, in concert. Nongraded and open classrooms, community apprenticing, artists- and writers-in-the-schools, “reading and writing across the curriculum,” and the “whole language” approach parallel each other and come together in thoroughgoing student-centered learning.

For secondary school, we recommend general English courses every year, within which individual interests can be pursued, rather than requiring some set courses followed by electives. Individualization makes electives unnecessary and makes possible a wider range of choices than can be offered by scheduling separate courses. Access to teachers who are expert in the area of one’s interest can be arranged other ways such as periodic conferring. With advising from one or more on-site teachers and perhaps off-site experts as well, a group or individual can pursue virtually any interest without sacrificing the benefits of being in an all-purpose, heterogeneous language environment and without having to make a project come out even with a semester or other arbitrary time frame.

The first thing to consider in setting up this environment is the use of human resources. The reliance of schools on commercial programs has made students interact with materials instead of people. Only human interaction and social experience can teach how to use language. It has seemed simpler to manage things than people. And running something through the market has been the chief way of certifying it in our society—even curriculum. But this is changing, as it must.

The proposals here and in following chapters emphasize the primacy of human resources because of the social nature of language in particular and of learning in general. But we recommend some equipment and materials that facilitate the interaction of individuals with language and with each other. Where some kinds of learning might be accomplished through *either* things *or* other people, we try to assess the options. Some materials that would indeed serve learning well are not commonly made available to schools and may have to be sought rather than bought, or made in school. Teachers have little time for seeking or making materials, we realize, but as with so many other practical problems, the solution can itself become an educational activity. In a student-centered curriculum, students are not waited on; they work. Finding and making materials can be part of their learning how to learn. Let them help you set up.

INDIVIDUAL PROGRAMS

Each student selects among a wide range of activities and thus has a different set of experiences, though often she is choosing to work with others. With your counseling, she determines the sequence of her pursuits and keeps track of what she does. Many different activities teach the same language arts skills. The precise routing makes little difference for the ultimate goal but makes a critical difference in the attitude of the individual learner. The routing is not haphazard, however, because it fits a learner’s precise needs and timing. When she controls what she does, being influenced rather than ordered, she feels positive and powerful. With that power, colleagues, and an attractive array of materials, she can do a lot.

How then does a student decide which activity to pursue? She may move into a project in any number of ways:

1. Her own interest may prompt her to seek out the materials or directions that will enable her to do what she wants. If she doesn't already know where to find these, she looks or asks.
2. Some book, tape, prop, learning station, or activity card may attract her eye as she browses.
3. Classmates may ask her to join in an activity someone else has already selected. Picked at random, as a friend, or for a special talent, a student may be introduced to activities she otherwise might not have thought of or have preferred. This is one safeguard against the limitations of personal choice.
4. A youngster may be introduced to an activity by seeing what some other working party produced from it—the booklet, tape, display, or performance. In seeing the results of the activity she is inspired to try it herself.
5. The classroom materials themselves can be cross-referenced to one another so that, for example, when a student finishes an activity, the card or poster suggests several related follow-up activities and gives routings to these.
6. You may advise a student at any time to do a certain activity or join a certain group. See “A Charting and Counseling System” on page 25 and, for assessment, page 248.

Whenever possible, give the learner choices about what to do so she accepts as normal the responsibility of deciding on her own. Simply help her become aware of her options and what's involved in the choices among them. Your suggestions allow for both her interests and the present limits of her awareness.

LEARNING WITH COLLEAGUES

A student should get experience working alone, in small groups, in large groups, and in groups structured for different activities. The whole class gets together for sharing and celebrating the accomplishments of small groups, for collaborating on complex projects, for receiving general information, and for certain other activities mentioned in other chapters. It will always be important as a pool of resources and as a community.

Small-group process is the matrix for most activities in this curriculum—discussion, reading, dramatic interplay, writing for real purposes and audiences, and responding to both books and the writing of other students. Learning through group process starts in the home, goes on outside of school, continues into college, and will continue throughout the learners' lives in the workplace and community. Group learning fosters motivation and confidence leading to independence and mastery. As students regularly work with partners, their emotions, their understanding of others, and their responsibility mature along with their intellect.

■ DURATION OF GROUPS

Some groups might stay together as briefly as ten minutes or as long as several weeks. How long a group stays together depends on the nature of the task and the maturity of the participants. After finishing one activity, a group may choose to do another together, or perhaps some members will so choose but others will decide

to do something else or to join another working party. Short-term random groups have the advantage of getting students used to working with all sorts of people. Long-term groups have the advantage of both developing a deeper familiarity and trust among members and of experiencing the kinds of group dynamics that can evolve only over a long period of time.

■ WAYS OF FORMING GROUPS

Helping individuals form appropriate groups is a paramount role that you take on as you drop the role of emcee. Some students unused to grouping may just want to be with friends or other students they feel comfortable with. Social closeness may well be more important to them at first than any activity they do together. Until they become accustomed to collaboration, you should probably let them choose at least some of their partners. But encourage mixing as early as possible. You can count on chance, their own interests, and the many cross-influences of the classroom to start mixing them also.

You can help students learn how to:

1. Come together when they want to do the same activity or share a similar interest.
2. Find others who are shaking free at the same time and available to form a new working party.
3. Assemble an effective working party that contains people with different abilities and skills for a project they've settled on.
4. Mix different temperaments or complementary personality traits or different backgrounds in such a way that they can better utilize their human resources and take advantage of differences in outlook, background, or dialect.
5. Put together long-range groups whose members might become over a period of weeks or months a semipermanent workshop in which strong trust grows and members become familiar with each other's needs, habits, and ways of expression.

A student may well be in more than one kind of group at once. For example, one of the groups, such as a newspaper editing and proofreading group or a writing workshop, might not need to meet every day and can run concurrently with a student's other activities. One of your responsibilities is to pick up on and counsel a student who has competing responsibilities that preclude her effective participation in any one group.

■ GROUP SIZE

The number of persons a group needs depends largely on experience and the activity they pursue. Veterans will often know how to group themselves, but you may need to help some groups determine an appropriate size, given their activity or purpose.

For most discussions, around five is an ideal number, providing enough variety of viewpoint to stimulate interaction but at the same time minimizing the risk of shy individuals retiring because the group is too large. Five can be a good size for

some writing groups if the kind of discourse they're writing is fairly short, like limericks or fables, but since some kinds of writing take more time and thought for group members to examine each other's compositions, size might sometimes be limited to three members. For improvising, except for the crowd-scene type, it is best to keep the groups down to two or three so that interaction is tight and close and the action keeps moving well without confusion or dropping out. Experienced improvisors, however, can still be effective in a larger group.

Some students may need to work into small-group process by participating in pairs or trios first. The classic problems of groups—inattention and dropping out, interrupting each other, not responding pertinently, not sticking to the subject, becoming distracted—are sharply reduced when only two or three are interacting. The price, of course, is a loss of ideas and stimulation afforded by more minds. But if the priority is to get inexperienced kids into small-group process, follow a general principle of starting small and building up. When students are choosing an activity and forming a working party, check out group size according to the nature of the activity and the maturity and experience of the students.

DYNAMICS OF SMALL GROUPS

Generally, each group size up to six has a different basic dynamic that makes it appropriate for certain tasks. Two people are good for activities that might also be done alone but that some youngsters are not yet ready to do by themselves; or for two-part reading aloud together, as with riddles, brain teasers, and other question-and-answer texts. Sometimes a highly skilled independent worker chooses to work and share with only one other person.

Trios are better than pairs for discussion, but they sometimes pit two against one, which is a problem unless used as a way to balance an overbearing personality. They also provide a minimal number for vocal interaction among students who would fall apart in a larger group. Three is a good number for building trust in a writing workshop. Groups of four tend to split into pairs, which can polarize discussion, but four fits well many game formats and other tasks not featuring discussion. A group of five allows many internal relationships to develop, and it also provides maximum stimulation without being so large that it's inefficient.

Groups larger than five should probably be justified by special considerations such as a task requiring a lot of division of labor, a drama calling for a large cast, or simply the desire to include everyone who wants to be on board.

FOSTERING SMALL-GROUP PROCESS

Many teachers feel that it won't work just to start in but that they should instead train groups one at a time until they are ready to do without the teacher. This seems reasonable, but in practice what usually happens—and this is the classic problem of inaugurating small-group process—is that in the very effort to show youngsters how it's done, the teacher only succeeds in making them more teacher-centered. As both adult and teacher you are a powerful figure; and though this varies a lot with the teacher, most youngsters have great difficulty not talking to and for you if you're in their group, even if you try to take only an overseer role. Those learners who most need initiation into peer interaction are the ones who will focus most on you.

The only way to avoid this trap is to assume nothing, play by ear, and be ready to operate in any of several different ways. Beginning groups limited to two or three members may never have any trouble—if the project or topic really animates the group. You may just stand by and listen in rather than sit in. This way your presence may not interfere with the interplay among group members but still reassure them and enable you to make observations or suggestions about their functioning. If you feel a group must have you because you have tried other ways unsuccessfully, then your sitting in may be worth the risk, especially if you play a role expressly aimed at weaning them from you. That is, you would do best to refrain from leading the group in the usual sense or trying to get ideas across. Rather, you should attempt to model a typical-member kind of participation.

Setting a model for good interaction means listening alertly and responding pertinently. This often includes questioning a previous speaker, but it's critical that the questions be honest efforts to have the speaker clarify or elaborate what she has said, not answer-pulling to get her to say something you may have thought of. Remember that the goal here is purely to initiate a process of exchanging and expatiating between learners. Some teachers have found that asking an experienced group to model effective interaction in front of the class helps novices to grasp how a focused, serious group works. Mixing experienced with inexperienced students also provides models by the ripple effect.

You may find that very young children have little difficulty operating in small groups. Older students who have been in school a long time but have never participated in small groups may have more problems. These students need to be thoroughly persuaded that small-group process is a serious and staple part of the whole language curriculum and not just a teacher's whim. They may not take it seriously for a while and may therefore test your own seriousness sometimes by seeming not to make it work. The initiation does take some faith and patience.

Game materials can help considerably. Both older and younger students may best ease into group process by playing card and board games, which substitute game rules for teacher direction and accustom players to addressing each other and functioning autonomously. From game materials they can shift to activity cards for talking, reading, and writing together. If you have not operated in an activity-card system, you may not be able to imagine how much cards can structure and maintain group process. They can actually substitute for teacher leadership of the group by providing directions and suggestions. In reading and discussing the directions, participants are already interacting on their own. You are nearby for questions. As soon as possible you want the learners to be able to take off from the written directions without your help.

■ PLAY-IT-BY-EAR TEACHING STYLE

Your job is not to lead small groups but rather to move from group to group and help set up, observe, counsel, suggest strategies or materials, troubleshoot, respond, evaluate, and so on. If a group of students is having trouble using certain equipment, you either show them how to do it or ask an experienced classmate to do so. If another group of students is arguing over the directions for a game or activity, suggest that one of them reread the directions to the others, but do not arbitrate the dispute lest the group become dependent on you. If, as you watch a group doing an improvisation, you notice that one of the participants seems to

misunderstand the point of the scene, you may ask the others how they see her role. At a later time you may discuss the improvisation with her alone as well.

What you do not do is set yourself up as sole problem-solver. You note problems, keep your own record of the kinds of experiences each student is having, and then guide her into new areas when she's ready. Your goal is to keep the process alive, not necessarily to intervene to improve the end products that the students are working on.

This play-it-by-ear teaching style requires an involved interaction with students that takes energy, patience, interpersonal awareness, and courage. You play to what you see. When you respond rather than initiate, the students become the active users of language. On the other hand, if you set yourself up as the decider or explainer or presenter, they may quit learning how to learn, which is their main job. The invigorating task of choosing and thinking for themselves is lost. Letting students initiate while you respond may not look as organized as if you were controlling everything and casting yourself as the star of the show, but be assured that the more active students become, the more they learn.

This is not to imply that you will never impose your will. You will whenever behavior by a student becomes not only unproductive but destructive of responsible group process. A student should not have the choice of whether or not she can destroy the work of another, whether the destruction be physical (tearing up a display or messing up a learning area) or psychological (booing or ridiculing a presentation by another child or group). Teachers set limits of acceptable behavior in student-centered classrooms just as they do in any classrooms. This function is not inconsistent with student-centering, which actually makes it easier to handle disruptive individuals. In small groups they're more likely to find personal peer relating a valued social role. You're also freer to deal with them one to one.

OTHER HUMAN RESOURCES

In building toward student independence even as you give help, you can use as aides all sorts of paraprofessionals such as parents, seniors, older students, or student teachers in a natural and relaxed way not possible in teacher-centered classes. They can talk and play games with individuals, read to them or take dictation from them, counsel them on the choice of an activity or coach them. They can help groups form, sit in on them and model the ideal participant, be an audience for a performance, give feedback to a writer, or lend expertise to a project.

Employing community aides has never seemed very realistic nor proved very popular in whole-class instruction, but its feasibility should be completely reconsidered in an individualized, small-group approach. Activity cards and learning centers allow aides to enter at any time and start helping right away, without your having to stop and explain activities and give directions, though you will want to lay down guidelines for aides helping with coaching and counseling.

Part of the purpose of restructuring school management as called for in today's educational reform should certainly be to make better use of human resources. This can happen only if we think beyond the isolated teacher in the self-contained classroom. Language learners need people and social experience—the more the better. Utilize fully the people already in the classroom, through plentiful and varied interaction, but draw also on those outside. Mixing ages and

experience levels permits rippling, one of the most powerful of learning forces, which schools destroy by segregating ages. If your classes can't be multi-aged, at least arrange with teachers of other grades to exchange halves of your classes on a regular basis. Buddy pairs work beautifully and are very emotionally satisfying for both. Larger working parties of mixed maturity allow the younger to learn quite naturally from the older how to function in a group and to carry out a self-chosen project. And, of course, all sorts of substantive knowledge and skills can be passed down in the process. Putting one adult off alone with a group of student peers represents the poorest use of human resources.

MATERIAL RESOURCES

A classroom needs the widest possible array of materials and activities for students to choose from. Such variety becomes possible in an individualized, small-group curriculum because only a few copies of each book title are needed and only one copy of each game or activity card. Also, teachers can share the same materials by letting the learners go from one room to another or to a common center to get what they need. Materials should initiate and facilitate every language-related activity you and coworkers can imagine that your students might have the ability and interest to benefit from. Materials can be cross-referenced to each other so that each item mentions as optional routing at least two other items from which a student can choose a follow-up activity.

A holistic student-centered approach needs no textbooks or worksheets, only good reading matter of every sort and some manipulable materials. You may inherit, of course, traditional textbook series and workbooks—basal readers, exercise booklets, language and composition textbooks, literature series, speller series, and other books for which most school districts have special adoption categories. Virtually never will these accommodate real individualization, and we regard them generally as ineffective and unnecessary. The book form itself locks activities into a single sequence, but the main defect is that textbooks and workbooks contain unneeded material that gets in the way of learning. All that is needed is authentic reading matter.

Large textbook publishers want to put out total curriculum packages for a subject and for a long span of years like K–8, the usual adoption period. Unable or unwilling to create their own curriculum, most schools have simply bought it outright in a box—a series of textbooks replete with worksheets, tests, manuals, etc. This is extremely dangerous, because education can't be entrusted to the mode of operation of large profit corporations, and the adoption committees that actually purchase these packages have to compromise among so many pressure groups that sound learning principles can't be maintained. Moreover, the very existence of adoptions in language arts and reading assumes the necessity of textbooks and thereby builds into schooling a bias for the sort of curriculum that does indeed need them, the conventional sort that breaks down learning into unreal bits. A major reason that the holistic "active learner" approach has been so hard to establish in schools is that it is too cheap. It doesn't require all those special materials that the particle approach and daily lesson plans require. In our consumer society an approach that costs little and is not embodied in marketable materials seems insubstantial and incredible.

The fact is that the language education most recommended today by professional organizations no longer fits into the educational-industrial complex. As a teacher you're caught in this conflict. Many commercial materials come emblazoned with all the labels that in the marketplace inevitably become trendy slogans and buzzwords—"process approach," "cooperative learning," "whole language," "student-centered," etc. Don't be fooled. Prepackaged curricula have always blocked improvement of language learning because they *inherently* contradict its personal, social, and spontaneous nature, which simply cannot be planned in enough detail to incarnate in physical materials for masses of students.

If school reform is to mean something, the purchasing of educational materials must be restructured. The people who have to use the materials must be the ones to select them. You and colleagues must make clear what you think is worth buying and what's not and stress with administrators that if they force a curriculum package on you, *they* have to take responsibility for the results.

You can run the best language arts program without any materials especially made for school. Tell administrators that you want to put the money into other things—namely, trade books and certain nonbook gear. For beginning literacy, students can benefit from materials besides books—bi-media materials and manipulables as described on page 129. For writing, the only educational materials needed are stimulants and activity directions, both of which are far more effective as cards or posters, which are visually better and not presequenced. If publishers make these available independently of a mixed package, buy them. The money wasted on grammar and composition textbooks can buy equipment for an excellent writing program—word processors, copiers, faxers, and computer-printer combinations for desktop publishing. Since making activity cards and posters for all the language arts is admittedly a big job and replaces textbooks, money would be well spent on good card stock, a lamination machine, software for graphics, good color printing, and perhaps some outside professional consultation. (Creating activity cards with students is itself a great language arts activity!) For reading, all you need are lots of good trade books.

But you can often salvage parts of textbooks. Buried in some composition texts, for example, may be good photos for writing stimulants and directions to the student for good writing activities that you can put onto activity cards. Most elementary readers and literature series contain some good selections and so can be utilized simply as anthologies for individualized reading without regard for their framework, order, or extraneous matter. Ignore the questions and exercises at the ends of selections and the editorializing about the selections, which just creates contexts that interfere with the reader's own responses.

Although multimedia materials and a rich classroom environment are desirable, a resourceful teacher can do the best part of this curriculum with just paper, pencils, old literature textbooks, magazines, newspapers, and odd books scrounged here and there. The minimum is a collection of reading matter and classroom-produced activity cards. Many of the activities presented in this book appeared before on cards created by teachers and students for their own use. If there is a cassette recorder, students can also make their own recordings. You can make it all work through some combination of buying, making do with old stuff, making things yourself, getting students to make them—*as well as* begging and borrowing.

But even the richest school district can't afford all the materials needed if schooling is really successful. This embarrassing fact has been masked by doling

out to students only so much as can be contained in the amount of textbooks that *can* be afforded. By holding everybody back to the pace of some mythical generic student, the spoon-feeding materials make the students and the money come out even at the end of the year! Once students really do become hooked on books, however, it isn't possible to purchase enough of them. The same for recordings and other materials. But really active learners advancing individually not only use up materials far faster, they also create further sets of materials. Following activity directions, they themselves produce other books, activity cards, recordings, games, photos, films, and computer disks to augment the class stock. Involved and active students also scour the community for what they need. So this curriculum helps to solve the desirable problem that it creates.

■ FOUR STAGES

Among the many traits that make textbooks and workbooks undesirable is that they are usually broken down into yearly grades, as most adoptions require or expect. The students in any one classroom span a far greater range of difficulty and interest than can be included in materials designed to cover one year and to cover it at the standardized pace of an "average" student. The only way to individualize is to give each class access to far more materials than any one student can work through in a year. This means that students live with the same materials for several years' running. The breakdown must not be by the year but by a much larger time unit such as a bloc of years constituting a growth phase, and even then the units will overlap.

We suggest breaking down materials and activities for the whole of elementary and secondary school into four stages, each of which spans several years. Place your own class within one of these blocs of grades and put together for it a set of materials covering the whole range of capacity and interests that may arise during those years. When in doubt, include more. Only in this way will you cover every possibility for every student in your class or classes.

1. During the "primary" period of age five or six to seven or eight, the child
 - is still closely tied to parents and home.
 - is not much allied with a peer group yet.
 - may still be developing small-muscle control and perceptual discrimination.
 - is very given to communicating with the body.
 - thinks very concretely.
2. During the prepubic "elementary" period of age seven or eight to eleven or twelve, the child
 - is rather well socialized and fairly independent of home.
 - still complies with adults but has consolidated a peer group.
 - acquires main physical and mental competencies.
 - has strong drive to get good at what the society values.
 - is most suggestible and receptive to others' ideas and influences, hence can be most highly absorbed in reading.
 - objectifies thought more into significant imagery and into concepts.

3. During the period of initial adolescence of age twelve and thirteen to fifteen or sixteen or later, the youth
 - vacillates between lingering dependence on adults and real independence, creating a second version of “the terrible twos,” or self-contradictory, “irrational” behavior.
 - attaches tightly to the peer group and follows its criteria, treading a delicate way between peer-group conformity and compliance with adult demands.
 - shows interest in the wider world beyond immediate locality.
 - develops sexual powers and feelings.
 - uses abstract logic apart from physical operations and from imagery.
4. During this period of virtual adulthood, which only some youths reach while still in high school, the student
 - still values highly her peer group, but her peer group more nearly coincides with the general adult public.
 - reaches or approaches full physical growth.
 - focuses seriously on mate and career selection.
 - possesses full human mental capacity but suffers the limitations in thought of early conditioning and of inexperience as an adult.

The breakdown of materials and activities into four stages gives maximum assurance that students will go as far each year as they are truly able. At the same time, less advanced students will not be constantly humiliated or have their confidence eroded by being expected to move along with the others. All students have access to at least three times the range of difficulty and variety found in a conventional classroom and so will be able to find both their level of development and the particular points of entry into speaking, reading, and writing that are necessary for them but not predictable.

Another extremely important advantage of the broad four-stage breakdown is the fact that it can accommodate the basic human need to rehearse what one has learned and to circle back to it from time to time. One can see this easily in youngsters who like to reread the same book, months or years apart, or in other students who seem to have learned something but who resist rather strenuously the efforts of adults to tear them away and push them onto some other, newer learning. There’s always a real reason why youngsters want to rehearse learning or mark time or circle back. While on occasion it may be something negative (which can be brought out and overcome), usually this desire means that the learner needs to strengthen her confidence, reassure herself of her mastery, or simply enjoy the experience again. Sometimes she’s tired of challenge and wants the security of doing something she knows how to do well.

At other times, when a learner is facing an entirely new kind of reading or writing, she may ease herself into it by choosing material that in a conventional classroom might be considered beneath her level. With so many options, on the other hand, a student may at any point experiment—may challenge herself with very difficult material without having to wait until she has “graduated” into it. If she finds it too hard, she can pull back. There isn’t the sense of failure that comes when a student is moved lock-step with her class to the next assignment before she’s ready. You can expect that your students will advance, return to touch base, and venture forth once more.

■ THE CLASSROOM LIBRARY

A classroom library replaces reading textbooks. Reading matter consists of any sort of books, periodicals, manuals, pamphlets, and so on. Students can campaign in the community for donations of such things and can set up a special part of the classroom library as a central exchange to lend their own reading matter to each other. Since reading is individualized as soon as children start to read at all, single copies are fine. In purchasing, five or six copies of any one title usually suffice for members of a small group to discuss, act out, or otherwise share reading material. As a general strategy in procuring books, trade off number of copies for number of titles. Class sets of one title are a waste and a contradiction of individualization. If you can get funds, subscribe the class to some magazines and newspapers. Discussing which to choose will itself educate.

Try for a variety of reading matter that covers different individual interests, multicultural backgrounds, and all areas of discourse listed on page 18 and dealt with chapter by chapter in Part Three, “Kinds of Discourse.” In representing types like memoir, reportage, and haiku, or topics like sports, mystery, and science fiction, try to do so by books that contain nothing but the one type or topic. This not only teaches literary forms by clumping samples of each but facilitates organizing the classroom library for coordination with other language arts. Students writing, acting out, or discussing myths, for example, can easily find and take out myths for their activity without removing other matter from circulation, as happens when myths, say, are bound into an omnibus reader. You might cut apart literature textbooks so each type of literature can be separately “bound.” Indeed, the more modular all the materials, the more things you and the students can efficiently do with them.

Organize the library with your students according to categories that will themselves teach about reading matter as class members go about searching and replacing items. Actually, working out and maintaining with your students a cataloguing and placement system may be a kind of blessing, because they will learn a lot about books and libraries from this. To some extent you can mesh your class system with that of the school and local libraries as a lead to the use of those.

For suggestions about criteria of selection and for other descriptions of reading matter, see page 166 and following in *READING*.

■ AUDIO RECORDINGS

Audiotapes are allotted a large role in this curriculum for reasons explained on page 150 regarding general reading and on page 118 for beginning reading and writing. Professional recordings serve also as a model for the performing activities described in *PERFORMING TEXTS*.

BUYING RECORDINGS

Some trade publishers sell recordings of texts along with the texts. Such a combination is certainly a major factor to consider in selecting books. Though more expensive than making your own recordings, commercial ones offer the advantages that professional readers can bring to the rendering of a text. Look at whether:

- The reading matter itself is truly first-rate.
- The oral interpretation is appropriate for the kind of text and really interesting to youngsters (and avoids the conventional saccharine and condescending tone).
- The reading is slow enough for literacy beginners to follow without spoiling absorption.
- The stress, pausing, and intonation indicate punctuation clearly.
- Voices of different age and sex are used for variety and identification.
- Different dialects are represented.
- Texts indicate which selections are recorded.
- A recorded signal indicates bottom of page in texts for small children.
- Format facilitates searching for a cassette and for a selection on a cassette.

Take time, perhaps with other teachers, to listen to a lot of the recordings and to deliberate over their value for teaching both literacy and literature and also for inspiring student performing of texts.

MAKING RECORDINGS

The advantages of making recordings in class are saving money (though the cost of even blank tapes can mount up) and having recordings for texts on hand that are not commercially recorded. But especially, making the recordings can be a fine learning activity for students. See *PERFORMING TEXTS* for procedures in rehearsing readings. Knowing in advance that their vocal rendering can be added to the classroom listening library provides excellent motivation for students to work up and tape a reading of some text available for classmates to follow visually as they listen.

You want to have your students contributing to the stock of recordings even if you buy commercial ones or even if you and other adults are also making recordings. (Some of what one records will be student writing.) Explain that certain standards of clarity and expression have to be met in recording for the classroom listening library, because other students will be using their work to learn from. The class can follow the guidelines above.

Mixing professional, adult, and student recordings makes sense. Not many selections in either trade books or textbooks are accompanied by a tape or disc, which leaves a real need for local supplementation. Professional renditions inspire emulation, while student renditions will foster identification and encourage classmates to try recording. To get especially talented adult readers, recruit among school staff members, parents, and actors in local theater groups.

Set up the listening library, like the reading library, as an easy and attractive place to browse in. Label and organize the tapes by the same system you do the books. Putting both book and tape in a plastic bag and hanging them together on a rack works well. Or place in the book a simple directive for locating the tape. Texts that have been recorded should be flagged some way on the outside. Headphones for tape players help keep down noise, and bookcases, screens, and carpets can baffle sound.

■ VIDEO RECORDINGS

A camcorder is an ideal learning tool, and most classrooms have a television monitor or access to one. Taping allows students to replay and critique their own

discussions, improvisations, and performances. This feedback is invaluable. These tapes can then be erased and re-used or kept for other students and teachers to view and discuss as orientation or staff development. An improvisation or performance might be taped several times for the best “take,” which students can then edit and place in a class video library with professional tapes. When a tape is a rendering of a text, this might be signaled on both items. Such a library becomes a repository of class oral work for many uses, including assessment.

■ ACTIVITY CARDS

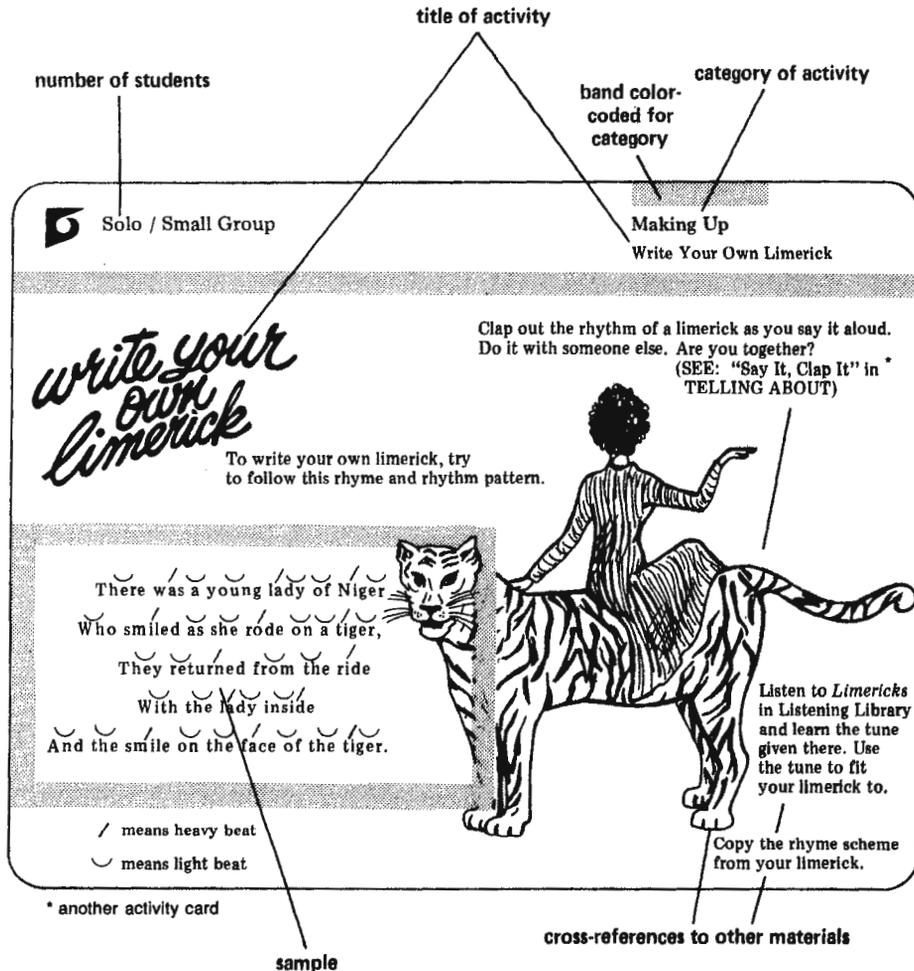
One reason for not putting activity directions in books is that books lock them into one sequence, whereas most language arts activities should be unsequenced so that individuals can put together their own sequences. Also, if not posted already at an activity center, directions should be separately portable and in a durable form so that they can be carried to and propped alongside a work place. An activity card or poster serves as a focal and reference point for a working party. Students can look back at it from time to time, and you or an aide can stop and help without having to ask what the party is doing or having to recall what the directions are. A set of activity cards arrays choices for students in addition to projects they originate and games or other materials bearing their own directions. Through cross-referencing, they lead students to books, recordings, games, and other materials either needed for the activity or suggested as follow-up.

These activity charts or cards can be either commercially produced or made by students and teachers. Those from publishers may well not contain the activities you want and may, besides, come packaged with a whole undesirable program. So you may have to make them with colleagues and students. Heavy stock laminated with plastic is durable, but if that is too expensive, any five-by-seven-inch or larger cards will do. Posters work well for younger children but can be part of a learning station for any age. Each activity card, poster, or chart could list the materials needed for the project, the number of people who can do this at one time (ranging from a single individual to a whole class), and the step-by-step procedure. Illustrations are highly desirable and often necessary for the activity. Cards can be grouped by categories such as “Making Up Stories,” “Finding Out,” or “Acting Out” and different categories placed in different parts of the classroom. Study the sample activity card in Figure 3.1 before reading on. It illustrates one format in which the front captures the gist of the activity, with the aid perhaps of a sample, and the back gives specifics.

We suggest that you conceive an activity so that it can be usefully repeated some time later by the same party, like our sample for writing limericks. If each card covers an activity so specific that it can't be usefully repeated, you'll have thousands of cards. If activities involve authentic sorts of discourse such as one finds outside of school, the purpose will probably be apparent and the activity will make its own appeal.

Activity cards replace teacher-presented lessons and conventional textbooks in reading, composition, spelling, and so on. They may be thought of as pages from a teacher's manual—enlarged, made more durable, addressed to the learner, and laid out where students can get at them directly and individually. These directions are the single most important means of individualizing a classroom, because they array the wide range of activities from which students may choose at any

FIGURE 3.1 SAMPLE ACTIVITY CARD (FRONT)



given moment and at the same time prompt them to think of their own activities. These cards also free you to work closely with individuals and small groups.

Activity cards are important stimuli for composition, especially as they suggest forms but leave content to the author. Most commonly, a written task is embedded in an attractive small-group social process, thereby providing an easy pathway from familiar oral activity into writing. The cards also provide circumstances for reading in each of the ten areas of discourse. See page 172 for their place in the reading program.

■ GAMES

Important learning games exist or can be created for all ages. Some games require no special materials and can be conveyed on an activity card alone, but some

FIGURE 3.1 SAMPLE ACTIVITY CARD (BACK)

directions

Read the limerick begun below—
Using the limerick rules, see if you can finish it by finding your own 4th and 5th lines.

An astronaut flying in space
was always forgetting his place.
Was it page sixty-eight

Put in the beat marks where they sound right.

Write a whole limerick yourself now.

Make a collection of limericks
you write as well as those by others.
Sing them. Tape them in funny or
surprising voices, as on the
Limerick recording.

Put a limerick or two on a display board and invite others to put up theirs.

Organize a limerick contest.

Try: "Story Poems" *
and "New Words,
Old Tune" in
MAKING UP

2

* another activity card

follow-up options

require card decks, game boards, or other manipulable materials. Many of these games teach word-making and word recognition (see page 129). Some "creative" or educational toy companies put out good learning games. Browse in game stores, look through ads in teaching magazines, and look in game catalogues. Textbook publishers seldom put out game materials because schools have shown little interest. Too many parents, teachers, and administrators still do not understand how valuable for learning very entertaining games can be. Powerful prejudices keep game materials, for example, from being adopted or otherwise allotted funds in many localities. Even in an age of great technological advances, widespread application of game theory, and sophistication about media, many people still don't believe learning can occur without books. Games on computer software are now getting into schools, but since computers are used for so many other things as well, and children shouldn't spend too much time head to head with an elec-

tronic monitor, social games with manipulable materials provide an important alternative medium.

If you analyze virtually any old folk game, you can see how it may have originated as a learning practice for some skill. Before schools were free and universal and taught practical things, much important learning of skills and knowledge was embodied in games for both children and adults. In *Blind Man's Buff* and *Hopscotch*, one learns to do without a sense organ or a limb. *Dominoes* teaches numbers. *Chess* and *checkers* teach logic through play strategies. The standard card deck teaches classification and seriality as one makes hands of suits and rank ordering. Educators should utilize in school these folk ways of learning.

Card games, for example, are not only fun, they also have built into them some very important and natural kinds of learning:

- Social interaction
 - discussing directions
 - heeding each other's behavior
 - arbitrating differences
- Attention, concentration, and recall
- Strategic decision-making
- Vocabulary, systematic and interrelated
- Coordination of words and illustrations
- Reading and following of directions
- Classifying
 - seeing similarities and differences
 - conjoining and disjoining attributes
- Sequencing by serial relations of lesser and greater
- Logical deduction
 - drawing inferences from available clues
 - calculating possibilities
- Factual information from science or social studies

For the now meaningless categories of conventional decks—clubs, diamonds, hearts, and spades—substitute some categories from science and social studies. Then the decks can be played by familiar rules of *Rummy*, *Concentration*, *War*, *Old Maid*, *Poker*, and other rules based on putting like items together (“melding” a “book”) or on ranking items by some order (animal hierarchy such as poodle, canine, mammal, vertebrate, for example, instead of ten, jack, queen, and king). Most well-known card games are played by classifying or serializing, that is, by making “flushes” or “straights” or by making both at once.

Playing card games in which items are depicted and named on the card faces can teach vocabulary in a special way—as interrelated sets of words, that is, as nomenclature. Card decks having science or math or social studies material, for example, depict and name items that form a system—classes of animals, say, or kinds of transportation or communication. In these games, the total deck creates a context for learning the vocabulary given on each card. Thus, the new words are defined not just by the pictures or symbols shown on the cards but also by the system within which the cards are played. A deck of cards bearing labeled pictures is really a kind of modular, manipulable chart and relates to booklets and activity

cards for charting, labeling, captioning, and dictionary-making. Furthermore, in playing the game, players usually have to utter the new words and therefore have to find out how to pronounce them. This is an example, by the way, of how a game context can supplant a communication context as a legitimate way of treating sub-structures of the language such as words and sentences.

For other kinds of word and sentence games see *WORD PLAY*.

■ CONSUMABLE BOOKLETS

Be wary of most consumable booklets. The traditional workbooks and worksheets build in many misguided approaches that should be abandoned or replaced. Only a very few consumables, usually put out by small publishers for the home market (like *Mad Libs*), fit this curriculum. Booklets of crossword puzzles, word-find mazes, and other language games are fine. Very helpful also for some students are comics with empty balloons to fill in with dialogue.

■ BEGINNING LITERACY MATERIALS

For basic literacy, some multisensory manipulables are desirable, such as physical letters, card and board games, bingo materials, letter cubes, and other items as described in *BECOMING LITERATE*.

■ EQUIPMENT

For reasons already mentioned or made clear in later chapters it's very desirable to have somewhere on the school premises:

- audiotape recorders and earphones
- a camcorder
- a television monitor with VCR
- one or more still cameras
- a copier
- a computer with software for word processing, graphics, desktop publishing, etc., and with modem for telecommunicating
- a versatile color printer for desktop publishing
- a thermofax machine

A raised platform for drama production is useful but not essential. A puppet theater and materials for making puppets are desirable in elementary classes. A corner for house or store play is good in the early years. Students can make many drama props themselves.

Art materials of all sorts need to be available at all levels. Painting easels, finger and other paints, colored paper, tagboard, porous pens, and poster paper are popular materials. In general, the wider the array of art media, the better. Not only art supplies but art objects—paintings, sculpture, designs—all can stimulate language production. Materials for physically making and binding books—cardboard, dry mount, and cloth—provide a powerful motive for writing.

■ CARE, STORAGE, AND DISTRIBUTION

Games composed of many small pieces must be put back before the students leave a game center, equipment well secured after use, and books and activity cards replaced where others can find them. Make sure everyone knows how items of equipment are operated and where stored. Affix matter-of-fact directions everywhere—to machines, supplies, and work or storage areas. These are part and parcel of becoming literate in order to operate the environment. Not only are learners frustrated by each other if they fail to take care of materials, good house-keeping goes with the feeling of community and of ownership that is part of good education.

Each student will need a place to store personal supplies and works-in-progress, but this need not be a desk. A cubbyhole, bin, plastic washbasin, or cardboard box stored along a wall or on a shelf will do. Decide whether portfolios and individual tracking charts can go here with one's other materials or be filed somewhere else with those of classmates. Active learners produce a lot: a writing file fast becomes a box. Some productions will be audio- and videotapes and works in other media. Some of all this should be saved across the years to facilitate individual continuity in following years. Computer disks may be the best place to store and pass on writing and other textual records.

CLASSROOM LAYOUT

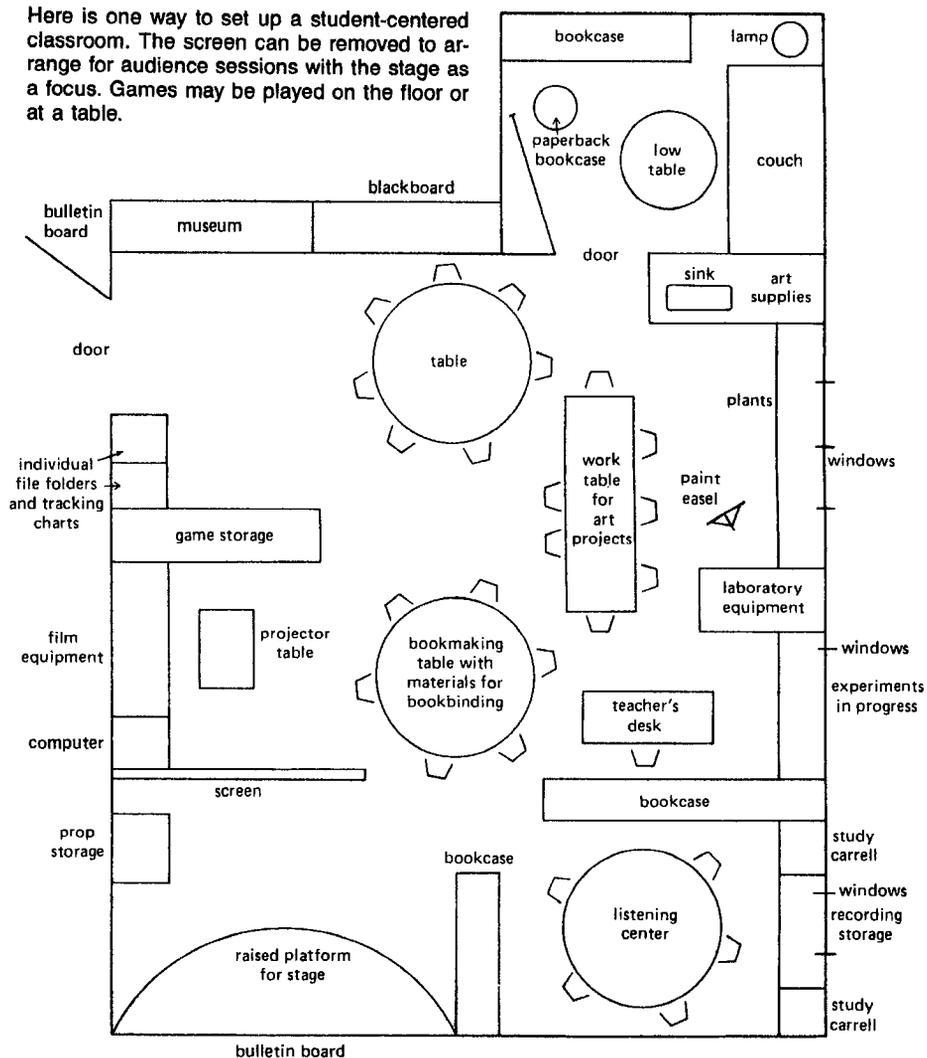
If you're free to arrange furniture, you can set up and equip a learning environment that provides areas for several different types of activity—reading, listening to recordings, acting out, writing, playing games, or watching films or slides. An area does not have to be a “corner”; there are not enough of these in any classroom. If your desks are still bolted to the floor, don't assign them to students but to activities, or ask to have them unbolted. Loose chairs and tables facilitate group work and multiple activities far better than traditional desks, which assume individual paper work only. If you can, move bookcases perpendicular to the wall to divide up space for small-group work and to utilize the backs of the bookcases for additional display space. Designate these activity areas and place there the appropriate activity cards and gear. Posted nearby along with rules for keeping the area in order can be a chart where a youngster can sign up or hang her name tag for a particular activity at a certain time. This is especially helpful when the number of people doing a particular thing at any one time has to be limited. Also, a list of youngsters who have already done a particular activity can be useful to students who might want to call on them for help.

At all grade levels you may find the following types of areas convenient for small-group work. For a sample arrangement, see Figure 3.2. Adapt according to your situation.

■ READING AREA

This is a place where a large part of the classroom library is displayed and where students can sit comfortably to read. This can be a depressed floor area, a grouping of comfortable chairs or a couch, a round table with chairs, or if nothing else, a group of school desks. For individual reading or other work, study carrels are

FIGURE 3.2 ARRANGEMENT OF A STUDENT-CENTERED CLASSROOM



desirable. Large refrigerator cartons can serve if equipped with desks, lamps, and even curtains for privacy. One teacher fixed up a small teacher's office as a quiet reading room with pillows and lamp.

■ LISTENING AREA

Here are stored a record player or cassette recorder—ideally one equipped with earphones—and the class library of discs or cassettes. Youngsters can bring to this area books that are recorded and follow the text as they listen to a recording.

■ DRAMA AREA

Ideally, a hallway, odd room, or other vacant space in the school can be used at least part of the time for improvising, doing creative dramatics, or rehearsing a performance, but an area in the classroom that can be somewhat partitioned off ought to double for drama work when needed and, with the partition removed, accommodate an audience. Wooden pallets can be quickly placed together to make a platform and stored out of the way “between the acts.” Simple costumes or props are welcome, but elaborate trappings are unnecessary, since the kinds of drama we recommend leave most of that to the imagination. The drama center in a primary classroom may well be the same as the playhouse center since much of the acting out at that age calls for household props anyway. A puppet theater or roll-a-story box could be part of the drama center.

■ ART AND SCIENCE AREA

A classroom sink can serve as center of both an art and science area. A great many language activities from kindergarten through high school are stimulated and followed up by illustration and other graphic arts. Dramatic productions are facilitated by artfully suggestive sets, masks, and costumes. And books, newspapers, and magazines students produce can be illustrated using various art media. A sink, counter or table space, and storage space for a wide range of art supplies are very desirable in secondary as well as elementary classrooms.

Unless the school has a room or rooms equipped as laboratories, each classroom needs a place where various scientific experiments may be set up, watched closely, and recorded in a variety of ways. The area can have growing plants, live animals, and other physical objects for observation, manipulation, and experimentation. A table where classroom museums and collections can be assembled is important.

■ GAME AREA

Students often want to take a game off to themselves, and this has to be allowed in a multifarious classroom, but game materials need a storage home with perhaps some carpeted floor space nearby. Many games have lots of small parts that can get scattered around a classroom and crunched underfoot. To avoid the frustration of missing parts, everybody has to make a special effort. If holes are drilled in game boards, they can be hung and their parts stored in drawstring bags hung beside them. Rig nifty containers for plastic letters, rubber stamps, and other recommended manipulables, which can be stored in this game area.

■ TRAVELING LEARNING CENTERS

In many schools, especially in junior and senior high school, teachers do not have their own teaching room where they can set up places for students to do small-group work. They move from room to room. If you’re one of these, you will have to rely on activity cards to play a much greater part in creating different learning centers quickly. You may have cards and other materials in boxes or large envelopes, each container complete with all that the students need for a set of activities of a specific type. These can be quickly placed throughout the room

when you arrive. Light equipment and books can be kept on a rolling cart to go with the teacher. A prop basket, art materials, or other items not used every day may be stored in a place where students who need them can get them to bring to the class. More reliance will need to be placed on students to bring in their own materials and quickly set up their own work centers. Also, students will have to store more of the “in-process” work such as books they are making or newspaper copy in their lockers rather than in the classroom. If bulletin board space is limited or unavailable, halls and display cases can be used.

■ SHARING AREA

At all grade levels there needs to be one large space where an audience can gather for a presentation—film, slides, drama, interpretive reading, project report or whatever. This could be in or out of the classroom. Better in, if out discourages arranging for it. If students get used to gathering on a carpet in a part of the room that is used for small-group work at other times, moving of furniture can be pre-arranged. In one small classroom a student committee made a map showing where each desk was to be moved to make room for an audience. These sessions for presenting something to the whole class can be scheduled at a regular time or arranged impromptu whenever a small group or individual has something ready to present.

Because most work is shared, you need to plan for ample display space for student writings, charts, graphs, art products, museums, and so on. When the bulletin board and wall space are used up, students can string up cord and hang their displays from the ceiling.

GETTING STARTED

Explain at the beginning of the year the gist of how the class will operate and briefly why. Tell older students that some activities that they expect may be missing but that the new ones are meant to teach the same things, only better (vocabulary, usage, and sentence structure, for example, by talking, reading, and writing rather than by lists and formal grammatical analysis). Take them on a tour of the different areas and show materials so that they know generally what the resources are and how activities are organized. Or if you have left much of the organization for them to work out with you, explain that to them and let them start getting involved in what might be done, in taking possession. Give them some time to poke around while you just observe who gravitates to what and how they react to the environment you have set up, whatever its degree of readiness. If you and previous students worked it out pretty well in past years, tell them what problems you still have or just ask them for suggestions. Conditions usually change enough from year to year that adjustments are always needed.

People not used to this sort of curriculum need to ease into it—both teacher and students. This means some degree of compromise at first. One general way of easing in is to limit for a while the quantity of materials, activities, and choices put into play, then to open up gradually to full volume and variety. Learning stations are an excellent way to do this. A learning station is a place stocked with the wherewithal for a certain activity—such as game materials, books, tapes, machines, or art gear—and surmounted by a poster giving directions. Since a

classroom can't contain more than ten to twenty stations, they limit choice just about the right amount for beginners at the same time as they make self-managing easier. The directions, the materials, and the place are brought together for a working party. Once they've worked at all or most of the learning stations, students will be ready to seek out activity cards, materials, and a place on their own.

Another way is to put all activities into play but to direct students more at first about which to do. This is tricky, because if you do not direct them toward self-reliance, they will get in or remain in dependent habits.

A third general way is to do more large-group or whole-class work until students get to know the materials and the system.

Try not to assume too much dependence and to compromise more than you need to, and be sure to allow for much individual variation in youngsters' readiness to operate this way. We hope the following list will serve usefully as a set of strategies that you can combine in your own way.

- Plunge in with the full system of individualizing and small groups but make available for a while only a subset of the materials and activities so that students are not overwhelmed by choice nor you by counseling. The subset might comprise some of the more basic and repeatable activities and those materials most attractive to your students.
- Set up five or six groups such that each student knows or chooses some but not all of the other members. Then give each group an activity card to do in a class period and to describe afterwards to the other groups. In this way, working parties will do different things at the same time, share their products afterward, and acquaint everyone with those five or six activity cards. The next class period, rotate the groups until each group has done each activity.
- Set up several groups and give each a number of activity cards to look over and choose one from. After they have finished, ask each group to tell and show what it did. Then list the activities and let anyone sign up for any activity or choose from among the unselected cards. Attach to each card the names of those who did it the first round so that the second crew can consult with them.
- Do one activity at a time with the whole class, projecting the activity card as you read from it and referring to it frequently as students do the steps together. Use the occasion to point out all the typical features of the card as we did on pages 62 and 63. After several activities have been completed, let students choose one of those to do again and help them to form up working parties.
- Sample some of the books one at a time for the whole class by reading aloud from them or playing a recording of the texts. Then again let students choose among these and form groups. Next, project two or three activity cards for reading follow up.
- Allow students who appear self-reliant to choose activities and form their own working parties while you take others aside a group at a time to stick with them through enough activities that they get the idea and can start working without you. Teach a group to play a game; then replace yourself in that group with a student new to the game and let old hands teach her, until eventually most of the class knows most of the games. This will start some dependent children doing group work without you. In the meantime, ask the more self-reliant ones to lead a couple of the others through an activity they've already done.

- Break the class into small groups and give each a game to play. Then let them exchange games. Continue games until you think they're ready to start other activities. Now try one of the procedures above.

However you start, you want to make sure, of course, that individuals begin sometime to do different things, to work alone sometimes, and to work with a variety of classmates. Use the launching process to give all students experience with all components—books, activity cards or areas, recordings, games, and other materials. Start the charting and counseling system as soon as students have got beyond merely getting acquainted with the materials and the system and are starting to individualize enough so that you can differentiate their different experience records and their future needs.

The secret is to avoid paralyzing students with too many or too difficult choices and yet keep them making decisions. Some teachers without activity cards simply write on the board a list of activities that students can choose from. Even if the choice is only one out of two or three alternatives, that's a beginning and would threaten only the most extreme cases.

Another common sort of immaturity that must be dealt with is the tendency to lump all activity cards together in the mind and say, "I've done activity cards," as if the similarity in the form of the directions means that the activities themselves are alike. Such a student will flip through cards and be unable to find anything to do or go through activities like popcorn. Make this student slow down and really pay attention. Her growth will consist of learning to discriminate differences, so help her do this with the cards themselves by taking her or her group step by step through at least a couple of cards so that she dwells on the steps and options and cross-references along the way. She needs to do a few activities with such loving care, and so enjoy the fruits of her labors, that thereafter she understands that each activity feels different.

Newcomers to school have no more problems working in a curriculum of individual choice and small-group process than they would starting off in any other kind of curriculum, whereas the longer students have been in school, the harder it is for them to make *any* significant change. If you teach older students, you can expect some to resent and resist being asked to do things differently. They need to be reassured that all this new stuff is really "English" and that it isn't just your personal "trip."

They may test your own conviction and steadfastness about it. Some will not thank you for requiring them to make decisions and to rouse out of their familiar school stupor. But if while understanding the reluctance to have the game changed on them midway, you hold a steady course toward their personal responsibility and deep involvement with their own learning, you will see resurrections as gratifying as anything a teacher can experience.

PART

BASIC PROCESSES

II

The seven chapters that make up Part Two encompass the language arts themselves. Through them the ten modes of discourse arrayed in Part Three are experienced. None of these basic activities is ever completed or outgrown. Each is a lifelong human way of processing experience through language.

CHAPTER

TALKING AND LISTENING

FOUR

This chapter covers task talk and topic talk, considering the learner as both speaker and listener. *INFORMAL CLASSROOM DRAMA* covers other spontaneous talk, of a fictitious sort.

Listening is developed incidentally by many activities in this curriculum—by playing games, listening to recordings, viewing films and slidetapes, serving as audience for other students' performances, participating in writing workshops, and so on—but talking and improvising especially feature interaction. They call for an immediate response by making the listener and speaker constantly exchange roles. Having something to listen *to* is not all that is needed for exercising listening skill. The learner must have something to listen *for*—a good *reason* to listen. Purely as audience for a performance, he may respond only inwardly, and inner responses may be enough, for the moment. But listening often prepares for action, either now or later. And when the listener takes outward action right away as the result of what he hears—as in conversing and improvising—he learns to attend carefully and respond relevantly so that on those occasions when he does not take action immediately, his inner responses are richer.

To listen well one must truly *receive*, not jam the channel by transmitting at the same time. On the other hand, the perpetual sound issuing from electronic media and urban bustle numb many children to the point of simply tuning out sound. Classroom experience calling for responses by listeners acts as a corrective. The reason we do not isolate the treatment of listening in this book is that activities that *entail* attention, as a preparation for action of one's own, teach listening skills far better than special drills focusing on listening alone.

Talk can take on forms and purposes in school that provide learning of a sort seldom occurring in casual out-of-school conversation. Because vocal exchange requires the listener to comprehend and the speaker to compose, it's a good way to amass voluminous, timely, and well-motivated practice in getting and giving meaning. This process transfers readily to reading and writing. Comprehending ideas, relations, and styles presented orally helps a person understand these in a book. Listening is the foundation for reading at all ability levels of comprehension, just as talking is the foundation for writing at all levels of composition. Because constant practice in good interaction are the best teachers of speaking and listening, talk in small groups should be a staple learning activity for all grades and allotted a large amount of time in the curriculum.

When talk teaches, the speakers are picking up ideas and developing them: substantiating, qualifying, and elaborating; building on, amending, and varying each other's sentences, statements, and images. All these are part of an external social process that each member of the group gradually internalizes as a personal thought process: he begins to think in the ways that the group talks. Not only does he take unto himself the vocabulary, usage, and syntax of others and synthesize new creations out of their various styles, points of view, and attitudes, he also structures his thinking into mental operations resembling those of the group interactions. Good discussions by groups build toward good thinking by individuals.

Your job is to establish those small-group interactions that, when internalized by individuals, will most enhance the growth of thought and speech. For students the purposes for conversing need not, and in most cases should not, be to improve their listening and speaking skills, but rather to solve a problem, explore a topic, play a game, complete a group-chosen project, and so on. Although the most mature may appreciate the skills for their own sake, most youngsters need more practical and satisfying goals. Conversing activities should allow for this. The practices presented in this chapter aim to accommodate both their immediate motivation and longer-range goals.

A major issue for the teacher concerns how much to lead and how much to leave alone. The more you lead, the more those who have most to learn about conversing will speak to and for you only and be lost without you. And yet without some guidance from you, many youngsters will simply fall back on old vocal habits and not experience what good talk can do for them. Do allow, however, for the tremendous help that activity cards and other self-directing materials can afford in focusing and structuring group talk when you aren't there, especially to the extent that talk interweaves with other activities. You play your part in peer talk as much when you make or choose activity directions as when you influence their talk directly while it's occurring.

TASK TALK

An easy way to gain interactive experience toward topic discussion arises naturally as a by-product of doing other things. This "incidental" talk actually teaches a great deal about vocal exchange and often exercises thought and speech as much as discussion having only that goal.

■ GIVING DIRECTIONS

Whenever students are collaborating, a natural situation exists for giving and taking directions. The classroom should provide repeated opportunities for a member who knows how to do something to share what he knows with others, giving them step-by-step instructions. For example, a knowledgeable student might show others how to work certain equipment, how to make an art project, how to set up a science experiment, how to work a puzzle, or how to play a game. Giving directions poses one of the most challenging kinds of communication problems. See *DIRECTIONS*.

■ PROJECTS

Rather than necessarily focusing on the process of discussion itself, a group of inexperienced learners can focus on a concrete goal such as making a magnet, acting out a text, or inventing a new board game. Any collaboration calls for discussion—planning ahead and working out details along the way.

Putting together a collection such as a museum, collage, bulletin board display, or anthology involves selecting, ordering, and arranging items—a process that provides an important stimulus for task-oriented language. A group-produced TV show, radio broadcast, slide presentation, newspaper, book, literary magazine, encyclopedia with pictures, or catalogue of information, such as a telephone or address book or consumer's guide, requires considerable planning plus later maintenance talk.

Older learners can coordinate research projects by different groups on a common topic such as organic gardening so that a variety of information-gathering techniques like interviews, case studies, surveys, eyewitness reporting, library research, experiments, or journals might all contribute to final information-sharing, significant discussion, and a full-scale report. Such multigroup projects entail frequent exchanges to coordinate, compare, and otherwise interrelate.

■ GAMES

Disagreements arise when playing card and board games because players interpret or remember rules differently, so players have to remind each other, discuss their varying understanding of the rules, and refer to the written rules as evidence. Most folk games such as charades, Password, or Twenty Questions are known by different rules, and one of the valuable problems players face is to reach agreement on some version or compromise of versions of how to play. Generally, games entail as well other vocal exchange to monitor and maintain play. Game rules and materials provide the easiest way for students to get used to interacting without the teacher.

■ BRAINSTORMING

Much task talk centers on solving practical problems. Brainstorming is a technique for quickly bringing forth from a group a great number of different and stimulating ideas for solving a problem. Instead of weighing ideas as they come up, members "storm their brains" for further possibilities, withholding judgment for the sake of amassing as many solutions as they can think of.

A recorder who can write fast should put all suggestions on a blackboard or large sheet of paper where the group can see them. Each participant sitting in a semicircle can call out his thought or suggestion as soon as there is an opening, and the recorder should write it immediately. Participants should be encouraged to give off-the-top-of-the-head, rapid-fire thoughts, not apologizing for the wildness or silliness of any suggestion. Evaluation will come later. No analysis, editorial comment, or negative criticism of anyone else's ideas should be allowed. At this point, the more ideas the better. The goal is for the group to concentrate fully and build toward as intense an experience as possible.

Encourage groups to try out various graphic forms for recording their thoughts. They may start out with a simple list and then find that they are listing mixed things that they want to separate. So the recorder might list some things in

one place on the board or paper and other things elsewhere on it. Thus clumping and circling may help, and eventually the group may want to connect the circled clumps by hubs-with-spokes, branching, or some other means of mapping relations among the ideas.

Wait a while for the evaluation of the ideas—a day or so for older students. The next session can begin with the recorder reading all the ideas, and the group can classify them as:

- Good ideas that can be tried right away.
- Long-range projects or projects that need some rethinking.
- Unusable ideas.

It's in this second session that a true discussion occurs. The wealth of suggestions must be organized, reflected upon, and evaluated.

Any problem or subject of interest to the students is good grist for a brainstorming session. Problems may be personal ones (how to make friends), broad social issues (ways to help the homeless), subjects related to school (ways to extend readership of student writing beyond the classroom), or ways to do or make something (a way of watering classroom plants over weekends and vacations).

Older students may want to refine their consideration of a problem by spreading it over five brainstorming sessions according to the analytic structure below. Each session deals with only one question.

1. What is the issue, problem, or goal?
2. What has caused this situation or keeps us from accomplishing our goal?
3. What might we do to solve the problem or reach the goal?
4. Is there anything that will prevent us from doing this?
5. What should be our next steps?

Brainstorming builds facility, imagination, and confidence in individuals and will serve them in good stead when faced with improvising or writing tasks that call for quick-witted facility and abundance of concrete ideas. The critique and ordering of the suggestions that follow the initial brainstorming session foster analytical thinking and categorizing. At the same time, participants feel communal commitment to the ideas generated, which they view as the property of the group as a whole. As a way to develop a subject out of a practical interest, brainstorming represents a transition between task talk and topic talk.

TOPIC TALK

Topic talk exists primarily to deal with a relatively disembodied subject and is not merely a by-product of some other activity. Like problem-solving, however, talking about physically present objects or pictures provides a concrete approach to the relative abstractness of topic discussion.

■ SHOW-AND-TELL

A natural avenue of this sort at all ages is show-and-tell—if listeners are encouraged to participate and if the group is small (three to six). Although a fine transi-

tion from play prattle to speech modified for a listener, talking while showing belongs no more to small children than to adults, who do exactly this when they demonstrate appliances, explain exhibits, chat about a “conversation piece” on the coffee table, or use a skeleton to teach anatomy.

But as a school practice, it should be done in small groups without an adult leader. Large groups intimidate those who would most benefit from show-and-tell and discourage questioning, without which the main value is lost. The main value for the undeveloped child, whose utterances tend to be short, egocentric, and undetailed, is to encourage elaboration. For the more developed learner, small-group, interactive show-and-tell gives help in stating and organizing better the material he has begun to elaborate. The trick for both is to use dialogue to make the monologue fuller and better verbalized for an audience. This experience will improve written composition before pen ever touches paper.

Show-and-tell allows the speaker to take off from a familiar or loved object that he feels and knows more about than his audience does and that, by prompting ideas, helps him to find and sustain and maybe even organize a subject. But the very personal nature of the object challenges his egocentricity, for outsiders do not share his feeling and knowledge.

As he talks, he can look at the object and do things with it, which will suggest things to say, but his speech continuity can no longer merely follow the blow-by-blow continuity of his play. What he does is tell stories about how he got the object or what he has done with it, or give information about what it is and how it works. His speech diverges somewhat from the ongoing action, becomes more independent, and necessarily becomes more abstract. While pointing, he inevitably talks of some things that cannot be pointed to—the past, feelings, purpose, function, and certain general information. But to be an important kind of learning, show-and-tell must be taken seriously and made a flexible, staple process for any age.

PROCEDURE

Help students to come together in groups small enough to reduce shyness, encourage interaction, permit listeners to examine the object, and afford everyone a long enough turn without tiring the group.

Second, make clear through activity directions and by your own example that listeners should question and otherwise contribute. Let the shower-teller begin as he will. When he has said all that initially occurs to him, encourage the audience by solicitation and example to ask natural questions: “When did they give it to you?” “What happened to the wing there?” “What’s the red button for?” “What do you do if you want to get the money out again?” “Where do you keep it?” “Do you let your brother use it?” These questions call for anecdote, explanation, and information. They are asked at first, if necessary, by the teacher and then by the other listeners as they grasp the possibilities.

Questions act as prompts that replace play as a cue for ideas. They cause the speaker to sustain his subject, to elaborate. With experience, the speaker will be more likely to anticipate questions and supply more information and background without waiting for questions to prompt him. Thus the monologue element will grow. A lot of practice in oral explaining can even influence the order of information—the mentioning of certain items first so that later items will be clearer. Questioning, then, allows the needs of the audience to influence the speaker.

Another sort of contribution from the audience can take the form of similar anecdotes or information summoned to mind in the listeners by what the speaker is saying. A good session can, in fact, produce a spontaneous “thematic unit” in this way that could lead to making a booklet or display together featuring similar objects and experiences. A pupil in Texas who brought to school an extracted tooth stimulated his listeners to contribute in turn their tooth stories, and another telling of an object he acquired while lost one day prompted his listeners to compare adventures when they got lost.

Third, the talk might be given a special focus by directions asking students to bring, on different occasions, something that (1) has a good story behind it, (2) they made or grew, (3) means a great deal to them, or (4) moves or works in a funny or interesting way. This is how show-and-tell can become something of a composition assignment. Narrative, exposition, and explanation are emphasized in turn by calling for objects that are associated with memories or that have certain characteristics.

Some objects were acquired in an interesting way or have had curious things happen to them; thereby hangs a tale (narrative), so the speaker must grapple with sequence and continuity. Drawings and paintings that he has done also contain stories—fantasies or real events—that the artist can relate as he explains his picture. If the speaker tells how he made or grew the object, he is describing a process. If he tells how he feels about it, he is doing a personal oral essay. Gadgets, machines, and other apparatus elicit explanation of purpose and operation.

Show-and-tell will grow as students grow, for their meaningful objects will reflect their maturing amusements, crafts, thoughts, and feelings. But for older students, call show-and-tell by another name to avoid suggesting that they are continuing a childish activity. Talking while displaying or pointing can blend with activities described in *LABELS AND CAPTIONS*, which features the coordination of words with things. Thus, show-and-tell not only parallels the juxtaposition of words and pictures in a book but also prepares for such monologues as slide-show and film narrations, display and exhibit explanations, presentations with an overhead projector, and sales pitches, all of which are activities to make available also. The television talk-show format provides a more mature-seeming occasion for older students to combine show-and-tell presentation with other dialogue.

To make the connection with composition, show-and-tell activity directions should include an option to write up the presentation and, after it has benefited from audience interaction, print it with others as a book of memories or how-to-do-it or whatever.

■ SMALL-GROUP DISCUSSION

By *discussing* we mean small-group topic talk, not what has generally been called class discussion, which is rarely a real discussion. The sheer size of a classroom of students precludes enough attention, participation, and interaction—three essentials for authentic discussion. To maintain continuity the teacher invariably talks too much. You may resort to prompting by questions to keep the discussion going, and most class members may play only the very restricted role of answering these questions, unless they are the loquacious few who carry on long monologues. Usually the questions are ones to which the teacher knows the answer. Serial exchanges between you and pupil A, then you and pupil B, and so on, may

serve another purpose, such as checking information or soliciting scattered opinions, but this is not discussion. Very experienced veterans of small-group talk may eventually become capable of making large-group discussion work, but if so that is an end not a means, for the amount of practice it affords a given individual always remains small.

Small-group discussion should be a staple, significant classroom process given the same kind of importance and commitment afforded reading or writing activities. It's through discussing that learners face the challenge of defining, clarifying, qualifying, elaborating, analyzing, and ordering experiences, concepts, opinions, or ideas, thereby developing their thinking and verbalizing skills for reading and writing.

Your basic job as the teacher is to create a good climate for conversation—relaxed but concentrated. The tone must be warm and friendly but not saccharine. Everything you do should show you truly value what your students say, well beyond mere polite attention. The art of conversing is at once a profound social and cognitive activity, based on real respect, not etiquette.

You may have to train at least some of your students to talk seriously to each other. Your hardest job will probably be to determine who needs training and how best to help them without keeping them dependent on you. See pages 50 to 54 in *SETTING UP* for general suggestions on forming and running groups.

It's easy to conclude erroneously that students don't know how to converse seriously and effectively, because many factors other than discussion ability can account for bad discussions. Aside from the number and personalities of the particular people forming the group, a major factor is motivation, which depends in turn on the nature of the topic, how it was chosen, why the topic is to be discussed in the first place, whether results will lead to other action, and what sort of warm-up, if any, preceded discussion.

EMBEDDED DISCUSSION

Until students have become seasoned discussants, they may not see the value of discussion for its own sake. To choose to discuss a topic with no warm-up or follow-up activities presupposes students who have already got used to good talk and know that it has its own rewards. Before reaching this point, most students of any age will need for the discussion to be embedded into a continuity of other activities leading in and out of it. We don't mean now merely task talk that accompanies other action, for that has no crystallized topic.

An example of topic talk embedded in a bigger framework would be a discussion of what the moral of a fable should be after reading it without its moral. Activity directions might say to listen to the fable, write down on a slip of paper what one thinks the moral should be, read aloud the proposed morals, then either choose one or fashion a new one that group members think expresses the moral best, and finally reveal what the author's moral was. Revealing the author's moral may, in fact, provoke further discussion if partners disagree with it.

The activity really just specifies how to go about discussing the meaning of a reading selection—or of a fellow member's composition—in a way pertinent to the fable form. In effect, the activity directions provide warm-up and follow-up for discussion and program the structure of it to the extent, for example, of forcing a summary statement—the moral the group members choose. The suspense about what the author's moral is adds interest to their own discussion, but the

main motivation is to compare their understandings of the fable and to work out one that fits best.

As this example suggests, various activities embedding discussion within other language arts activities may well set up successful discussion so that training may not be necessary. Discussion of both reading selections and each other's writing will often naturally center on topics. Members of a group reading a selection in common can follow the practice on page 161 of writing down questions or other topics and bringing these to the discussion. And whenever a writing-workshop group tries to work out just what the main idea of a member's composition is, that automatically focuses discussion on a topic (what the author's "theme" was). Talking about a text also furnishes knowledge common to all group members to which they can refer for evidence.

Other good embedded discussions occur when activity directions say to write about a personal problem (real or made-up) as a letter to an advice column, then to answer such a letter for each other. That is, each writes a problem letter and after these are read one at a time in the group, the members discuss the best solution to each. For one thing, this activity solicits topics from students themselves, which ensures a lot of motivation. Directions can follow up discussion by telling the group to draft a collective response or to write separate responses. These can be posted along with the problem letter for other students to read and judge. Part Three, "Developmental Speaking, Reading, and Writing," contains many other examples of interwoven reading, speaking, writing, drawing, or viewing photos, and so on that frame small-group discussion of topics.

Before you conclude that certain of your students don't know how to discuss, try some such activities. Letting students discuss topics drawn from social studies, science, or math will extend the possibilities of involved, purposeful talk. It is not the purpose of a discussion to convey information; that should be done elsewhere—through trips, reading, classroom pets, films, and life experience. But subject-matter studies can supply the information that students can put into meaningful frameworks of ideas by means of discussion, at the same time sharpening their communication skills. Citing information from one source or another should certainly become common practice in discussing topics.

ESTABLISHING CONDITIONS

Attentive involvement is the main quality of a good conversationalist. And the main problem is distraction, whether it comes from outside the group, from irrelevant private associations of ideas, or from entanglements of personalities. So, at first, you exert an influence against distraction and for concentration. This need not and should not be done in a disciplinary way. Members of the group are seated in a circle, perhaps around a table. A specific visual focus may help: they can write the subject on a placard or chalkboard close by, or place the picture or object within easy view. One teacher solved the noise problem in a ninth-grade class by placing a group in a corner of the classroom with a microphone and an interconnected set of headphones. An interesting advantage of this ingenious makeshift arrangement is that students listen more closely to each other and concentrate better.

The basic conditions for small-group discussion are matters of common sense. Group members need to agree on a topic, say what they think about it, listen to what others say about it, respond to what others say, and stick to the topic.

The question, about which teachers may disagree, is whether these commonsense conditions, which in fact define small-group discussion, need to be stated and taught to students as rules.

An initial presentation of rules may help some less mature children to conceptualize discussion behavior, which may, in turn, help them to achieve it. A demonstration by one group for the rest of the class may also help. Once good interactive habits have been formed, the rules can be dropped. Small children may like ritual, but procedure should be emphasized no more than is necessary to induce the habits. Sometimes "collaborative learning" becomes so formularized through elaborate briefing and debriefing and other structuring procedures that students lose control of their own speech, which then lacks the spontaneous interaction that makes discussion worthwhile.

You may not need to set up rules at all, depending on the development of your students, but can let them remind each other when they're all talking at once, not participating, getting off the subject, or asserting egos more than ideas. How much does common sense have to be taught? Actually, the best way for members of a group to deal with these problems is to listen to themselves as they play back tapes of their own discussions. Even primary children can hear what they need to change. Try this before deciding you should teach common sense in the form of rules.

Some teachers who have tried small-group discussion and been disappointed have concluded too readily that poor results meant that rules and a leader were necessary. If students are using the small-group discussion time to "get away with stuff" because you are not leading them, or if certain personalities deadlock the group, or if an inept attack on a topic leads to a dead end, it may well *appear* that the problem is the students' lack of understanding of how to interact. But we have to ask *why* a group isn't discussing well. Failure may have more to do with distraction, impulsivity, poor motivation, and egocentricity than with ignorance of commonsense principles of interaction. You will do better to gain insight into these causes, as you will through experience, than to rely on rules.

If, for example, discussants are not really involved in the subject, then of course the talk will fall apart. When small-group discussion fails, we find, it's usually because the teacher or the program has set the topic. As so often, student decision-making accounts for the difference. Or the particular people in the group do not know or trust each other well enough yet to talk freely. Or they may have chosen the topic and mix easily socially but need some practical framework or goal.

Before you make judgments about what ineffectual groups need, let them try topic discussion when it is embedded in integrated language arts activities, such as the fable example mentioned earlier, or such as the captioning of photos and other activities in Part Three, "Developmental Speaking, Reading, and Writing." The degree to which small-group discussion is isolated or integrated makes enormous difference in how well students go about it. Furthermore, many groups that fall apart or fail to follow commonsense principles will discuss well when following activity directions, which to some extent can build in the focus, the reminding, and the strategies that a teacher might provide. Habits of autonomous peer interaction in all other activities, finally, do wonders for small-group discussion in particular because the heart of the matter is social collaboration anyway.

TEACHING THE PROCESS

If well convinced from trials and observation that your students truly cannot discuss well without some training with you, then consider how you might best take

part in problem groups. Even students who *can* discuss without you might well benefit from your sitting in occasionally. But without *leading* discussion, you can establish a positive tone and model the ideal participant by listening closely, responding pertinently, calling attention to hang-ups in group functioning, and suggesting strategies for dealing with the topic. A major reason youngsters may not listen to each other is that they assume that they can learn only from adults, not from other minor critters like themselves. If you attend to and value their peer talk, they will also. As in many other matters, real attention establishes value. If you praise and blame, however, or otherwise make yourself the motive center of the group, students will talk to and for you, not to and for peers, and consequently will listen only to you and use the time while another member is talking to prepare their next bright remark for you to praise. The problem of inattention decreases as the peer-to-peer nature of the group becomes real to youngsters.

Fasten them on each other. When some students are not listening well to one another, you can ask one to repeat what another has just said. You should resist the temptation to repeat what a soft-spoken child has contributed, thus focusing the attention of the group on you. Ask him or a classmate to do that so you build toward independence from your leadership even as you exert it. The measure of your success is how well the discussion goes without you, how soon the participants can take over your role. By enabling youngsters to exchange with their peers in learning ways you are giving them a great educational gift for the rest of their lives. After all, any teacher's ultimate goal is to become unnecessary. If you need too much to feel needed, you unconsciously keep the students dependent on you.

ESTABLISHING THE MEANING OF THE TOPIC. Participants need to understand the question or topic in the same way, but is it better to discover discrepancies in understanding it at the outset, or will it be more valuable for learners to discover in the course of discussion that they are taking a term or concept in different ways? Suppose children are discussing animal communication, and it is clear to you that some are thinking only of mammals, with whom they identify much more than with birds, reptiles, or fish. (Discussion sessions give you important insights into students' concepts and knowledge so you can better fit other learning into the frameworks they already have.) A lot of good discussion consists of defining the topic itself.

You could post a rule that discussion should begin with taking turns saying what the topic or key words in it mean. Or while sitting in you could say that you think Ellen and Robin don't mean the same thing when they refer to the term or topic. Then they can check this out. Or you can help discussants habitually listen for this when playing back a tape. In other words, by instituting certain procedures you can head off a problem so that the activity "runs more smoothly," but the ultimate question is which way will teach the most. This is a typical sort of judgment that a teacher has to make. The better you know your students, the easier it is to decide.

Common understanding about the topic does provide a touchstone for relevance when the group is wondering if some utterances are getting off the subject. But of course the very exploration of a topic often leads to new conception of it—a discussion value that must be allowed for in setting a topic and sticking to it.

KEEPING THE FOCUS. Usually all that an off-subject utterance requires is a neutral reminder. But try to be aware of why students digress. If too many discussants wander frequently from the topic, you had better ask if the subject really interests

them, or determine what else the matter might be. They might discuss what would be a better topic. Digressing is, after all, mostly a matter of uninvolvement. Think of how difficult it is to divert even a small child from something he wants to do very badly. But digression may also arise because of involvement. Something just said may remind a child that "Daddy locked himself out of the house yesterday" or set him to wondering, "What would happen if a locomotive got too hot and started to turn red all over?" Though irrelevant to the group's present focus, these are legitimate private associations and should not appear as enemies to the teacher or as mistakes to the child. You simply say, "That might be a good incident to act out next time" or "You can suggest that for a later topic." No remark is ultimately inappropriate, only immediately inappropriate. All ideas get their time; another idea has the floor now.

REPETITIONS AND NON SEQUITURS. Immature discussants sometimes repeat what someone else just said. If you suspect this is caused by inattention, try asking, "You are agreeing with Joan, then?" or "Did you hear Joan say that before?" This lets the repeater know that he may have missed something and also shows that you are setting an example of listening. But consider the possibility that this person repeats as a way of trying to participate when he is not confident enough yet to venture his own ideas.

Another characteristic of immature discussion is abrupt change of topic. Some non sequiturs, however, are not born of inattention; a learner may be breaking new ground in another aspect of the topic. Help the group determine this and at least acknowledge that a shift *has* occurred. Do they accept this or want to shift back once they know what the non sequitur means?

Occasionally, when you feel that a certain remark is especially fruitful or difficult or deserving of thought, you might ask someone to paraphrase what was said. Such feeding back can help the speaker to know how well he was understood as well as sharpen listening among peers. Part of your role is to heighten awareness of pace so that ideas are given their relative due and the discussion thickens and thins at appropriate places.

THE IMPULSIVE INTERRUPTER. If someone seriously interrupts another's sentence, say, "Brad hasn't finished yet," in a factual rather than accusing tone of voice, or "Remember about waiting your turn"; or make a simple gesture that says, "Hold off a moment." In extreme cases, when a chronically impulsive child habitually interrupts, you may as well focus the group momentarily on this problem and discuss it before proceeding, if the group seems mature enough. Ask what they all might do to help the interrupter listen more and wait for his turn. The point is that when an individual problem impairs group functioning, it is then a group problem also, and time should be taken to restore functioning. Turning in annoyance on the individual culprit makes him defensive and makes matters worse; he needs rational help. If the group can think of no solution, ask the interrupter to act as recorder for several minutes, listening only, and perhaps taking notes, and then, when the time is up, to tell in his own words the gist of what the group said, and to voice what he thinks of what they said.

The interrupter's difficulty in waiting usually stems from one or more of three things—impulsive inability to delay responses, egocentric disregard for what others say, or overanxiety about having a chance to get attention. Small-

group rather than whole-class discussions will at least provide the interrupter with more opportunity for the attention from others that he needs.

ENCOURAGING PARTICIPATION. A discussant who wants to talk doesn't raise his hand; his cue to speak is simply someone else's stopping. If you call on members who raise their hands, you inevitably become the focus of the group. Hearing out the last speaker and then starting to speak without signaling will help students listen to and focus on each other. Don't worry about silences. Usually people are thinking then. If you rush to fill silences, they'll feel there's something wrong with staying quiet for a while. Eventually you might ask a question they could ask themselves without you—that is, whether they've exhausted the topic or just need a new angle on it.

It may help shier members to have an understanding for a while that each member will say in turn at the outset what he thinks about the topic. Then members can comment on each other's openings. Groups discussing without the teacher may still want to agree to do this if members feel it useful. If someone doesn't participate for a long time, you can say, "We haven't heard from you yet," or "What comes to your mind about this?" Sometimes just looking at a person will draw him out. Reticent people may need a skillful alternation of encouraging and letting alone. They probably want help joining in but don't want to feel pushed.

QUESTIONING. One sort of participation you can model is that of good questioning. Occasionally interject questions calling for elaboration, clarification, or qualification. These should not be mere conversation prompters; they should express your real feeling that what a speaker has said is incomplete, unclear, exaggerated, or overgeneralized. Whereas a declarative statement to that effect sounds critical and omniscient, an honest question or request expressed unaggressively in a natural tone of voice can help the speaker think a little more. This can set a good example for the listeners, who may have found the statement incomplete or unclear too but were not aware that they did, or, with naive acceptance, did not realize that questioning might relieve their uncertainty. You might say: "Will you explain that a little more?" (clarification); "All animals?" or "Is there a time when that is *not* true?" (qualification); "Tell us some more about what they do because I'm not sure yet how that fits in." "Can you give some examples?" "What other possibilities are there?" or "What would happen if you did that?" (elaboration).

HELPING WITH HANG-UPS. Even if agreement about terms should head off some definitional misunderstandings, as new words and concepts are introduced into discussion, the problem may keep cropping up. If so, you might say, "Leon, I think when you say 'power' you're including a lot of things Anne doesn't have in mind." Or ask another member if he thinks those two students mean the same thing by the word. Either you or another student should try to say what Leon means and what Anne means. Leon and Anne can be asked if that is, in fact, what they do mean. In other words, hang-ups should come under discussion until, again, the group process continues unimpaired.

If you believe a disagreement stems from different information—Alice has seen so-and-so and Elmer has heard or read something different—you may ask them each, "Where did you learn that?" or "What do you think proves what you

say?" Partly, this questioning is intended to establish the habit of asking for, and giving, evidence. Documenting statements is something that small-group discussion should pursue eventually in many ways. Mainly, at first, you help the students to see how some disputes may be resolved by getting more or better information, or at least to see that different information is the source of the dispute. This could lead to research that could be brought into the next session.

For disagreements founded on different values, you can only remark, "Jeff and Carol seem to be arguing over a difference in what they like. He considers machines very important, and she doesn't because she cares a lot more about live things." This does not, of course, resolve the disagreement—which isn't your job—but it serves to clarify the basis of the disagreement.

Often, blockages reflect personal relations among the participants. If doing so does not embarrass them too much, you might remark, perhaps humorously, "Ed and Rick always seem to disagree, no matter what the subject is," or ask, "Do you always agree with Julia?" Another person may say, "Sure, they like each other." (Giggles.) "Do you think you can like each other and still disagree sometimes?" It's true that a teacher shouldn't meddle with students' personal relationships, but, as you can bring out, when feelings they have about each other interfere with the activities of the group, the group has some right to talk about them. As a general principle, whatever impedes discussion of the topic can itself become the topic until the way is cleared again. Metacommunication—talk about talk—is fair game as a practical matter of troubleshooting their own functioning. If members want to get on with their discussion, they have a good reason for wanting to improve their group interaction.

In some cases personality clashes can't be lessened by group attention, and what is needed is a change in the make-up of the group so that these students don't have to work together for now. Sometimes one student will so dominate the others that the best thing to do is to add new members who might challenge the dominant one.

Sometimes when discussants get blocked because they have exhausted all the ways they know to think about a subject, you can encourage them to think about the topic from a fresh point of view. If they're discussing shoplifting, for example, and they reach an impasse, you might ask them to consider the problem from the point of view of a store owner or law enforcement officer or insurance adjuster. They could even role-play these personages.

TOPICS

Discussants must choose their own topics, whether they make them up or borrow them. If students talk about what they care about, small-group discussion usually succeeds. But you may help groups to frame topics that best express their interest and to cast them in the most useful form. It makes a great deal of strategic difference, for example, whether a topic is a word ("Suicide"), a phrase ("The Increase in Teenage Suicide"), a sentence-statement ("Adult neglect causes teenage suicide"), or a sentence-question ("Why are so many adolescents committing suicide today?"). A yes-or-no topic like "School campuses should be open" invites an either-or response and thus may block qualification and refinement of thought. "When should ...?", "Who should ...?", and "Why should ...?" will probably elicit more thoughtful exchange.

As students mature, topics can be stated so as to call for increasingly difficult thinking tasks. The following broad types of topics roughly exemplify an order of difficulty.

ENUMERATION. The kind of topic most appropriate for beginning conversationalists calls for listing or enumeration; for example, “How many different ways does an animal get food?” Listing is, in the first place, a simple kind of thinking but an important one, and we know that small children can do it and learn from it. Cognitively, the process is one of furnishing positive instances of a category, “Animal Ways of Food-Getting” or “Uses of the Magnet.” This relates to concept formation. Disagreement occurs when an instance is offered—say, birds flying south to get food—and another child objects, in effect, that the instance is negative, not positive. (Birds fly south, he says, for reasons other than to get food.) If the category is vehicles, “sled” may be challenged as an example. These disputes lead to precision of concepts and finer discrimination, to more analytical thinking.

Second, listing requires the least sophisticated interaction among learners. Essentially, it is a piling of ideas, like brainstorming. A suggestion by one makes another think of something along the same line. Disagreement over instances, however, does represent greater interaction and a step upward from mere influence by association of ideas.

Enumerative topics may be of different sorts that can be roughly scaled to form a progression. For the youngest children the topics should be concrete, such as: “How many ways can you think of to use a ping-pong ball? A brick? A coat hanger?” and so on. For more mature learners the enumerative topics can call for categories that are more abstract, complex, or novel, such as: “How do people get other people to do what they want?” Finally, enumeration topics can call for listing in a rank order according to some system of priorities: “If you were leaving your home forever and could take only six things with you, what would you choose, in order of importance?”

CHRONOLOGY. Another kind of topic for beginners calls for chronological ordering—making up a group story, planning an action, or telling how something is made. Such topics could be interspersed with the enumerative kinds. Most often they will relate to other activities such as drama, writing, and making things. The purpose of discussion is to work out an order of events that is going to be carried out in some way. The process is one of building, act by act or step by step, which is relatively simple in itself but usually entails reasons for choosing one suggestion over another. Thus the main form is easy but invites some more complex kinds of thinking. Sometimes a group will think of things later that should have gone before. This backtracking and readjusting is something a closing recapitulation could help put to rights.

Planning an action also calls for chronological ordering. Questions such as “How are we going to arrange for the class to get here and not suspect our surprise?” or “How are we going to get John’s bicycle back?” call for chronologically ordered steps. To deal with a question such as “How should we go about making a bird feeder?” both enumerative and chronological orderings may be needed. For example, in order to settle on the type of feeder, a listing of things that birds will be attracted to and will peck at might have to precede a session on construction.

COMPARISON. Enumeration can lead to definition and comparison topics by making the category one of similarities or differences but taking only one or the other at a time at first: "In which ways are cars and boats alike?" or "How are you different from a chimpanzee?" Dealing simultaneously with both similarities and differences—full comparison—is rather advanced and might come after experience with just one at a time.

ANALYSIS OR EXPLANATION. These topics call for analyzing something into components and explaining how or why something is as it is. Furnishing some sort of evidence to support the analysis or explanation naturally becomes important. Topics may be stated as questions of several sorts—yes or no, which or what, how or why, and so on. Some may be put as propositions to accept, modify, or reject: "When school campuses are open, students have a better attitude about learning." A more open topic of this sort that has proven very successful at many age levels is "Do you think it is better to be the oldest child in a family, the youngest, the middle, or an only child?" The topic is of universal interest, allows participants to draw evidence from their real-life experience as well perhaps as from literature and factual reading. It staves off crude dichotomy because it has more than two alternatives, and yet the alternatives are concrete and finite. In arguing among them one may do considerable reasoning and documenting.

The more students experience small-group discussion, the more they appreciate the importance of backing up their statements with evidence, because asking each other for proof makes up a good part of intellectual interaction as young people ask *themselves* why things are so. Evidence may consist of personal experience, others' anecdotes, consensus of opinion, the word of experts, research findings, or logical conclusion. Encourage group members to ask themselves what sort of proof it would take to persuade each other of their arguments. Some remote topics, like international affairs, however, make discussants depend so much on secondhand sources that they can hardly do more than parrot what everyone else has also read or heard.

The degree of truth in a selected proverb can make a good topic for analysis. Consider "A rolling stone gathers no moss" or "Birds of a feather flock together." Translating the figurative language into literal circumstances complicates the intellectual activity and gives it a literary twist. See *IDEAS* for more suggestions for discussion and writing topics.

OPTIONAL PROCEDURES

Recording discussion sessions of beginners can help them considerably to become aware of how much they participate, how they interact, when they interrupt, when they get off the topic, and what other strategies they might take toward a topic. Playing back amounts to feeding back to yourself, which is preferable to outsider commentary, although groups might agree to exchange tapes and respond, especially if they're interested in each other's subjects. Discussing their own discussions deepens perspective and heightens awareness. By watching and discussing these same tapes, teachers too can learn perhaps better than any other way what makes and breaks discussion.

Recapitulating or summarizing their own discussion gives group members extra learning benefits and frequently proves useful for a following activity. When a group feels it has finished a topic, participants simply try to say what they

remember that's important of the ideas they generated. Individuals amend or add to what the others remember. Activity directions may require a summary so that some conclusion can become the basis of further action, but even without follow-up, discussants will get satisfaction sometimes from feeling either some resolution of their topic or some advancement of it over where they started.

Sometimes groups may find that members disagree about which points were made. Or the effort to recall and pull together their ideas may stimulate further ideas. Occasionally the act itself of summarizing helps members clarify what they did say or decide. Once all the returns are in, perspective is sometimes different. Summation is an important kind of thinking, a further abstracting of what one has already thought. Younger children will content themselves with selective recollection, but as they grow, their manner of summarizing will also grow.

If its task calls for recording a conclusion, the group can appoint a scribe to write it down. In fact, it may want a scribe to take notes throughout the discussion as well. In this case, the scribe reads back the notes, and the other members amend if necessary and dictate a summary as they thrash it out. A common use for both scribing and summarizing is to report to classmates the ideas a small group comes up with in connection with a broader project. Often, then, the scribes may become spokespersons before the whole class.

PANEL DISCUSSION

Small-group discussion may evolve into panel discussion, which is discussion held before an audience but unplanned except for the designation of a topic. Panels become one of the options open to students who have had small-group discussion experience and are mature enough to take an audience.

In general, the only necessary preparation for a panel is deciding on a topic. Discussants need not be assigned positions in advance nor directed to prepare what each will say. Dividing panelists into teams, setting up debates, and choosing dualistic yes-or-no topics all promote dogmatism rather than flexibility. Panelists bring personal biases to a discussion anyway; they should not be prevented, by a prior commitment, from changing their minds, making concessions, or finding areas of agreement with other panelists. On some occasions participants might prepare by reading something about the topic beforehand.

If small groups are feeding into a large group like the whole class, the spokespersons might form a panel to report what their groups have said, respond to each other's reports, and then invite audience commentary. If the groups have been discussing the same topic at the same time, as "buzz groups," the panelists can bring to bear on a topic the ideas of a whole class. If the groups have been conducting different investigations related to a common theme or project, panelists can interplay these varying points of view.

A discussion before an audience can take on the qualities of a workshop, whereby the discussion process itself becomes the subject as well as the original topic. The panel might sit in an inner circle facing each other and the audience in a larger concentric circle surrounding it. After responding to the panel's ideas, and perhaps summarizing them as well, the audience comments on the panelists' interaction—helpfully and considerately, to be sure.

The audience benefits by becoming aware of aspects of discussion dynamics that are hard to remain sensitive to when one is participating—things that advance or block communication. For example, a panel may circle repetitiously, become

lost in trivialities, get distracted from a good line of thought by an irrelevance, fail to pick up and develop each other's points, or get hung up unwittingly on a hidden problem of definition. Some members may dominate or contend with certain others out of personal opposition, or stubbornly reiterate just for the sake of defense. One way to become aware of problems is to observe them taking place in *another* discussion group.

EXPLOITING AUDIENCE RESPONSE. A common experience for spectators is that they find themselves itching to get into the fray. While listening, they think of counter arguments, points left out, other sorts of ideas stimulated by the panelists. This is an excellent educational moment that can be exploited in three ways. One is simply to turn the pent-up reaction into small groups to continue the forum there (assuming the panel initiated it). Another is to let some of the more aroused spectators form a second panel. A third way is to take the discussion to paper while it's hot. The audience can put down what they think about what has been said and other further thoughts stimulated by it.

MOCK PANELS. Discussion and improvisation meet in the form of mock panels, for which students play roles—that is, pretend to be certain people or kinds of people engaged in turning over an issue. They can play roles they've made up, characters from fiction, or personages from history, improvising a discussion of an issue according to how they think the characters would have talked about it. On a more abstract level, each discussant may be assigned a certain family, social, or professional role that would be expected to furnish him with a particular bias, point of view, or investment. One cast, for example, could consist of a convict, a warden, a parole officer, a district attorney, and a judge. See page 108 for more on mock panels.

MONOLOGUES

Monologue arises out of dialogue. Questions prompt the shower-teller or the interviewee to hold forth, or a small group sends its spokesperson to report its results to the whole class, or one person takes over a "talk show" and holds forth. From dialogue, the speaker learns to objectify and organize thoughts, to accommodate and interest a listener. Using this experience, he practices monologuing further with announcements, storytelling, media narrations, and speeches. Any of the ten kinds of discourse discussed in Part Three can be developed through monologue.

The continuity of a monologue must come from within the speaker, from his perception of how to string his utterances together to develop a subject. He does this spontaneously, of course, but practice in oral soloing can improve what he utters more deliberately on other occasions, as when writing. Monologuing is an important step toward sustaining composition on paper. Written monologues make up in fact a good portion of Part Three, "Kinds of Discourse."

CHAPTER

INFORMAL

CLASSROOM DRAMA

FIVE

In this chapter we suggest dramatic activities that are largely improvisational. We reserve for a later chapter the rendering of texts. "Informal classroom drama" covers the "creative dramatics" of elementary school, the "improvising" of secondary, and the "role-playing" of both. The activities these terms usually refer to hold good in most cases for a wide range of school years. The actors invent all or most of the dialogue, action, and characterization, drawing material sometimes from the surrounding culture but, if so, always remaking it in their own way.

Improvising is making up the particulars as one goes along. This creative process is at the heart of all oral language development, for any speaker plays the options of the language and makes up new sentences she has never heard before. But drama, like conversation, is not all verbal. Actors practice also the repertory of "body English" that accompanies speech or simply speaks for itself.

Drama is not necessarily theater. Theater concerns performance for an audience, whose point of view is accommodated and for whose benefit effects are calculated. Theater is a secondary effect of drama, an outgrowth appropriate in school only for experienced players who ask for an audience.

THE VALUE OF INFORMAL CLASSROOM DRAMA

None of the activities presented in this chapter are merely "games for kiddies" or "enrichment." Rather, they are a vital part of the language arts curriculum. Teachers should not feel that time spent on them takes away from reading and writing or basic literacy. Drama will definitely further such goals.

The general purposes of drama at any age are to:

- promote expression of all kinds, movement and speech harmonizing and reinforcing each other.
- limber body, mind, and tongue.
- develop concentration and focus of energy.
- single out the verbal mode from the others and thus to activate speech in particular.
- forge drama into both a learning instrument for other ends as well as an appropriate end in itself.

- make the school experience with language fun and meaningful in youngsters' terms.
- habituate students to working autonomously in small groups.
- further peer socialization of a learning sort not usually possible outside of school.
- foster intuitive understanding of style as voice, role, and stance, and of rhetoric as achieving effects on others.
- develop in the more familiar mode of dramatic play those characteristics necessary for the less familiar process of discussing, such as attending, responding, interacting, and taking turns.
- exercise and channel emotions.
- stimulate second-language acquisition through lively oral practice.

■ NONVERBAL UNDERPINNING

Though movement-to-sound, pantomime, and charades do not seem at first glance to relate directly to the development of speech, they in fact lay an important base for it. For young people, speech is only one physical activity among others (as indeed it really is for all of us), and not normally a preferred one. As a specialized mode of communication and expression, it only gradually singles itself out from movement and gesture until, in print, it becomes totally separate. For youngsters, speech accompanies other action and justifies itself only when it can do what other actions cannot.

Movement-to-sound, charades, and pantomime permit the child both to develop her powers of nonverbal modes of expression and to run up against their limitations. In pantomimes and charades, one sometimes fairly bursts to speak those things difficult to convey by movement and gesture alone. Body English helps students learn what words can do by trying to do without them. It is thus part of multimedia learning.

Conversely, body English can say some things with greater brevity and power than words can. Also, sensory awareness and intuition are often heightened when talking ceases. Nonverbal expression remains throughout the student's school experience important as a supplement to speech, a base for speech, and an alternative to speech. What should be explored are the advantages and limitations of both. All students need ample opportunity to relate words and deeds and, when possible, to translate from one to the other. In addition, physical action gives pupils a respite from language while at the same time enhancing it. Most students—like the rest of us—are hard put just to sit and work with books and paper all day.

Many of the problems that begin in the upper elementary and junior high years—destructive rebellion, alienation from school, dropping out, and crime—all can be alleviated if youngsters see school as a place where feeling and energy can be shaped and handled, instead of a place where these forces must be stifled. Many teachers are afraid that drama work will open a vent and create disorder, but nearly all people who try it find that it tends actually to lower tensions and help students behave better. Youngsters who express most feeling and meaning through the body are allowed to remain on native ground while being drawn to explore the new territory of language.

One hears much talk in education about multisensory learning and multiple intelligences—far more talk than one sees classroom implementation. The activities recommended here translate this talk into learning reality.

■ PERSONAL AND SOCIAL GROWTH

Drama exercises and focuses emotions as well as thoughts. Real feeling can be expressed in a situation made safe by the pretense “I am being someone else.” Students choose stories to enact and situations to improvise that attract them for inner reasons. Acting out some such germ of action, interacting with others at the same time, induces insight about oneself and others. It doesn’t merely elicit feeling but also shapes it in a transpersonal learning activity. It has the therapeutic value of art in general.

Dramatic activities demand concentration, involvement, and response. They show how to relate to other people. Role-playing permits trying out voices and languages not usually one’s own, to understand from the inside what it’s like to be someone else. Through the active use of the imagination a player identifies at times with both other players and with the characters in the fiction they are creating. Rotating roles and revising versions, she views interpersonal relations and problems from multiple viewpoints that develop thoughtfulness and good judgment in real life. Through dramatic experience she becomes not only more empathic about others but more confident about herself.

While mirroring the real world, drama provides a wedge into it, letting the participants prelive the feel and texture of experience before they are thrust into the risk of an actual event. In so doing, they can begin to develop some of the skills needed to handle such experiences. Even adults rehearse an important interview or upcoming speech to prepare emotionally and intellectually for a challenge. Art allows us to preplay as well as replay experience. Personal and social growth depend a great deal on opportunities to work over experience under safe conditions.

■ WRITING

Increasingly in the upper elementary and secondary school years improvisation is taken to paper. Students can begin by recording an improvised dialogue and then transcribing it later, writing it up as a play script. Pantomime can also be extended by writing (see page 214). Anything that can be improvised can be scripted, as pursued in *ACTUAL AND INVENTED DIALOGUE*.

But dramatic work improves writing in general as it does oral fluency and expression. Like conversationalists, improvisers learn to compose without going through the slow process of putting things on paper and waiting for delayed reactions. A student improvising gets fast, relevant feedback from partners and is constantly adjusting her language expression on the basis of its effects. Consider drama as an especially powerful form of the oral practice that underlies writing.

Improvising skits may seem a far cry from persuasive writing and argumentation, but in fact the connection is very close.¹ Players are constantly trying to per-

¹ See Betty Jane Wagner, *The Effects of Role Playing on Written Persuasion: An Age and Channel Comparison of Fourth and Eighth Graders*. *Dissertation Abstracts International* 43 (1987), 08-A. (UMI NO. D82-29981). Students who role played wrote significantly more persuasive letters than those who discussed rules for good persuasion and studied model letters.

suade and dissuade each other. Such tension between the different characters' motives indeed makes up much of drama, which is nothing if not rhetoric in action. Rhetoric is the art of getting effects on others. Improvisers must think up things to say that will influence each others' behavior. This means giving reasons of one sort or another. At the same time, they are refuting or discounting them as much as possible and forcing each other to counter the objections to them or find new ones. These reasons run the same gamut as in persuasive essays—from various kinds of material and authoritative evidence to pure logic. Dialoguists have to know their audience and think of reasons that will persuade or dissuade their particular interlocutor. And they must choose illustrations and wording that this person can understand and appreciate.

■ COMPREHENSION AND THINKING

Whenever students take turns as actors and audience, getting and giving feedback in cross-commentary, they have a challenging opportunity to correct their own egocentricity. As they share responses, they compare interpretations. This can be a valuable way to see how we assemble cues into inferences and how it is that, witnessing the same action, we can interpret differently. This uncovers the sort of hidden assumptions and subjective reactions that operate in our interpretation of real life and of reading matter. Physical action can be very ambiguous: some spectators will say that a pantomime is about a hunter stalking game and others will say it is about a detective tracking a criminal. Language removes much ambiguity, but, as another sort of behavior, dialogue too can be ambiguous. A guessing game is an inference task.

No other activity—except game playing, perhaps—puts such constant pressure on the participants to think on their feet, make spontaneous decisions, exercise independence, and respond to the unexpected in a flexible, creative way as dramatic invention does. Drama integrates physical, social, and intellectual forces and undergirds the language arts curriculum because drama is life made conscious.

The following activities represent different ways in which students of all ages can act out without using a script. They include not only dramatic scenes but also certain warm-up movements, acting games, play with objects, role-playing, and other inventive expression through gestures, words, and actions. These take place concurrently in the curriculum but might be begun by students in a staggered fashion, following roughly the order of their presentation in this chapter. Any one may be returned to at any point as a warm-up for a more demanding activity or as another way of coming at an experience. For example, pantomime is never outgrown; it continues to play an important part in developing one's communication skills even into adulthood.

Some of the processes presented earlier below can give students of any age the experience they need to undertake more mature improvisations. Unison actions, for example, will help students feel comfortable with one another and get used to conscious body expression. Newcomers of any age will probably need to develop their acting powers within the safety of whole-class or small, unwitnessed groups. The important thing is that dramatic inventing not be considered appropriate only for young children. The older students become, the harder it is to introduce them to dramatic work if they have never had it before, but it's important to do so for all the reasons given here and throughout this chapter.

PLAY WITH OBJECTS

The first dramatic activity of the young child is solitary play, spontaneous acting out not so much to deliberately imitate what she sees about her as to become it. This early drama wells up from a passion to relate to the environment, to know it and oneself through interacting with it. At first, toys are the stuff of drama. For the small child, they automatically imply some words and deeds; they provide a point of departure. Grasping a stuffed animal, puppet, wand, sword, stethoscope; donning a feather, cap, mustache, kerchief, or cape; standing before an imagined moon rocket or gate of gold—all these suggest to a child what to do, by evoking a host of associations in which the item is embedded in her mind. (Of course, these associations vary among cultures; a Southern African American or a Harlem Puerto Rican may find meaning in different objects than a middle-class white would.)

The stimulus of objects doesn't end with the early years. Even adults are eased into drama by concrete points of departure or stimulants that both suggest and limit the dramatic idea. Few persons, no matter how experienced, plunge right in when asked to "make up a drama." Often just one prop or object will start them off. For example, if a player places a crown on her head, her action is both stimulated and to an extent determined. Certain acts such as hammering an anvil no longer seem appropriate, but at the same time other behavior is suggested. By limiting action and feeling to that appropriate for the role, a child becomes a player, assuming behaviors that are not customary. Her imagination determines the extent to which the new role can move her into new awareness, into hitherto unrealized experience.

Classrooms need to contain many objects that can stimulate drama, but these can be cast-off gear like phones or a cash register or career uniforms. An inexpensive colored spotlight or two, clamped on the back of a chair or onto a shelf, help establish mood. A light dimmer can quickly create a similar magic. The classroom needs window shades to control light for mood as well as for projections. As performers gain experience, they will increasingly be able to imagine the properties they handle instead of actually having to have them on hand.

Costumes are never necessary, but inexperienced students seem to invent more freely and feel more comfortable when a token of dress or property is provided. Too complete costuming can impede a novice's movement, and sheer realism can stultify creativity. Thus a "costume" may be something as simple as a paper bag mask or a picture hung around the neck or pinned on the front of the actor's shirt. These symbolic items allow small children to "be" a monster, a witch, or a fire fighter.

They seem to have to be themselves by being something else. They like to invest themselves with the qualities and powers of some object, animal, or fantasy figure. They work out realities through fantasies and thus prefer the symbolic and ritualistic to the actual and original. Young actors often require masking as a condition for being creative. But they also imitate realistically various kinds of adults, partly to understand adults and partly to try on their powers. No matter what our age, we never outgrow this need to project feeling into roles we enjoy or need to assume.

All you need do at first is to provide a few materials and a time and climate for acting with props. For young children the play process usually takes care of itself if there are plenty of fantasy objects and playmates. Experience suggests

that a natural sequence is from playing alone to playing in pairs to playing in larger groups. An advantage of acting out at school rather than at home is that individual play soon becomes group play as children become interested in and influenced by what others are doing. A child may begin by monologuing her fantasy as she plays, or by making up a conversation between two puppets, and end by playing doctor to several patients. Certain props, such as play money or a pair of telephones, naturally call for social play and promote interaction; they also promote the specific social play of talking.

Props or bits of costume may be put in groups of three to five in separate paper bags. Then small groups may be given the challenge of making up a skit using all the props in the bag. Any object may serve any of a number of functions: for example, a cane may be a shepherd's crook, a railing of an ocean liner, a bar to a locked door, a trapeze, an umbrella, Neptune's trident, and so on; the only stipulation is that each of the objects in the bag must be used in the skit. Then bags of props can be exchanged, or their contents shuffled, new skits performed, and then these compared with the first ones. The skits can then be taken to paper and turned into scripts or stories.

PUPPET PLAY

Because improvising actions and dialogue for a puppet is a less threatening way to act out something, many youngsters will work with puppets before they are willing to engage in other dramatic activities. Their own person is masked in the puppet they are playing, but the same challenge of improvising and inventing that is present in any acting-out process is there.

Many books provide directions for making a puppet stage and all kinds of puppets—stick, Styrofoam, papier-mâché, mitten, sock, glove, finger, paper bag, box, paper plate, or yarn puppets, and so on. Identification with the puppets is especially strong when students have made the puppets themselves.

If possible, a puppet theater should be available where inexperienced puppeteers may improvise without an audience if they prefer and where the more experienced may stage a performance, inviting a small group or the whole class to watch. This type of performance is an appropriate first-one-with-an-audience because the puppets, not the puppeteers, are the focus. Youngsters will use their voices more boldly because they think of them as issuing from the puppets.

MOVEMENT-TO-SOUND

Movement-to-sound, including rhythm and music, has some advantages over play with toys; it leaves more to the imagination, and it prompts the youngster to use her body more. We recommend movement-to-sound sessions two or three times a week for younger children.

Underlying all language is sensitivity to the experiences of the senses and to mood and feeling. Music has power to evoke these and provides a strong impetus first to bodily expression and then to language development. Live or recorded instrumental music or songs can stimulate expressive movement and pantomime not only of action but also of the more subtle elements of feeling and mood.

Simple rhythms provided by clapping the hands or beating a drum, tambourine, sticks, cans, or boxes, or playing other instruments, such as gongs, bells, pipes, recorders, or whistles, can make a good beginning. Recorded marches or dances can follow. A piano, autoharp, or guitar can stimulate movement well.

The important thing is to diversify the sound for perceptual discrimination, emotional range, and bodily articulation. Play with all the possibilities, no matter what instrument you use: shift the stress in rhythms, speed up and slow down tempo, raise and lower or shorten and lengthen the notes, widen and narrow the intervals between notes, make the sound skip or trip or drag or slide, alternate quiet and turbulence. Isolate one at a time the various dynamics of music—staccato, glissando, crescendo, accelerando, ritardando—then join them later into little sequences for the group to react to with bodily movement.

In responding to these diverse sounds students will have the opportunity to build a wide repertory of body movements. Upon this repertory depends the ability to act with the body—to pretend to be a frog or an old man climbing a snowy mountain. Learning to discriminate various auditory dynamics will sensitize youngsters to pattern and structure in other media, including literature. And running the sound spectrum is running the emotional gamut.

Unlike play with objects, which best begins with solitary play and gradually moves to interaction among a larger group, movement-to-sound best begins, even for very young children, as a whole-class simultaneous activity. This can progress from movement in concert to individual movement and thence to interaction among individuals. We suggest this because personal invention comes slowly, and because many children are shy of bodily exposure, which is minimized when everyone is doing the same sort of thing together. Confidence comes from identifying with a large group such as a class. But as is true in many other areas, the individual develops by shedding her dependence on the group. Once she is able to express herself somewhat in her own way, she can learn to interact with other individuals in a more truly social way than when she was merely a herd member.

The following procedural suggestions reflect the progression from concert to individualized movement. The three stages are for convenience.

■ HERD MOVEMENT

Since you or another leader make the sounds while the students react, a controlled activity of the whole class becomes possible. This gives each person a chance to act out feeling in a creative way without the embarrassment of having an audience. Begin by beating a strong, simple rhythm that students will take as a cue to either skip, run, tiptoe, slide-step, leap, jump, or hop, directing them only to “move the way the sound tells you to.” Groups of primary children almost always fall into a circular movement, often following one or two leaders. Both this ritual and your control of the sound production impose order on this mass energy.

Try out many of the variations mentioned above, gradually complicating the sound sequences by producing different dynamics in succession, but hold each pattern long enough for students to work into it. If attention seems scattered slow the pace or lower the volume. Have everyone freeze when the music stops and then slowly look around to see what others were doing.

■ INDIVIDUAL INVENTION

Begin to alternate these locomotions with movements in place by sometimes directing participants to move each in a small area of her own, and occasionally even telling them not to move their feet. But first make the sound while they are resting and ask for ideas about how to move to it. Experiment with moving just one part of the body at a time (finger, heels, toes, head, elbows, shoulders, and so on) or with sitting and moving only from that position. Try motions that are twirling, angular, smooth, jerking, gliding, striking, shaking, bouncing, pushing, pulling, stretching, thumping, or swinging. Let the class try out these various motions one at a time in concert. The questions would be: What is happening? Who are you? Where are you? This helps students verbalize or demonstrate the movement idea in dramatic terms.

Then dispense with the practice of asking for ideas and just tell the class to move in place as the sound tells them to. Those who still have to imitate will do so, and those who are ready will invent. Occasionally repeat a sound sequence and tell them to do a different movement to it than they did the first time. Continue the sound variations. Encourage students to imagine a setting, an action there, and a personage. Have them be that person or thing doing that action in that place. Introduce more extended pieces of music, especially music suggestive of mood and action. Let them know that they may speak as they move, and have them move about, each in her own area.

■ SMALL-GROUP INTERACTION

Place the class in pairs, trios, and quartets (gradually increasing the number in each group) and direct them to share space with their partners. The point is not to make them act or dance together but simply to clump them for spontaneous interaction, to let them influence each other in a group-defined area where they may move in place or move about. Recompose the groups on each occasion. Continue sound variations.

These three stages—herd movement, individual invention, and small-group interaction—continue to be a good warm-up for any group, no matter how experienced. They are cumulative; to enter a new stage is not to abandon previous ones but to add to them.

WARMING-UP AND CONCENTRATION ACTIVITIES

It is well to begin any drama session with an activity or two involving the entire group to help them feel comfortable, relaxed, and in the mood to improvise and act expressively. Talking about an activity, trying it, then discussing feelings, actions, and qualities of performance help performers assimilate and evaluate the experience.

■ RELAXATION EXERCISES

To loosen up the body, try singing games such as “Hokey Pokey” that call for kinesthetic experience, or exercises like these:

- Roll the head clockwise and counterclockwise.
- Hunch up one shoulder and then the other in quick succession.
- Pretend to yawn several times until you actually do yawn.
- Stretch tall, then to each side; bend over, unlock the knees and bounce gently. Repeat several times.
- Start at one end of the room and move forward in a relaxed stupor, allowing your body to be tipped off balance in a forward direction, but don't fall; just keep moving forward, unbalanced and loose. When you get to the end of the space, reverse the balance and walk backward; then fall and lie flat on the floor and close your eyes.
- Get as low as possible and scrunch up into a tiny space, tightening each muscle; then, slowly, open up, taking as much space as you can.
- On the floor take each part of the body in turn, beginning with the toes, and tense and release all the muscles; go all the way up to your forehead; then lie still for a few moments, eyes closed. Open your eyes; take a deep breath.

■ CONCENTRATION ACTIVITIES

To help young children concentrate and listen discriminately, games such as "Simon Says" serve well as a starter. Games such as those below demand more concentration.

TOSS IMAGINARY OBJECTS

- Arrange yourselves in a circle or in two lines facing each other. Begin by throwing out an imaginary ball, telling a particular person to catch it, while all eyes watch it.
- After everyone is involved, change the size or weight of the ball, saying, for example, "Watch the ball; it is getting tinier and heavier. It is like a tiny marble made of lead. It is very, very heavy."
- Later you can again change the ball to a big ball, and then into a big beach ball, a hot potato, a porcupine, a pillow, a feather, and so on.

MIRRORS

- Work in pairs, one to be the actor, and the other the mirror.
- Face your partner. If you're the actor, start moving any way you choose, moving slowly and with concentration. You may either pretend to do something such as combing your hair, or you may move abstractly in straight or curved lines with different parts of your body.
- If you're the mirror person, try to pick up your partner's actions so exactly that no one is able to tell who's the actor and who's the mirror.
- Then change so the actors are mirrors and the mirrors actors.
- For a more challenging activity, have a team of two initiate an action such as winding a ball of yarn, and have another team mirror the action.
- At another time, have a person convey an emotion and the other person mirror the feeling as well as the action.

PANTOMIME

To pantomime is to render feeling, idea, and story wordlessly in gesture and action. It's but a step from moving to music and is often effectively combined with it. After movement to sound has become a regular activity and has reached the stage of individual invention, it may easily be combined with pantomime. Instead of toys, props, or sounds, the stimulant now is an idea of an action.

A whole class working simultaneously eliminates self-consciousness and helps participants feel comfortable. Whole-class activities give students a background of experiences they can draw on later in smaller groups. The progression, as with movement to sound, is twofold—toward individuals doing different things at the same time and toward individuals forming small groups that do different things at the same time.

■ UNISON

The best way to initiate your students into pantomime will probably be to give the whole class one action at a time to do together.

WALK IN A CIRCLE AS A WHOLE CLASS

As students walk, you or a student leader feed in suggestions, starting with simple sensory experience and moving at a later time to names of times or places that evoke a more imaginative response for which students supply more of the sensory details for themselves. Keep the pace slow to allow time for belief. Here are some suggestions you or the class can provide:

- As you walk, you're slowly getting taller and taller. You're seven feet tall, now twelve feet. How do you feel? Now you shrink back to your own size.
- You're walking through tall grass. Is it smooth, slippery, prickly? What color is it? Is it dry and brittle or fresh and supple? Now you are walking over hot sand, on eggshells, in a swamp, through water, through molasses, in deep snow, over fallen leaves, on slippery ice, along the edge of a cliff, through cobwebs, in a dense fog, in quicksand.
- You're very hot, very cold, floating on air, frozen into an icicle, now melting bit by bit, caught in the heavy gravity of Jupiter.
- You're lost in a dark tunnel; you're walking at night under bright stars; you're fighting with an octopus; you're entering a strange school for the first time; you're carrying a heavy fish tank full of water to the brim; you're skating fast; you're leading a lumbering camel across the desert.

PRETEND TO BE

Ask pantomimists to pretend to be all sorts of things, at first selecting simple acts: a giant striding, a hobbled prisoner, someone hauling on a rope or pulling a sled, someone opening a door or window or umbrella or difficult bottle, someone drinking something pleasant or unpleasant, a salesperson demonstrating a product. Children particularly delight in assuming the role of an animal such as a frog, fish, elephant, butterfly, or duck and acting out its characteristic behavior. This activity can begin with unison actions, then individuals can choose an animal,

and, finally, they can pantomime different animals and guess each other's. Anything that can be experienced with the senses can be pantomimed.²

PRETEND TO DO

When ordinary acts such as washing hands, swimming, eating a meal, peeling an orange, playing a game such as baseball, or riding a bicycle are pantomimed, students are pressed to rely on kinesthetic and sensory memory, making explicit previously unnoticed details of an action and performing steps in chronological sequence. The feel of the experience is re-created in a process that is very demanding of concentration and memory. Pantomiming an action in slow motion can help learners re-create experience through remembered sensing of shape, size, color, texture, weight, temperature, odor, and so on. Good writing often depends on a similar process.

Select actions that will continue to enlarge the repertory of movements—bending, twisting, contracting, stretching—with all parts of the body, and in all directions. Tell students, for example, to imagine that they're standing close to a building, facing it, and straining to look up at someone in a very high window; then the person at the window throws something out that curves slowly over their heads and falls behind them; they follow it with their eyes, bending back until, as it nears the ground behind them, they finally have to twist around. Or station them all along the walls and tell them to try to push the wall over in as many different ways as they can think of without striking it.

Once students are familiar with the process, ask them for suggestions. Continue to select the ideas, however, both for muscular and dramatic variety. Then give the group an action made up of a series of acts, such as entering a room through a window, taking something from a chest, hiding it on one's person, and leaving. Then add different motives for doing the action, such as to play a joke on a friend or to commit a burglary.

■ SMALL-GROUP

Small-group work can begin after students are well-experienced with unison pantomimes and after they have acquired some social maturity. Some directions might tell them how to do such things as the following, any of which may be done as a whole class prior to small-group work.

CREATE A CONTRAPTION

- Have one person (possibly the teacher for inexperienced groups) step into an open space and start a movement, such as rotating a gear, making her body into a part of a machine. She keeps this movement going.
- Have another person join her, adding a different motion but relating herself to the moving part in some way. For example, she might alternately squat and stand to represent a piston.

² A very helpful book for combining pantomime and yoga exercises, illustrated with photos of preschool to junior high children, is Rachel Carr, *Be a Frog, a Bird, or a Tree* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1973).

- While the first participants keep up their motion in pantomime, the rest of you, one by one, attach yourselves to the “contraption,” each adding a different motion.
- When everyone is participating, have your leader call for a slowing down or speeding up of the contraption’s operation, and, finally, push the “off” button to stop it.
- The next time, either create the contraption to appropriate music, or each of you can add an appropriate sound or words as your part goes into action.

GET OUT OF TRAP

- As a group, pretend to lie down to sleep. When you awake, you find yourself in some kind of enclosure—a box, a dome-shaped plastic bell, a large ball, a metal machine, or some such thing.
- Then slowly examine its limits in pantomime. Feel the texture, temperature, dimensions, and strength of this container.
- Finally, after thoroughly exploring it, find a way out and escape.

CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT

- Meet as a group in a large space.
- One at a time, in slow-motion pantomime, put something in the space. For example, you may pretend to push in a large harp and bench and then sit down and play it so everyone will know what you’ve brought in.
- If you’re next, decide in your own mind what this place is and introduce another object that belongs in such a place. For example, you might bring in a music stand or another instrument and strum the harp on the way out.
- Each of you then goes into the space and puts a new thing in it and uses one other thing that someone else put there. You must be careful to walk around or take account of everything that has been put in the space.
- Be sure that the dimensions and shape of whatever you put in the space are clearly revealed. Do the pantomime slowly and in detail.
- Discuss afterward what everyone thought each of the others was pantomiming.
- You may decide to do an improvisation in the environment you have created, using all the things you have put there.

PANTOMIME A STORY

Experienced students meet in small groups, choose a story, cast themselves in the various roles, and improvise a pantomime. Often the group contains more people than parts so that members take turns playing and watching, in workshop fashion.

Make sure players keep in mind that pantomime is played without words and without props; their bodies alone tell the story. Objects are suggested by movement in feigned relation to them or can be played by other people (rock, tree, revolving door, and so on). Good pantomime demands concentration, belief, and memory. Players must remember, for example, which things are in which places.

When the players have been through a pantomime once, they can discuss any changes they might make, rotate roles, do the story again, and discuss both versions. Doing different versions of the same basic action is a form of composition

and also draws some attention to technique (the commentary coming from the participants, not from the teacher or any other audience). Recasting roles establishes early the principle of flexibility and point of view in role-playing and breaks any typecasting based on traits of personality and physical build. Don't ask one group to perform for others. Let players request an audience if they want one.

WHAT AM I DOING?

Any pantomime can be a focus for a guessing game. After individuals have acquired some confidence they can take turns pantomiming characterizations, actions, and places and have a partner or a small group guess who they were, what they were doing, and where they were. The feedback that comes from the guessers shows a player any discrepancies between what actually got across and what she had in mind. The pantomimist can learn from this alone, but concrete suggestions for making her intention explicit may help too.

For other guessing games, a player writes down first what she's going to do as a kind of script, onlookers write down after the pantomime what they saw, and all compare accounts. Or players can pantomime each other's scripts.

Groups can pantomime problem situations where characters are involved with each other. Onlookers tell the players afterwards the story as they saw it. This is a good occasion to discuss differences in interpretations among onlookers as well as differences between these interpretations and what players intended. Ideally, such comparisons would refer to specific gestures and other physical renditions.

CHARADES

Guessing games can take the form of charades—the pantomiming of verbal phrases, titles, and quotations. In this case, what the audience tries to guess are not the actions themselves but certain words that the actions merely evoke. This feature, of course, makes the game more sophisticated and more abstract, since actions must be linked with particular words for them, not with just any words for them (*steed*, not *horse*). And often, it's only via purely verbal associations such as puns, that the right word is arrived at (*I* by pointing to one's eye). Also, instead of holding off the answer until the end of a whole presentation, the actor makes the audience guess at each act, each word. This makes for intense audience participation and fast feedback.

■ SLIDE SHOW OR MOVIE

Pantomime lends itself to presentation in a series of slides or a silent movie. In order to depict a story in pictures without recorded sound, actors need to rely on the skills in gesturing and body English they have learned in pantomime. Several different versions of the same scene might be tried out as a guessing game before filming the best one.

■ PANTOMIME AND DANCE DRAMA

Combining movement to music with pantomime opens interesting possibilities. It stimulates all players to respond to the same stimulus at the same time, but they

may respond in very different ways. Either individual pantomimes can take place simultaneously or small-group interaction can take place as the music is played. All three ways of responding—unison, individual, and small-group—may be combined in planning a group pantomime after listening to a piece of music once or twice. Or, if known story-music such as “Peter and the Wolf” is used, roles can be simply assigned. Or grouped individuals can invent movements in relation to, say, three partners, the directions being to move as one feels but to stay aware of the others, to share the group space, and to let oneself be influenced by what the others are doing.

For students having considerable experience with movement, pantomime to music can lead to dance drama in which the feelings stirred by music act as a more open, more subjective stimulant than words, while at the same time the ongoing rhythm and melody create dynamics of their own that translate readily to movement. The actions of pantomime tend to mimic recognizable outward gestures, whereas dance drama tends to express less explicit inner moods given form by the music. So movement to music offers more opportunity for personal, free improvisation. Story music makes a good bridge at first between these two kinds of body English—pantomime and dance drama, which become fused as players respond to both musical stimuli and actions suggested by them.

ENACTMENT AND IMPROVISATION

From here on, our suggested activities will combine speech with other action.

■ DRAMATIZING STORIES

Play with objects, movement to sound, and pantomime may be combined with speech to act out a borrowed or original story. In the elementary school tradition called “creative dramatics” this can begin in the primary grades, but its value is ageless. First the players choose a story they already know, recall it together, and decide what the main events are, which characters they want to cast for, and when and where the story takes place. They might decide also whether to use props, have people play inanimate things, or add musical or singing accompaniment. Typically a sub-group of the class would do this, but the size of the cast needed might require the whole class.

The players act out the plot by improvising the particulars of dialogue and action according to their memory of the main story line. They should feel free to enlarge or eliminate any character or add a character. They can change events in the plot including the ending. The original story serves only to inspire their acting and spur their invention.

Like other improvisations, the main value accrues to the players themselves, but they may want an audience at some point, perhaps after acting the story out several times to develop a version they like. Inexperienced actors often become more involved with the audience than with fellow players, which impairs their concentration. Present improvisation as something primarily to do, not to see done.

The purpose of this freewheeling handling of a story is to provide an opportunity for a group to take possession of it and re-create it in a way that interests them, just as they might do in discussing it or extending it in writing (page 164). This reinforces literature for better comprehension and appreciation. Enacting a

story after reading or hearing it ties the printed word to the physical world of behavior and translates the subject into another medium. During preparatory discussion, children might need to refer to the printed story when making decisions about how to act it out. This task talk focuses on an analysis of the text to determine plot, characterization, and meaning. Acting out stories leads easily into Story Theater, described on page 188.

■ CROWD-SCENE IMPROVISATIONS

Large-group improvisation attunes players to the presence and actions of many people at once and lets individuals experience the collective energy of large numbers. It also gives the teacher an opportunity to assume a role through which to stimulate and heighten the drama.

Large-group improvisations are best done in a group of fifteen to thirty, which is large enough for each person to feel comfortable in the “crowd” yet not so large that the teacher cannot be aware of individual performance. As with small-group improvisations, warm-up routines before and discussion after the drama build confidence and stimulate student experimentation.

One way to get started is to dramatize a setting in which a crowd of people would ordinarily be gathered—each carrying on her own business. Favorite settings for crowd-scene improvisations are marketplaces (usually either foreign or historical), airports, public beaches, prison camps, parks, street corners, carnivals, or offices. The class talks together about the scene, and players make up roles and typical actions for themselves, suggesting things that might happen in that setting. Then the drama begins, and each student acts the way her chosen character would, interacting with the others when appropriate.

You can side-coach. You can feed in directions as stimuli without breaking the action. Players do not pause or look at the coach but simply react in role to the stimulus. Capitalize on some promising bit of action already under way by calling the others’ attention to it. “Oh, it looks like this man is getting cheated over here. Do you notice? How do you feel about that?” By this means you can help players integrate the scene and parlay some improvisation into more.

You might talk the whole group into a mood, using your voice itself to induce a particular state: “It’s getting toward quitting time now, and you’re getting weary and feeling hungry. Your movements slow down, and you begin to think about going home and settling in, but you have to keep going and you fight the temptation to give in early. You don’t feel very patient, but you try to pay attention and keep working.” The idea of this mood may come to the coach because the scene needs slowing down or simply would benefit from a change of action level.

You might side-coach just one individual or a subgroup. Given, for example, the mood just induced, you could say: “You two by the door, you’re gossiping, it looks like. You’re gossiping about some of the others. You look around, and you smile as if there’s a secret between you. You’re setting yourselves apart, drawing attention, and you seem up while everybody else is running down.” Such reflecting feeds back and suggests at the same time.

Create changes to see what happens. Later, players can discuss how they were affected by these directions and whether they were a good idea or not. Give play to your own inspiration; students will respond in kind, and some will learn to coach too.

If you see that a group seems to be losing energy, you can stop the drama and ask them for a decision that can revitalize their commitment. "Should we make some changes now?" They can alter the main scene or shuffle roles a bit. Pausing and re-starting is in the nature of improvisation, which is one kind of composition.³

■ THE MINIMAL SITUATION

A minimal situation is the briefest possible statement of character and event for players of a certain experience to get an improvisation under way. This is the "given" on which the players build. The difference between improvisation and enactment is necessarily a matter of degree only, since there are always some "givens," suggestive ideas that are the starting point for acting out. In improvising, one makes up more of the story as she goes along; when enacting, one has more details specified in advance.

Since young children's inventions tend to be drawn so much from familiar stories anyway, the distinction breaks down even more at that age. The younger the child, the more givens there will need to be. Nevertheless, launching even young children from a minimal situation rather than from a known story does place them further along the way toward individual creativity. Since they have less to go on, they must heed carefully the actions and words of others, because these cue their responses.

There are several sources of minimal situations: (1) original student ideas; (2) situations drawn from reading; and (3) situations embodying moral, social, or psychological issues.

ORIGINAL STUDENT IDEAS

For students of any age, a good beginning in dialogue is for a pair to role-play any two people, such as an interviewer and a politician, a parent and a teacher having a conference about a pupil, or brothers arguing. An activity card can show a photograph of two people talking together in particular surroundings and invite students to imagine what they are talking about. After experience with these duets, students can think of other situations involving three or more people. A high school student who has just borrowed the family car without permission is facing her parents afterwards. A family is arguing about which TV program to watch. Relatives have got together to tell an alcoholic that she must go for treatment. A single-parent mother is trying to lay down rules to her rebellious teenage daughters. A crowd of neighbors suddenly want a couple to sell their home.

An improvisation may begin with students writing on three separate slips of paper a setting, a problem, and a character. Then the papers are mixed up, and each small group draws one setting and one problem for the group, and one character for each player, and improvises a drama. Another stimulus is to write sentences that must be used as either the opening or the closing line in a dialogue. Each pair or trio is given a sentence written by another group, such as, "Things will never be the same around here from now on" or "He just goes to pieces when

³ For more ways to keep large-group drama going, see Betty Jane Wagner, *Dorothy Heathcote: Drama as a Learning Medium* (Washington, DC: National Education Association, 1976).

that happens.” Or students can make up fairly definite character profiles, such as “You are an aging dancer depressed by the death of your one close friend.” Whether the players work out the setting, characters, and main action before or after they start improvising depends on how ready they feel to plunge in.

Veteran improvisers can start with almost no givens, with the most minimal situation, such as one of us was once given in an acting class: “You want the chair here and she wants it over there.” The understanding is that whatever setting, circumstances, and identities the actors establish for themselves as they go along must be maintained from then on. (The two of us became interior decorators who disagreed over the arrangement of a client’s room.) In a workshop situation, where players take turns acting and watching, a scene may be stopped and discussed. The onlooking players may make suggestions or take over the scene themselves for a while. Mature improvisers can also replay each improvisation as a comedy, a serious drama, a dance presentation, an operetta, a melodrama, and so on.

Another form of spontaneous invention, one that even elementary children can succeed at, despite its obvious difficulty, represents rhetorical practice at its most elemental. One actor goes out of hearing while partners give a brief direction to another actor. The direction simply stipulates the effect one actor is to produce on the one who is out of the room, using any means except physical contact: “Make her laugh”; “Make her thoughtful or sober”; “Startle (or cheer) her.” The person who was sent out of the room simply returns and reacts spontaneously. The other’s means of getting the desired effect from her may be many—making up anecdotes, asking questions, flattering, launching into commentary, drawing the other into an exchange about a certain topic, and, of course, some body English.

These sorts of free improvisation develop fluent invention that will help many other verbal activities—talking, writing, acting out scripts, and even reading. A group improvising an original situation composes it by doing different versions until it is wrought to the members’ satisfaction. Then they may collaborate in writing it down in play format, as dialogue and stage directions, or in transcribing it if they have recorded it.⁴

SITUATIONS FROM READING

This obviously extends “creative dramatics” toward freer and more various use of texts. Improvising, either before or after the reading, is an effective way of working with literature and history that will improve understanding of silent reading. Students make a minimal situation out of a scene or relationship they find in a true or fictional story. They want to understand it better, apply it to other people and settings, or otherwise explore it. Perhaps they are still reading the text.

Before students have seen a certain text they plan to read, they can ask you or other students who have read it to abstract in advance a key scene, such as the scene in *Julius Caesar* in which Cassius tries to persuade Brutus to join the conspiracy to kill Caesar. A is trying to talk B into helping kill a mutual friend for the good of their group. A number of key interactions from a work can be improvised

⁴ We are much indebted to Viola Spolin for many of the ideas presented in this chapter. See the excellent sourcebook: Viola Spolin, *Improvisation for the Theater* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1963, 1977, 1983).

in this way so that students have experienced the structure or dynamics of them before actually reading the text.

A scene merely alluded to in a play or piece of fiction (an off-stage action) can be improvised from the slight references made to it, the students drawing on their understanding of the rest of the work in order to create the scene the author did not present directly. This raises good issues of reading comprehension. Exploring other possibilities of a text makes the author's choices meaningful. And players have to think about motivations and relationships in order to act their roles. Discussions of interpretation inevitably arise en route, and these discussions are practical, not arbitrary. Changing roles and replaying a scene is another way to deepen that understanding.

Some fairy tales, legends, myths, parables, historical events, and scriptural stories come down to us so condensed as to cry out for elaboration. This is not a fault, because they compel us to use our imagination to fill them out. For this reason many make good minimal situations. Again, players invent what is missing—the details of dialogue and action—on the basis of what is there. Improvisation translates such summary of *what happened* into *what is happening*. This makes the abstraction of the story come alive in the present. So if the material is literary, students can make it their own, and if it's historical, they can enter the past. Sometimes players may feel that they don't have enough to go on because the material comes from a very different time and place. The problem becomes a reason for research.

Expanding myths and historical events through improvisation repeats, in effect, what the great dramatists have done with them in writing. Dramatizing involves a slowing of pace, compared to narrative, a living through of an experience at life rate. As students expand summary action through improvisation, they see the values and the possibilities of elaborating dialogue, gesture, and sensory data. Expanding kernel stories helps youngsters learn to fill in detail in their own writing and to grasp an important relationship in literature: drama elaborates narrative, and narrative summarizes drama.

SITUATIONS EMBODYING MORAL, SOCIAL, OR PSYCHOLOGICAL ISSUES

Improvising scenes with characters drawn from real life is often called role-playing. "Playing the Problem" can be the name of an activity card for improvising a situation drawn from the experience of students and people they know or from such reading as advice columns. One family member is reading another's personal mail. A parent favors one child over others or blames everything on one child. A beloved person won't admit addiction. A spouse feels she has suffered enough to warrant divorce. Players do successive improvisations, changing factors, rotating roles, and discussing issues and solutions. This allows the problem to be examined and turned round to reveal many faces.

When ready, students can move to larger institutions than the family—hospitals, political parties, corporation offices, educational institutions, governmental agencies, legislative bodies, and so on. For example, students might set up a scene in a company office where a chief executive officer, her legal counsel, and a couple of vice presidents are debating whether to render a product or a service in such a way that it makes more profits but risks the health of consumers or the state of the environment.

One high school teacher⁵ reports a good response from her students who play a problem in small groups with these directions: "Decide together on a moral position or deep conviction that a person might hold. Then put a character who holds that position into a situation in which she is pressed to act counter to her belief." Situations her students chose: a student believes "the clothes make the man" but finds herself falling in love with a sloppy guy; a defense attorney who firmly believes that the end does not justify the means argues the case of a radical who has murdered for a cause.

Minimal situations such as these lead into, or become a kind of, topic-centered discussion, which occurs in incidental talk generated while setting up a minimal situation or while evaluating different versions of a scene. Or a situation may be one in which characters representing different viewpoints are deliberating some issue they have to reach a decision about such as whether to invite a certain type of person to become a member. The scene is dramatic, because a fictional situation motivates the exchanges, but the improvisation closely resembles mock panels. These panels, incidentally, might comprise historical personages anachronistically assembled to address an issue of today. (What would Nat Turner, Marie Antoinette, Thomas Jefferson, and Harriet Tubman say about the liberation of black women?) Mock panels help induce awareness of how our ideas are rooted in our roles and characters.

Student dramas, like adult literature, illustrate some common human experience. They have a theme, and thus they provide a natural topic for small-group discussion. If topic talk and improvisation are coordinated, a very powerful learning will result, because ideas can then be dealt with at two levels of abstraction. By improvising the instances that come up in topic discussion, students can go from generality to example, and by discussing the material of improvisations they can go from example to generality. At any time you or the students can distill an issue from the drama work and propose it as a topic for small group discussion, or explore a topic by improvising a case of it.

This movement between generality and example, like the movement between drama and narrative, constitutes a vital issue in thinking and writing and therefore also a major educational goal. Improvisation and discussion are the ends of a spectrum. Minimal situations can lead either way, into forum as well as drama, because the dialectic of discussion and the dynamics of drama are profoundly related.

THE DRAMA WORKSHOP

Although most dramatic work occurs in self-directed working parties, as for other activities, regular whole-class warm-ups and occasional workshops for the entire class can be helpful, especially as students are getting used to drama. Or perhaps you see no way of having some students do drama without disturbing others who are doing quiet activities. So you might sometimes set aside a drama period for all. This can have a general structure that creates a sense of order and purpose but allows for a variety of current projects. For example, the entire group begins by

⁵ Robin Hinderyckx, Evanston Township High School, Evanston, Illinois.

doing a few warm-ups and concentration activities together then some pantomime ideas for everyone to try out simultaneously, often suggested from the floor.

Depending on what the current projects are, the next phase of the drama period can consist of small-group work such as charades, improvising from a minimal situation, acting out an unscripted story, or rehearsing a scripted scene from a play. You circulate among groups. This small-group work might last until the end of the period, but sometimes the whole class could be reassembled to watch some groups put on scenes or to coordinate the groups if they are working on parts of a whole.

Like a writing workshop, a drama workshop is a working party in which members present their efforts to each other and provide each other with helpful response. A valuable part is the discussion that goes on between versions as the group tries out various interpretations. The purpose of comments is to reflect what the improvisation looks like from the outside and to widen the range of possibilities. One of the main values of improvisation is the exploring of differences—differences, for example, between two-way and three-way relationships, in pace and rhythm, in language styles of different speakers, in the dynamics and balances of interaction, in settings and circumstances, in the order of acts, in behavior strategies. (All of these are aspects of both literature and real life.)

If an improvisation seems lifeless and forced, the commentators need not make negative remarks about the acting. Taking their cue from you, they suggest changes in the variables of the situation and in the casting. Sometimes, for example, if a scene is revolving repetitiously or keeps falling into pauses, it may help to suggest another ploy that A can use on B, or to propose that the two players reverse roles for a while. If seeking alternatives is customary, then proposing changes will not be taken personally.

You set the tenor for students' cross-commentary when you give personal responses while dropping in on a group: "The clerk seems very annoyed, but the customer doesn't seem to notice that." Your chief role may be to ask "What if...?" questions about all the variables that they might change—setting, timing, casting, number of parts, kinds of relationships, tone, and so on. You might suggest things the actors may not have thought of: "Why don't you try it in another setting?" or "What would happen if the son asked his father before the mother entered the room?"

Students can learn from your example how to respond sensitively and helpfully. There is no secret other than to watch closely and keep all of yourself open to what's happening. Be patient about letting students work things out if they seem able to. Members of a workshop work come to identify strongly with each other and want each other to improve because they depend on learning together how to get better. Show them how to make everybody succeed.⁶

⁶ We are indebted to Rose Feinberg and Floren Harpen for particular teaching suggestions in this chapter. See Gay Hendricks and Russel Mills, *The Centering Book* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1975, 1989). This book provides excellent exercises to help learners of all ages focus, relax, and balance mind and body. It relates usefully to many recommendations in this text but especially to those in this chapter and Chapter 8.

CHAPTER

BECOMING

LITERATE

SIX

In becoming literate one is learning to read and to write at once and one through the other. So before taking them up separately in later chapters we will interweave them here.

PREPARATION FOR LITERACY

If a person wants to learn to read and write, he can do so at any time after some minimal sensorimotor development. He can also do so in a short time, depending largely on the strength of his motivation. Some young children have learned to read and write in three or four weeks, which shows that literacy acquisition does not inherently have to take place slowly, however long it may drag on for many other children. Literacy grows as the mind grows, but it can begin at virtually any stage of mental development.

The opportunity to learn to read and write should be offered children at every age from babyhood on. The key word here is *offered*. No child should be forced to try to become literate, whether ready or not, just because he has arrived at a certain chronological age. Encouraged, yes; surrounded with a literacy community, literacy materials and books, occasions to get involved, people who can help him seize the occasions, yes. But schools cause real tragedy in many lives by forcing certain first graders to try to read and write, because many such children experience only failure in school from then on and drop out later. Not only do they miss the benefits of literacy, but they may harbor all their lives feelings of resentment and inferiority.

The chief reason for this forcing, despite the better judgment of many teachers, is that any first- or second-grade teacher whose children do not all show certain reading scores by the end of the year may risk criticism. Many parents as well as administrators pressure teachers to get a child reading in kindergarten or first grade, and some minority parents suspect discrimination if a teacher doesn't force their child. Much practical evidence indicates that some children could learn with greater speed and ease if they simply waited a while, but such a policy would have to be understood by both parent and administrator, so that the first would know that in the long run his child would read better than if he had started in the first grade, and the second would know that the teacher had not failed with the child but had simply not forced him.

At every stage of his development a learner approaches new intellectual challenges that he might or might not take on then, depending on whether others guide and support him or whether certain activities become available that make a fit initiation for him into this greater social or cognitive maturity. We don't know which learner is ready for which new challenge until we have surrounded him with all possible means for meeting it. You don't have to decide if a child is ready but merely have to refrain from forcing or blaming him, at the same time giving him every opportunity to learn literacy. Everyone involved should assume that in time he will. It is true that other schoolwork presupposes after a year that a child can read, but a child offered every opportunity is not going to read yet anyway, however forced.

What we're recommending here is not, of course, indifference or casualness but an expectation that individuals will vary in their timing, so that if some don't take to literacy immediately, no one panics or thinks that either the child or the teacher has failed. If you individualize literacy, using the means proposed in this chapter, few children will be able to resist it; and most pupils will in fact learn to read and write sooner than has been true with forced standardization.

■ SENSORIMOTOR ABILITY

Becoming literate requires, and at the same time further develops, auditory and visual discrimination—the ability to identify and distinguish different sounds and different shapes. It also requires control of fine muscles in the hands for writing, though children certainly don't have to wait on this development to write if keyboards, letter stamps, and manipulable letters are available. Many activities and materials described in this book can aid sensorimotor development, but virtually any sort of play, socializing, and other activity will also, including coordinated movements like crawling and drawing. What best develops auditory discrimination is hearing meaningfully distinguished sounds, and for this human speech itself can't be bettered, but musical tones and any other arrays of significant sounds that interest the child will help.

The real secret is to enrich the environment so that children can be constantly manipulating interesting objects and comparing them for their shapes and sounds, among other features. Exploration and comparison are the key, and this occurs best when children can experience a lot, be active, and have access to a large variety of things to handle and play with. It seems to be true that sharpening one part of the sensorimotor apparatus sharpens the rest. The nervous system is interconnected and grows as a whole. So refinement of touch or muscle action of any sort, for example, will probably help handwriting, as any auditory and visual experience will help reading. In fact, development of either muscles or senses seems to develop the other, because of the close coordination that using either requires, as in writing.

■ EMOTIONAL AND EXPERIENTIAL SETTING

Like other learning, emergent literacy benefits from a framework of motivation, emotional maturity, and general experience with people and things. To develop these, children need to be talked with, read to, and taken places. They need direct experience with some of the physical and social things that books talk about. They need to handle books, turn the pages, and look at pictures. They need to

draw a lot, because for children writing begins as just a special way of making shapes. Indeed, reading and writing generally just extend other sorts of exploratory play. So children need to discover the pleasure and information in books, become aware of environmental writing such as signs and labels. Older youngsters can understand how literacy may be necessary for getting a job and generally getting around, but small children unable to foresee these utilitarian possibilities must feel pleasure awaiting them in print, find out that locked in the letters are wonderful stories and funny games and things they want to know.

It's terribly hard for one teacher alone to give a roomful of children all the experience that naturally accompanies literacy. You can read to them, let them talk a lot, give them objects to play with and picture books to look through, and take them on visits. You can make the class interactive so they can pool their understanding, practice oral language, and grow socially. But you can go much further by mixing them with more developed youngsters and by bringing other adults into the classroom. Even peers differ enough for some to lead along others, but the limitations of segregating by age never manifest more strongly than during emergent literacy, where rippling could work most effectively. The notion of joining a community of readers and writers can hardly apply to a situation in which the learners are roughly all in the same boat—preliterate!

VISUAL PROCESSING OF TEXT

What are the best *means* of becoming literate? To deliberate this, let's go back to what we said in Chapter 1 was the only thing unique about reading—the visual processing of text. Consider a bit more this interaction of incoming visual cues with previous knowledge of grammar, meaning, and spelling. The proficient reader does not give equal attention to all words or to all parts of words. He doesn't need to. There are many cues of syntax, sense, and word structure that make it unnecessary to process every letter, word, and phrase in the same way. In a very real sense, we don't see everything in a text even when we “read” every word of it.

For example, proofreading for typographical errors is very difficult because we unconsciously “fill in” the obvious—the letters we know are there because of how the rest of the word is spelled, articles and prepositions we know are there because nothing else could occupy certain slots in the sentence. This means that if errors exist in these obvious positions, we may well miss them. Familiarity with the text makes proofreading even more difficult, because we fill in even more.

For another example, the cloze procedure of deleting some letters and words from a text doesn't prevent readers from getting all the meaning of it—provided that deletions are of redundant items, that is, of items that are dispensable because their information is conveyed equally well by other cues. If more important items are deleted, however, the text will become ambiguous or cryptic. Compare:

_ole_ant
tol_ra_t

Surely the letters deleted in the first were more essential, while those in the second were more redundant. Compare also:

I _____ have found it _____ to believe.

I would _____ found it difficult _____ believe.

But redundance is relative to the knowledge and experience of the reader:

Give _____ this _____ our _____ bread.

Marx's theory of historical _____ derives
from _____ 's concept of thesis and _____.

Scanning and guessing, in short, are integral to proficient reading. Swiftly, automatically, we attend to critical cues and infer what is in between. As we are reading along, we constantly corroborate inferences by matching them against our ongoing interpretation. Occasionally, when something doesn't seem to fit, we "regress"; we flick our eyes back to a word or phrase and discover, for example, that what we took to be *importing* was actually *imparting*. This is not mere skimming or sloppy reading; it's what every proficient reader does, including those whose comprehension is best. See pages 162–163 for an extended example of following syntactic and semantic cues.

Actually, not all of this perceptual/mental scanning is unique to reading. When we listen to someone speak we attend in the same selective fashion and have no more need to "hear" every syllable in order to understand everything said than we need to "see" every syllable when reading. Both seeing and hearing partake of the same general data-processing system. But there are differences too. One is that reading involves eye movements. Another is that reading concerns arrangement in space, whereas speech concerns movement in time. We can assimilate spatial information faster than temporal information—read faster than listen, which is one reason we come to bypass the intermediary of speech in the fusion of sight with thought that we spoke of in the first chapter.

The big pedagogical question is how the beginner crosses the oral bridge to reach that point of proficiency knowing only the sounds of the language and not the spellings. How does he learn enough of the sound-spelling correspondences in the first place to set the circular process of cueing in motion? Some priming of the pump, it seems, should be all that is needed to aid learners to teach themselves to read. Is some sort of phonics in order, then?

But many children have learned to read and write splendidly with no phonics at all. In fact, some of the most avid and proficient readers learned so spontaneously, often at home, that neither they nor their parents knew how or exactly when it happened. So why the high national illiteracy rate and the constant struggle in schools to achieve even this low rate? We partly answered this on page 43 in comparing learning to speak at home with trying to learn literacy in school. Motivation to learn the *first* medium of communication is much stronger than to learn literacy, and learning to read and write is usually attempted in school, where institutionalism interferes with natural learning processes, which are interactive and integrative. Institutions tend to atomize an operation into small pieces and then to line up these pieces into sequences. Phonics fits both this and the industrial model of assembling small parts into successively bigger assemblies until this culminates in a product.

Well then, how *does* a beginner learn enough sound-spelling correspondences to play these visual cues in with the syntactic and semantic cues? Unless the learner is going to memorize spellings one word at a time, he's going to have to recognize *parts* of some words in order to recognize them as wholes. The contending factions in reading pedagogy fall out according to the size of the language unit that should be the learning unit. Should the student hear and see at once sin-

gle sound-spellings (phonics) or single words (“look-say”). Or should spellings and words be introduced only in complete texts (“language experience” and “whole language”)? Clearly, the smaller the unit, the less context and hence the fewer cues. The larger the unit, the more meaning and hence greater motivation. In practice, these approaches have usually been combined.

Indeed, all but phonics correspond to actual reading practices, since reading even single words and sentences occurs all the time out of school, as in signs. Phonics is the only claimant for teaching reading that is not something proficient readers also do. As only a means, in other words, not a goal of reading, phonics is the hardest of the competing methods to justify, and so the advocates of it must bear the burden of proof. Phonics is also the most expensive, because units smaller than whole words require special materials, whereas complete texts, even if only signs and captions, already exist. (If other “reading instruction” programs cost more, it’s because they collage together any number of miscellaneous practices and materials.)

Any activity that allows learners to match speech with text will probably help them read, whatever the size of the language unit, and some children have succeeded in programs heavily emphasizing phonics. But this doesn’t mean that all such activities are equally good, especially for all people. Which is most efficient? Which generates the most negative side effects? But especially, which *might* be dispensed with. Not whole-word and whole-sentence activities, which will inevitably be part of a literacy program anyway, because they are themselves target activities. As purely a learning device, only phonics may be deemed optional. For the same reason, it incurs greater risk of such side effects as aversion, “word calling,” or mental myopia. Not surprisingly, then, there’s some evidence that heavy emphasis on phonics impairs reading comprehension.

So if teachers arrange for learners to see and hear texts simultaneously in units large enough for meaning and motivation, we have now some literacy “methods,” familiar activities actually, quite common out of school. Reading to learners, for example, will allow them to match visual symbols with oral speech—if the learners are watching the text being read. So will writing down their speech while they watch.

But we still face the lingering question about whether phonics is needed to break down these larger language units so that learners can eventually recognize new words reading alone and spell when they write alone. Let’s begin to answer this by considering what goes on in the learner when being read to or having his speech transcribed. We’ll do this in the process of offering these activities as two major ways of becoming literate. Then we’ll pursue the question afterward when setting up a third method.

READ-ALONG OR THE LAP METHOD

This method consists simply of watching a text at the same time one hears it read aloud, as a young child does on a parent’s lap. It may very well be true—and we suspect it is—that given words enough and time, virtually any person might learn to read by this method alone, if in the beginning he followed with his eyes a moving finger that allowed him to synchronize the sound and the graphic symbol, voice and print. One question might be whether a public institution can ever flood each child with the copious flow of love and words it takes to induce such sponta-

neous learning. By arranging properly, we think it can. The teacher's lap is not the only one, nor his the only literate voice. For younger children there are the real laps of aides, including older children, and for both older and younger learners there is the figurative lap of the phonograph or tape recorder.

■ HOW IT WORKS

How can a person learn to read independently just from being read to? All while listening to a story for pleasure, the child may be visually processing the text in whatever way he is able. He may be just looking at pictures and turning pages, approaching reading by successive approximations. Or he may be scanning the letters for those that are in his name or another familiar word. He may be memorizing the content of whole pages, then gradually analyzing the big blocs of print, discriminating among the different words, and narrowing his synchronizing focus down more and more—from the whole page or paragraph to the sentence, then to the phrase or word, then eventually to each of the forty-odd phonemes of English.

Beginners can eventually generalize for themselves the phonographemic regularities—how letters render sounds—as they generalized for themselves, well before entering school, the basic grammatical rules about word endings and word order, which have to be figured out, not merely memorized. Human beings are born with such analytic-synthetic ability, so to see it operating on printed words, as on other arrays presented to them, should occasion no surprise. If an infant did not analyze speech sounds and match them off with meanings, he would never start to speak. It may well be that if many learners seem to need others to help them analyze words and generalize the sound-spelling regularities, that may only be because schools have never afforded students the huge amounts of ore it takes for that kind of refining. This is our point in calling for massive practice and total immersion.

Let's take the classic case of the preschool child at story time at home. The book is a child's book, and each page bears only one or two sentences, sometimes only a word or so, usually illustrated. The effect is of a series of captioned pictures. Hearing the story over and over, held on the lap so he can see the page and hear the voice right at his ear, he virtually memorizes the text so he can tell the reader when to turn the page and whether he left something out. He knows which part of the story is on each page and so has synchronized at this gross level.

But many things help him to match off oral words with written words much more precisely—the typographical isolation of some words on the page, the repetition of words that he can at once see and hear, the prominence of some words printed large or naturally set off by front and end positions in the sentence. Often he asks to have pointed out a printed word standing for something he is especially interested in. Or the person reading may habitually move his finger by the words as he reads them. Some words are used to label or caption or title things in the book and so stand out also.

One way or another, he memorizes a number of whole words by their overall look, and this is an important part of the read-along process, since many irregular words have to be memorized and, once known, can be used to help figure out more words and eventually the regularities of English spelling. Once a few words can be recognized roughly, they serve as bench marks to keep the child synchronized. Then the process snowballs very fast: the more words he can cue from, the

more the young reader can synchronize sounds and sights right into the interior of words and thus begin to analyze them into their components. He finally notes, for example, that the same sound occurs every time he sees *which*, *what*, or *where* and infers that *wh* stands for that sound. This is do-it-yourself phonics. Even with no sound-letter instruction at all, a person can learn to read and spell entirely from the lap method—but only, in most cases, after many, many hours of hearing and seeing the same or similar words recur.

The very lack of self-consciousness and of formal instructional situation that so long caused this method to be omitted from the official repertory of reading methods accounts partly for its great success. The learner becomes rapt and relaxed. Within this deep absorption, the mind unconsciously works over the data and begins to infer the sound-spellings. To use the lap method in a school situation means arranging for this same pleasurable absorption, protected from pressure or conscious striving. Don't be fooled by the apparent easiness; children do most of their deepest learning in just this undeliberate way.

■ TEACHER READING

Simply reading aloud to students is very effective. They learn to create images in their mind, as they must do to read well. Once accustomed to hearing stories read, and motivated by the pleasure to want to hear more, they will find it natural to start looking at the text and will usually want to take over eventually and read for themselves. Children gravitate to texts they have heard read.

When reading to groups, teachers find “big books” a practical and engaging way to use this method, since everybody can follow the text together. Children enjoy repeated readings of favorite big books and, once familiar with one, can help you read it. If you use a pointer as you read each word, the children will be encouraged to focus on the match between the sound of the words and their corresponding written symbols. Read for the natural flow and sense without letting the use of the pointer slow down too much or break up your rhythm, intonation, and expression. For beginners, choose texts, like “The Little Red Hen,” that have the kind of incremental repetition children like, because repetition helps them recognize and cue off certain words. The rhyming and typographical form of poems are good for this too.

Older students who are weak readers or “nonreaders” also enjoy being read to as they watch the words of an interesting text or their own student-produced papers projected on an overhead projector. If students have written poems or raps, the teacher or student writer can lead the class in a choral reading of the texts together. For more on choral reading, see page 184. Weak readers can watch the text as you read pieces that are too difficult for them to read on their own but that are mature enough in content to be interesting and not perceived as “babyish,” as texts on their reading level might appear.

As you read, all the students have to do is follow. Thus dependent students of any age can go ahead and be dependent but at the same time begin to gain the means of independence in a very unthreatening way. Students who have apparently failed to read usually recognize some words and so are at the point where the snowballing could start any day. They can follow known words well enough to be pretty sure of looking at the unknown words at the same time you are sounding them. The read-along method is limited to no age and may prove especially useful

for older students who are supposed to read but don't. It can lead nicely into partner reading as described on page 155.

■ STUDENTS READING

More mature readers in any class can read to the others. Even in first grade, some children are able to read fairly well either by the time they enter school or soon afterward. In succeeding years, the spread in literacy ability broadens so that it should be increasingly easy to find adept readers to give the lap method to their peers (and without the curse of it seeming babyish). Besides freeing you to individualize, student readers add the appeal of peer interaction.

Arrange for a strong reader to read aloud to one or two others still learning. Let them choose a text and settle in somewhere comfortable in such a way that the listener(s) can easily see the text. If it doesn't interfere with their delivery, the readers might move a finger along the text to synchronize listeners who need it. If you feel your readers are a bit shaky themselves, have them rehearse their texts with each other to work out kinks.

Even if you can muster enough good readers from within the class, arrange for older students to come into your class periodically to read in this way. Small children love to have the attention of older children and want to emulate what they can do. Since this kind of pairing has other uses that we will mention later, you could make standing arrangements with other teachers about pooling your students together. In our experience, wherever this arrangement is used teachers become very enthusiastic about it, and the older students gain confidence and a sense of self-worth.

■ AIDES READING

The read-along method is a major and staple way in which parents, student teachers, or community helpers can contribute substantially without either teacher or aide having to prepare on a given day. All that is required is that the person be a competent reader. Although a special time might be set aside for aides to come in and read, an individualized classroom can avail itself of aides at any time, which is more effective and convenient all the way around. Just explain to aides the importance of students seeing and hearing the text simultaneously. For bilingual children, an aide who is fluent in their heritage language can translate from the English text where needed to speed up comprehension, but having the story read aloud in English will itself speed up this transition from one language to the other.

■ RECORDED VOICE

Recordings enable students to look-and-listen independently of other people. This makes individualization possible when live readers are not numerous enough. Recordings also save face for students old enough to have learned to read but still unable to, who feel ashamed being read to by another person. Best of all would be to have both people and machines available. Some youngsters will prefer one to the other, and sometimes one or the other will fail you. See page 59 for getting recordings and page 150 in *READING* for more on this method.

THE LANGUAGE-EXPERIENCE APPROACH

The language-experience approach might be described as the writing counterpart to the read-along method. The learner dictates something he has to say to a literate person who writes down the words verbatim so that the learner can see how his oral words look as text. Like the read-along method, only in reverse, this provides the learner with a literate person who can mediate between the learner's oral knowledge and the strangeness of written language so that he can learn to translate between media himself. The name that has been attached to this method over the years by its many practitioners refers to the fact that the content of what is written comes from the learner's own verbalization of his own experience.¹

■ BASIC PROCEDURE

Posted or set forth on an activity card for the use of both aides and students, the directions to the learner can go like this:

1. Sit down beside your helper so that you can watch him write.
2. Tell your helper the title of your story. Watch him write it down. Tell your own name next.
3. Now tell him your story. Watch him write it down.
4. Read your story out loud with your helper. Help him put in any punctuation marks that will make your story sound the way you want it to be read.
5. Trace over the letters with a high-lighter pen.
6. Then read your story to a friend while he looks on.
7. Draw pictures for your story and post it on the display board or put it into a booklet with other stories.

The aides or other scribes should use manuscript printing to model the first type of handwriting that children will be producing in school. Explain to these scribes that since the normal intonation of speaking often gets broken up by dictating, they should ask for repetitions to check on how to punctuate the speech flow. Step 4 should help too. If uncertain, the scribe should read the phrasing a couple of ways, ask the speaker which is right, then perhaps explain the difference the alternatives make in punctuating. Direct scribes unsure of spelling or punctuation to check with you. It's important for student scribes not to mislead the learner, but it's also important to make checking matter-of-fact so that the scribe doesn't lose face in front of his charge.

The content of a dictation can of course be anything. Younger children usually apply "story" to practically anything they have to say. The material can be a recent incident, a made-up tale, a list, a caption, a description of a pet or parent, a certain routine, a favorite object or person or activity, or directions for how to make something or play a game. Sometimes members of small groups will tell something they did together.

¹The chief exponent of the language-experience method is Roach Van Allen. For models for designing activities, see Roach Van Allen and Claryce Allen, *Language Experience Activities*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1982).

A lone scribe may gather a group aside to the chalkboard or around a large easel tablet or computer monitor and write down or type what the group agrees to say. This can be functional, as when class news is being recorded, a log is being kept on some class project, or some letter is to be sent. Easel sheets are good for posting as class reading. The scribe repeats, as he writes, the words the group decides on. Though less potent than one-to-one, this is worth a lot and leads easily into collective writing later (described on page 201), where a student becomes scribe. The scribe can prepare for this by sometimes asking the group for spellings and by letting those who know them write them in.

The great advantage of dictating while watching is that it places the learner in the writer's stance so that he watches each letter being written down as his speech is literally spelled out. This can be an effective way for the speaker to learn sound-spelling correspondences, especially since the personal content makes for very high interest and close attention. Then when he traces over the letters, he further adds the transcribing role to his authorial role. After thus creating a text he reverses roles and becomes an interpreter of a text. He reads the transcript back, with and without help, aided by the memory of his own words.

Aside from offering learners opportunities to generalize spelling, the language-experience approach helps them very much to memorize the overall look of words. It parlays sight-word into a continuous, meaningful process. The speaker is seeing how highly irregular words are spelled. Such words require memorization, and again, whole-word learning aids identification of word particles as well.

■ USE OF AIDES

Like any whole-discourse approach, language experience requires a vast volume of practice before most learners can generalize well the sound-spelling correspondences. But this volume is not impossible in school. With one teacher to service twenty-five to thirty-five pupils in the traditional classroom, it's a tribute to the effectiveness of the approach that it has worked as well as it has. Dictation can become a much more powerful force in literacy if every learner has the opportunity to dictate something almost daily. Like the lap method, language experience is simple and cheap and anyone who can read and write himself can implement the method. Neither has often been fully realized, however, because even avid proponents have seldom made way in the classroom for enough outsiders to come in and work one-to-one all the time.

Unlike the read-along method, the language-experience approach allows little choice between human and mechanical means. Until such time as schools have computers that type out words when someone speaks into them, we will have to rely on people to take dictation—parents, student teachers, seniors and other community volunteers, students from upper grades, and more advanced classmates. (Human means are preferable anyway.) Some teachers make the same arrangements to engage scribes from outside as to engage readers, and often the same people do both and perhaps other things as well on the same occasion. One easy way to arrange for this is to exchange halves of the class with a classroom of older youngsters who buddy up with the younger pupils. (A side benefit is that the older students get purposeful practice in transcribing and proofreading.)

■ WRITING DOWN SINGLE WORDS

An extremely valuable literacy practice is to write down for students words that they ask for at any time. The chief advantage of dictating-while-looking lies in the student's involvement with the words he proposes. This extra interest ensures heightened attention to the overall look of each word, for whole-word memorization. So arrange for you and aides or other students to habitually write out on request whatever words a learner wants. Don't worry about spelling difficulty and rarity. The point is that the learner has some cherished or fascinating word that he wants to possess visually as he already does orally and emotionally. Give it to him. Make a lot out of the process of collecting words, remind the students constantly that they can do this, and keep connecting their growing stock of word cards with activities that call for them.²

WORD-CARD COLLECTIONS

Give each student a little drawstring bag or box or ring that opens. Give him also some manilla tagboard or other paper of fairly heavy stock and direct him to cut out some blank word cards approximately two by three inches. Whenever he asks for a word, write it on one of his blank word cards and tell him to trace over the letters with crayon or porous pen of his color choice. Or, depending on how advanced the student is, you might spell out the word orally as he draws or stamps the letters on the card. In either case, have him say the word while looking at the spelling. The learner keeps the cards in his bag or box, or if he has a ring, punches holes in the cards and strings them on the ring. Emphasize possession: these are *his* words. Sometimes the words have another, immediate use such as to label some object the student keeps in the classroom or at home or some item in a display he has made.

This collection has many uses. Classmates can compare, trade, copy, and borrow cards. They can use them to make playing cards by drawing or pasting on these or larger cards pictures of things that the words refer to. They can make sentences with them on a flat surface. Then they will discover that they lack dull but necessary words like simple verbs, prepositions, and conjunctions, for which they now have a need and can also ask.

Partners can turn word cards face down and take turns picking them up one at a time and reading them as the other tries to spell them back. They can spread them face down on the floor then try to guess from memory where each is, saying the word first before turning a card over. They can alphabetize their cards, following the order of a simple dictionary if they need to, then copy off the words in order onto pages of a blank booklet. Add illustrations and they have their own dictionary. Partners collaborating on one dictionary will pool their word cards and thus learn new words. There are many other uses to which these cards can be put, and students can increase their stock of words by copying favorite words from signs, games, books, and so on, once the words have been identified for them at their request.

² See Sylvia Ashton-Warner, *Teacher* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1963) for her fine development of this activity with Maori children.

CHARTS, CAPTIONS, MAPS, LISTS

Youngsters often want to know how to write words as part of a project they're doing. A number of such activities are described in *LABELS AND CAPTIONS*. Encourage children to label the parts of some drawing they have made and to ask either you, a classmate, or an aide for the spellings. Often they want to label something they have made or caption a story picture they have drawn. Launch them into keeping charts of the growth of a plant or the behavior of their pet or the weather and other activities described in *TRUE STORIES* and *INFORMATION*. These can be done by small groups too. Charts often call for single-word entries and repeat some words, which help learners recognize them.

Launch map-drawing also, another type of graphics that requires labeling of parts and captions. Proper names and titles offer an opportunity to teach capitalization also. In this regard, students can start keeping name and address books of friends and classmates. They dictate these, collect them on slips or cards, alphabetize and make booklets out of them. Accustom students to reading all such words to someone soon after you write them down.

■ SCRIBING FOR ALL AGES

Like reading aloud to students, taking dictation from them is so associated with primary school that you have to be careful to keep older students from feeling that it's childish. Scribing is a major literacy method, and many older students need all the literacy strategies available. It shouldn't be limited to the early years simply because that's where it's first used. Some older students, in fact, are so gun-shy of books and paper after failing to read and write for many years that dictating may be by far the most appropriate method for them. Pairing the nonreader off with a literate peer may work for some. Others may prefer you or an aide as scribe.

Since collective writing is a common activity in this curriculum, it can provide cover (see page 201). Counsel reluctant writers to participate frequently in such groups. Suggest in conference alone with them that they contribute a lot there by dictating things to say and that they make a point of watching the scribe write down their words. Point out that by doing this they can learn to write for themselves. Say you think dictating to others will help them learn; then ask how they would like to go about it.

Another possibility is for such students to talk into a tape recorder then watch as someone else transcribes the tape. This adds a degree of indirection that may suffice to forestall embarrassment for some. Some teachers arrange for students' tapes to be transcribed and returned to them. Though not as effective as watching a scribe, this can draw reluctant students into writing and provide them their own words as reading matter.

Being read to and dictating are temporary substitutes for reading and writing. By means of them, the beginner learns to match off speech with print within himself. Next, he reads to himself and dictates to himself. Finally, as we said, he even dispenses for the most part with his own internal oral intermediary as literacy becomes second nature. This progression from vocalizing a text to subvocalizing to nonvocalizing seems to us a paramount truth of literacy growth. It's implemented simply by letting a literate person translate for the learner between voice and print while the learner participates and emulates the helper, who serves also

as a role-model. The Balinese dancers teach their youngsters by holding them from behind and moving so that the youngsters' bodies move with theirs until a time when the adult steps back and the learner continues moving on his own from within. This internalization from the social to the personal seems a natural, effective way to learn to read and write as well.

THE READING IMPASSE

By way of working up to a third major way of becoming literate, let's resume the question of whether beginners need to learn some sound-spelling correspondences directly, in isolation.

Some educators are ruling out absolutely any teaching of phoneme-spellings on grounds that proficient readers recognize words as wholes without delving into the letter constituents of the word, and that literacy learners of ideographic languages have no other alternative. But the fact that the Chinese *must* learn to memorize words one by one because their language has no alphabet hardly compels speakers of other languages to follow suit by failing to make use of an alphabet when they do have one. And it's not true that memorizing the look of thousands of separate words amounts to no more than memorizing the look of thousands of miscellaneous objects in the environment, which children routinely do. The words are part of a system: knowing the letter components of some words helps one to recognize other words. It's in the nature of the human mind to create or to utilize systems.

Nor is it true that the English system of spelling is so irregular as to be of no use in becoming literate. Just a *partial* knowledge of sound-spelling correspondences will allow most people to learn to recognize new words. A little letter knowledge can go a long way, as we've indicated, because it interacts with other cues. Despite all its irregularities, English provides quite enough consistency for this *minimal* letter knowledge.

Research on what proficient readers do doesn't tell us what they did to become proficient. At some point previously, adept readers did have to focus within some words and use some knowledge of sound-spelling correspondences to identify those words so that they might recognize them as wholes in the future and might interplay them with syntactic and semantic cues.

Now, this sound-spelling knowledge might have been acquired by the two methods we have just proposed and by the means we ascribed to them—that is, by a combination of memorizing words as wholes and of analyzing whole words into their component sounds and spellings while reading along and dictating. But many educators remain unconvinced that *all* beginners will become literate by these means alone, unsupplemented by some sort of phonics. School experience and research comparing methods, they say, indicates that if some phonics isn't included, some students don't make it. (Note in passing that contending theorists can both cite research findings to support their position.)

Not all people learn the same way. Some seem less able than others to analyze words and generalize sound-spelling correspondences for themselves and may need these taught to them explicitly. But this apparent disadvantage may simply reflect the fact that read-along and language-experience have not figured prominently enough in the literacy methodology of schools to have fully proved themselves for all types of learners. Even their staunchest advocates have rarely succeeded in implementing them as fully as we have proposed here, because packaged programs

have, in most schools, kept both in a marginal role. Neither formal research nor general school experience is conclusive enough to settle this controversy.

INDEPENDENT WRITING WITH INVENTED SPELLING

It's time to turn now to the more neglected half of literacy—writing—and to how it may actually lead into reading rather than wallow in its wake. Up to this point we have considered phoneme spellings only in relation to reading, which leads to an impasse in the controversy. Deliberately we have let our line of thought follow the reading bias to demonstrate how chronically decisions about literacy are made with reading mainly in mind and writing slighted. Treating literacy as reading only has in fact bedeviled not only pedagogy but research and theory about it as well.

■ THE WRITING POINT OF VIEW

But most controversy in literacy looks different when you put reading and writing on parity and treat both at once. Why fight over whether sound spellings are needed for reading if readers have to become spellers anyway in order to write? It's all taking place in the same mind. The amount of sound-spelling correspondences that might be presented to learners to help them write independently would probably be more than readers would need as a starter or booster to recognize words when reading independently.

Sensible teachers have always encouraged children to write freely and to make fearless educated guesses about spelling, but the error orientation of schools too often prevailed over this approach. And many parents have fostered at home the spontaneous inventive spelling of their preschool children playing creatively with letters. Researchers like Charles Reed, Carol Chomsky, and Glenda Bissex helped to legitimize this play for school by showing that it helped to teach reading as well.³ But children inventing spelling must learn the alphabet, which comprises the twenty-six smallest particles in the language! Does this violate the “whole language” approach?

Learning seventy graphemes, as children did in the old *Writing Road to Reading*, differs only in quantity from learning the alphabet, not in principle. Neither conveys meaning. The difference between independent writing based on the alphabet and that old “phonics” program turns on one's notion of *minimal*. Is there something between the incomplete, misleading alphabet and the fuller, more accurate but more numerous set of the main phoneme spellings of English? How elaborate does a set of sound-spelling correspondences have to become before it ceases acting as a magic key and starts interfering with the learner's natural self-teaching?

³ See Charles Read, “Children's Categorizations of Speech Sounds in English,” *Research Report 17* (Urbana IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1975); Carol Chomsky, “Write First, Read Later,” *Childhood Education* 47, (March, 1971): 296-299; Edmund H. Hunderson and J. N. Beers, eds., *Developmental and Cognitive Aspects of Learning to Spell* (Newark, DE: International Reading Association, 1980); and Glenda Bissex, *Gnys at Wrk: A Child Learns to Read and Write* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980).

■ THE NATURE OF INVENTED SPELLING

This self-teaching begins with drawing. Like words, pictures too represent things, symbolize. Drawing letters is for children not so different from drawing other shapes. And children become interested in drawing letters if they see that these are important to other people around them. They imitate. Then gradually they realize that these letters can be combined to represent speech sounds. During preschool and primary years this correspondence or code can be a very intriguing idea indeed.

The process of trying to match speech sounds with the letters of the alphabet becomes a powerful way to teach oneself the phoneme-grapheme relationships. Children who invent their own spelling go through a fairly predictable series of stages:

1. using the names of the letters of the alphabet for their sounds as in Paul Bissex's message to his mother, RUDF—"Are you deaf?" (dee-eff).
2. using only consonants for whole words, sometimes only the initial consonant but often initial and final consonants.
3. representing vowel sounds as well as consonant sounds.
4. spelling the long vowels by single letters as pronounced in the alphabet (*sel*).
5. spelling short vowels by a single letter even though not pronounced as in the alphabet (*fill*), spelling long vowels with two letters even though one is silent (*seal*), doubling consonant letters after a final short vowel (*fill*), and inserting *m* and *n* for nasal sounds inside words (*send*).

The continual process of hypothesizing about how words are spelled stimulates children to notice conventional spellings and to sense when their hypotheses are not taking account of all of the conventions of standard spelling. What all beginning writers need is a print-rich environment with plentiful examples of conventional spelling and at the same time encouragement to guess at how words are spelled. Then they can juxtapose their own invented spellings based on their operating hypotheses about orthography alongside the way the rest of the world spells words. Ample opportunity to read along with texts and to see their own words become text through language-experience activities combines with plentiful independent writing to forge further hypotheses that successively approximate the English spelling system.

Young children who guess at how a word is spelled, based on their operating hypotheses, will have at least three advantages over other children. First, they grasp the basic idea of literacy as a visual system for connecting thought to sight as they formerly connected thought to hearing. Because they themselves invent a spelling system and keep modifying it, they understand both how English literacy is systemic and how it is not. Second, they become independent writers earlier and thus will garner more practice writing at an age when creating a written artifact holds a special charm for children, one similar to creating a picture or other art object. Third, their interest in writing prompts them to read, and their awareness of the selecting and ordering of letters in words makes them better readers.

As Bissex's case study of Paul brings out very clearly, although the inventive speller may start with having each letter of the alphabet say its own name, he soon senses the difference between his spelling and that he sees in the signs and labels

and stories around him. He then feels a need to supplement and correct the alphabet while writing. Children want to get things right, the way adults do it. So they ask others for spellings for the words they are trying to write down. Significantly, Paul sometimes asked only for the spelling of part of a word, a phoneme, not the whole word, because he had already worked out the rest of the word to his satisfaction.

But just as often, Bissex did not know *which* spelling of the phoneme to give him without knowing the context provided by the rest of the word. As she countered his question with hers, he became aware that graphemes don't neatly pair off one-to-one with phonemes but change for a given sound according to neighboring sounds in the context of the whole word. Asking for spellings of both phonemes and whole words became a major way that Paul made his way from his spelling inventions toward conventional English orthography.

It's ideal to get information this way, just at the moment you need it. Learning a systematic bloc of information in advance, pending the time you shall need it, as in a phonics program, is not ideal, because you have less motive to learn it in the first place and later you may forget the part of it you need or not be able to pluck it from memory and apply it at will. So, besides needing people standing by to answer your spelling questions, what's the problem with using the alphabet alone as the basis for invented spelling? It's the briefest such bloc of information an independent writer can start with.

The problem is that in overcoming its very paucity and consequent distortion the learner comes to depend on others to feed him the further, corrective information. And for a while he often can't read back his own writing for himself or share it with others. The more the inventive speller realizes that his spellings differ from those in texts, to which he is increasingly drawn for reading material, the more frustrated he can become with the inadequacies of the alphabet and his inventions based on it. This tension is bound to increase as he grows and is in fact what will transform invention into convention. If phoneme spellings are ever to be *presented* to learners, this would be the time. What began as solo play inevitably becomes communication, which requires conforming to such social conventions as spelling. For a while he maintains both his orthographic system and society's, but the motivation to read others' texts and to have them read his eventually predominates as a game having more possibilities than the original one.

Some children will start invented spelling at home, others in school. How may school best sustain the former and initiate the latter? Schools have not acquired enough experience with either to offer complete answers. Should children who never wrote on their own before school start independent writing with only the alphabet, or utilize a somewhat more extended presentation of sound spellings? Whether the independent writer begins asking for conventional spellings before or after he enters school, sooner or later he will need some sources for answers. Can he ask for spellings in the classroom as frequently as he might at home? Perhaps so, perhaps more, if, as we've proposed, many outside literate people are routinely brought in. But busy writers could interrupt them a great deal as they are working with other learners.

Both human and material kinds of resources for elaborating alphabet inventions ought to be available to give individuals standard spellings of phonemes and words if they want them and when they want them—in mid-writing. They get standard spellings of course all the time as they read along, read alone, and dictate, but you can give spellings also in mid-writing conferences, and writing part-

ners can give them to each other. Many primary teachers write out below a child's invented-spelling text the standard spelling for that text. This honors the original but allows the child experiencing the tension between his inventions and regular orthography to compare and to make his own transition.

Maybe the classroom should also contain other material resources besides dictionaries that independent writers can refer to for sound-spellings, such as wall charts or, better, audiovisual materials that sound as well as show the commonest spellings of English phonemes. For an example see the footnote on page 138. It is here and only here—as *reference in independent writing*—that we think such materials should be considered.

■ LITERACY AS A GAME

Let's combine the possibility of such material resources with two other considerations. The first is suggested by the very motivation that impels some preschool children to start writing on their own by invented spelling. This literacy that educators and researchers make heavy weather of is for children a game like any other game. It's hard for lifelong readers and writers, especially academic people, to appreciate the marvel that children feel at first about the idea of converting speech and letters back and forth into each other. It's stunning to discover that a *second* way exists to give and get meaning—an equivalent out there of this familiar body activity of talking. Preschool children don't take up make-do writing primarily to communicate, since they already can speak and they often can't read back their own writing. They do it for fun.

Inventing spelling is the same kind of creative, intellectual play that makes small children the prodigious learners they are. Letters are a new play medium, the alphabet a generative toy whose possibilities they play out by combining members of the set to learn which combinations can stand for sounds and words they want. The very idea of reading also is astonishing—this hidden, distanced voice that you can unlock from the page if you have the key. Reading plays into the child's sense of mystery about a world not yet explained away and his need for a magic to penetrate this mystery. In all our utilitarian talk about literacy, we educators and researchers have lost the viewpoint of the one who is actually to do this thing we are talking about. For the beginner, literacy is about secrecy and sorcery.

Just as lion cubs gambol and tumble to develop the agility they will need as predators, human children invent kinds of play that exercise their mind. Inasmuch as inventing a writing system out of the alphabet is such play, it is just another survival game to develop the sorcery to penetrate the secrecy, aside from what new communicative possibilities it also holds, which are by no means clear when a child starts writing on his own for fun. In other words, the learning of isolated letters or letter clusters that can appear unholistic from the perspective of language communication alone appears integrative from this learner's perspective, *wherein letters, phonemes, and words are play tokens as well as symbols*. Knowing that putting them together can also tie into meaning does not in the child's mind conflict with this but, rather, enhances it. The meaning sometimes riding on the play tokens simply makes of literacy a very resonant double game whereby children crack a code and sport with a new medium at the same time, that is, become a sorcerer to penetrate secrets—all while exercising the play of their mind.

We share the outrage of colleagues in English education about the untold damage done to schooling in the name of phonics and would be dismayed to see the argument developed here perverted into a rationalization for any of the drills and rules, workbooks and textbooks. We have roundly condemned the particle approach since the 1960s, but at the same time we don't want to let outrage blind us to this child's view of word particles as play things.

At this point let's turn to the other consideration that bears on the question of whether, or how, to present phoneme spellings. It is the question we asked of reading but now ask of writing: what is unique about it?

■ TRANSCRIBING

As visual processing of language is all that's unique to reading, transcribing is all that's unique to writing, since composition may be oral or even nonverbal as well—though differing for these of course. Written composition and oral composition are not the same. The fact of transcribing while composing does indeed influence the composing, recursively, since it leaves a record of thoughts that the author keeps referring back to while composing further. And again as with reading, the oral intermediary recedes with writing proficiency as sensorimotor becomes more automatic and more directly connected to thought. So while fully recognizing the eventual fusion of transcribing and composing, educators must allow, as with reading, for how the *beginner* must go about learning to coordinate these very different but simultaneous activities.

Thinking is not new for the child, but transcribing is. In fact, trying to learn how to draw letters and spell words *while* thinking of what he has to say poses such a severe obstacle to the beginner that he may hate writing from the start and develop a block on it, like most of the citizenry, unless his teacher arranges for him to dictate to a scribe or invent his own spelling. Dictation permits the beginner to let someone else transcribe while he composes so that, just like the corporate executive, he doesn't have to bother with it. Actually, of course, dictating is a major means, as we saw, of *learning* to transcribe, by watching and emulating. Unlike the executive, the child wants to take over and transcribe for himself, as he learns to do concurrently through invented spelling as well.

The greater difficulty of writing has not been fully appreciated and accommodated. The child's problem of trying to write and think at the same time has often been evaded by simply deferring composition until after mastery of transcription, which has been taught through drills and rules on handwriting, spelling, and punctuating. This way of beginning gives children an aversive and barren notion of "writing."

To appreciate the greater difficulty of transcribing, compare it with its counterpart in reading, the recognizing of oral words in text. Spelling out one's thought into letters demands much more than sounding out or figuring out a text. Whereas a reader can take advantage of grammatical and meaning cues to fill in words and fill out sentences, and therefore does not have to attack each letter or word directly according to sheer appearance, a writer must summon everything from within—sense, sound, and sight. He must know the sound-spelling correspondences much more explicitly and more precisely. Spelling requires more consciousness.

The reader has external givens by which to infer from known to unknown. With a little visual processing he can activate a lot of oral knowledge to apply

back to the visual information. He can operate more intuitively too, because he can constantly check guesses against comprehension. So his job is more to synthesize, to pull all evidence together into a whole. The speller faces a task more characterized by analysis. He not only has to parcel his thought out over parts of speech; he must segment the speech flow into its finest sound particles—phonemes—and write them down in the finest graphic units—letters. He must also sequence these letters in a precise order that renders both the multiple-letter spelling of individual phonemes and the overall sequence of phonemes within a word—when the phoneme sequence will itself affect the individual spellings within it.

A writer is a speller. Of course much writing consists also of simply reproducing already memorized words as visual wholes. But to the extent that the beginning writer uses words he does not already know how to spell, he will have to rely on some knowledge of phoneme spellings going well beyond the alphabet. Starting with the sound of his own words in his mind, the writer must build up phoneme by phoneme each word he hasn't memorized the spelling of.

The fact that it's harder to spell words than to recognize them must become an important consideration in determining what learners need to become literate. Handwriting need not encumber early independent writers, because they can stamp and type letters. Spelling remains the major stumbling block to transcribing and hence to independent writing. Fortunately, it can be learned in fairly large measure, even broken down phonographically, through reading. But we're obliged to ask if the circular process of teaching oneself to read and write by means of each other can work fully enough for all learners if no spelling information is fed into it but the alphabet. Since learning to write requires some phonographic breakdown, then the issue is academic whether reading does or not. What one learns for writing will be available anyway, needed or not, for learning to read.

GAMES AND MULTISENSORY MATERIALS

In keeping with the principle of pluralism—of affording whatever *some* learners *may* need—it seems wise to make available as classroom resources, on an individual basis, some physical materials that accommodate both the independent writer's need as speller to break words down and the child's treatment of letters as toys.

Becoming literate requires no great expenditure and can be taught well with few materials other than good reading matter and the learners' own writings. We oppose class sets of anything that require the same materials for all individuals. What we recommend are some nonbook materials that serve the students collectively as classroom resources. If purchasable, these are usually not made for schools alone. If not purchasable, they can be made in school, to the educational benefit of the makers.

Much depends on how the school uses human resources; people can supply live sound, for example, that otherwise machines would have to supply. Our recommendations play off human and material resources in ways that allow teachers to combine them according to local circumstances. Most of the games described in this chapter can be put on computer, but if the classroom has only one or two computers, too few individuals can get at the games at any one time. And cost is not everything either. Social games and manipulable materials provide interactive

experience children too often miss watching a monitor at *home*. Utilizing human rather than material resources not only saves money but affords an advantage we think should count high among priorities—the personal relating.

Becoming literate entails a lot of matching—of like letter shapes, of printed letters with cursive letters, of phonemes with graphemes, of spoken words with written words. Many games played out of school by both children and adults are based on matching, as in making a “hand” with cards of the same suit or number. Other common games like Boggle and Perquackery are based on making words out of letters, on spelling, which is itself a permutation game played by combining members of a set in various possible ways. Despite appearances, games embody basic human mental functioning. Matching members of one set with counterparts in another set, or aggregating items within a set to create new items according to certain combinatorial rules, are functions of logic. Many of the games described here resemble activities that inventive spellers devise as they explore phonemic spellings in different word structures.

Such games are vestiges of folk ways of learning that existed before public schools, which have, in their proud professionalism, usually scorned them. As a result, parents tend to distrust games, and the society has drawn a sharp line between playing and learning. But as we have been saying, it is precisely this sort of false professionalism trying to make an exclusive place for itself that has resulted in the concept of reading as a highly specialized activity requiring special practices and materials not otherwise found in nature. Today, fortunately, a growing number of professionals see themselves more as applying natural learning activities of a general nature to specific tasks such as reading and writing.

Two other considerations. Most games depend on social interplay. Players pool their knowledge. Game materials such as cards and letter cubes usually provide the sight, or spellings, but players have to provide the sound, or oral language. Collectively, they have enough knowledge of word recognition and sound-spellings to play the game, but while one player may only be practicing a sound-spelling or word he already knows, another player in that game may be learning from him that sound-spelling or word for the first time. Similarly, given a certain game, players will alternate between presenting spellings to each other and sounding out spellings presented to them by their partners.

Sociality is itself a learning modality and one especially preferred by some individuals. And this relates to the other consideration. Like most other learning, becoming literate succeeds best if pursued across different modalities, media, and materials. This pluralism not only ensures that each individual finds the most suitable means but that everyone can reinforce the learning by varying the form of it. Learning to recognize and produce the shapes of letters benefits from multisensory experience. Learning to match sounds with spellings according to various combinatorial patterns increases significantly the more a learner experiences these across different social and material contexts. The variety helps, precisely, to distinguish what does *not* vary, which is the spelling regularity or the overall look of a whole word.

The fact that relationships learned in several different materials or media become more sharply generalized argues for numerous, overlapping games. Another reason is simply that variety allows learners to shift a certain learning into a fresh game and get further practice while still enjoying it. Finally, since learners will be playing these games by unplanned combinations of choice and

chance, they will have more than one opportunity to encounter certain sound-spellings or words. You can also counsel individuals to play one or another game according to how much they seem to need, for example, (1) whole-word memorization, (2) word-making for spelling, (3) refinement of phonetic spelling to fit conventional spelling, or (4) reinforcement of an emerging generalization of phoneme spellings. Some learners would presumably play only a portion of these games, and some none.

We recommend assembling as a classroom resource the following materials. Some might be purchased, some might be made with students. Older students or adults who have come in to read or take dictation might help make some games and play them with beginners. Once well launched, a game culture perpetuates itself by the ripple effect as the community passes it down. In any case, game directions can be placed on an activity card to go with each set of materials.

■ HANDWRITING MATERIALS

Children who have discovered how to put their voice on paper are proud of the way their artifacts look. They often want to make the handwriting beautiful. Because most beginners draw and write together on the same page, we recommend starting on unlined paper. While the letters youngsters produce on unlined paper are still large, their first lined paper would do well to have wide lines. Most children spontaneously start by making letters in manuscript printing before they learn cursive, which in our culture comes typically in late second or third grade. Young children also enjoy tracing and erasing letters in a pan of shallow sand.

Some teachers show children how to print in the simplified italic and D'Nealian calligraphy, which slant the letters. It's certainly no more difficult to produce than the traditional ball and stick style of printing. When written with a broad-edged pen, it's not only pleasing because of the alternation of thick and thin lines, but it's easy because it follows the natural movement of the wrist. Some advocates of italic printing argue that it can be as speedily produced as cursive handwriting and that it's as legible, so there's no need to ever learn cursive writing.

TRACING CARDS

Children enjoy tracing shapes. Buy or make large plasticized cards that bear some letters on each, printed about an inch high in one handwriting style per set of cards. Learners clip onto a card a sheet of tracing paper, which they can keep and eventually place in their folder. Cards are thus re-usable and preferable to consumable booklets, which are more expensive and less modular. An individual need practice only on letters they haven't yet learned. If they play enough with the stamps and manipulable letters recommended below, especially tracing over imprints or around the letters, they may never need cards. And of course constant independent writing teaches and rehearses letter formation, since it often begins at the same time as handwriting.

LETTERS AND STAMPS

Basic for recognizing and making the letter shapes is a set of cutout letters, rubber-letter stamps, and/or letter cards. Physical letters of various materials combine tactile and motor learning with visual. They can be cut out of felt, masonite,

wood, plastic, sandpaper, and so on. Substances like clay or dough can be molded, cut out with cookie cutters, or twisted like pretzels and hardened by heat. Ideally, stamps, letter cards, and material letters would be of the same style and size so that they can be physically matched with each other.

Letter shapes can include upper and lower case. Their size should be large enough to see and handle easily but small enough—one to two inches high—to permit making sentence continuities in some manageable space. Cut vowels, regular consonants, and influential semiconsonants (*w*, *y*, *m*, *n*, *l*, and *r*) from material of three different colors so that students begin to discriminate among these three groups. It would be good but not essential to have also in cutout or stamp form the numerals one to nine and even punctuation marks.

Other useful materials are stencils that can be brushed over to print letters, or magnetized metal letters that can be attached to a metal wallboard.

LETTER SETS FOR INDIVIDUALS

You might help some of your students make, each for himself, a set of either small single-letter cards or cutout letters. The latter are far preferable, because cutting out the letters itself teaches the shapes kinesthetically; then all subsequent manipulation of them provides tactile reinforcement. Students will have many uses for these sets.

Let each youngster trace or stamp a model array of the alphabet and cut these apart so that he has his own permanent letter set to keep in a little drawstring bag or box or can to make words with. Like their own word cards, these accumulate as a personal collection. Owners will need around one hundred capital letters and one hundred lower-case letters in ratio to each other according to their frequency in English.⁴ Personal, homemade copies of punctuation marks (on cards) and of numerals would be useful too. Just making their own set of letters helps youngsters learn the names of the letters and how to identify them even before they begin to put them to use.

USES. Youngsters like manipulating objects. Think of the cutouts as “feelies,” a tactile means by which learners can “grasp” letter shapes in conjunction with seeing them. Laying out letters makes conscious issues out of backward, upside-down, or reversed letters and creates occasions for learners to correct each other. And youngsters love to stamp.

Both letters and stamps allow them to write words and sentences, in effect, before they can form letters, which expedites invented spelling a great deal. But they should be encouraged to practice drawing letters at the same time, using the letters and stamps as models. Outlining silhouettes of solid letters or stamped letters will probably teach handwriting very effectively but should be worked into an individual’s overall evolution in hand-eye coordination and drawing.

With these materials students may do many kinds of solo and partner literacy activities:

⁴11-A; 2-B; 2-C; 3-D; 10-E; 2-F; 4-G; 3-H; 9-I; 1-J; 2-K; 6-L; 2-M; 5-N; 9-O; 2-P; 1-Q; 7-R; 4-S; 5-T; 3-U; 1-V; 2-W; 1-X; 2-Y; 1-Z.

- Stack one letter on another of identical shape, for visual discrimination.
- Stamp a letter; then place on top of the stamped image its solid-letter counterpart, for visual discrimination.
- Draw a silhouette around a solid letter or trace over a stamped image, for handwriting.
- Match lower case with upper case, to distinguish capital letters.
- Match a manuscript letter with its cursive counterpart, to learn cursive.

For making words and texts:

- Combine letters to spell a word and read it aloud or silently.
- Combine letters to copy some printed matter, for spelling.
- Combine letters to make a word for partners to sound out.
- Combine letters to spell out a sentence or story.

Like electronic keyboards, which transfer this learning to yet another play medium, stamps and letters allow a beginner to create texts before mastering handwriting and as a means to mastering handwriting. Working with a partner or so enhances the fun of these activities and acts as a corrective.

In addition, letters can be used to play tic-tac-toe and Scrabble-like games, and stamps can be used to make labels, word cards, and other materials for other activities.

■ OTHER WORD-MAKING GAMES

Players of these games alternate between creating their own texts and reading those of others, between spelling and word recognition.

SCRABBLE-LIKE

An easy way to get into word-making games is to play the familiar game of tic-tac-toe with all the letters of the alphabet. Players take turns, each adding a new letter to ones already played. The first one to make a word wins. Players still learning to form letters may play by stamping or by placing solid letters into the squares. A good kind of follow-up is Scrabble, which essentially just extends the idea of tic-tac-toe by increasing the number of squares and permitting players to build words over a larger area. These games stimulate experimentation with sound-spellings, but be prepared for much querying about which spellings are words and which spellings are correct. Aides and dictionaries help.

LETTER-CUBE

Players cast cubes with letters instead of dots on their faces and try to sequence them into words. A store-bought game such as Spill 'n Spell is made for those already literate, not for those becoming literate, who need several special sets of cubes and directions. Graduated games can be created by increasing the number of cubes rolled at once and by stipulating particular cubes bearing certain letters. If cubes are color-coded and bear either vowels only or consonants only, then game directions can say, "Take two red and two blue cubes...." and hence auto-

matically exercise players in building words of, say, the *mate* and *meat* patterns. So game directions based on number and color of cubes can establish a progression of games emphasizing different word structures. Consonant digraphs can probably be better learned if printed on the cubes as such—*ch* or *wh* on one face.

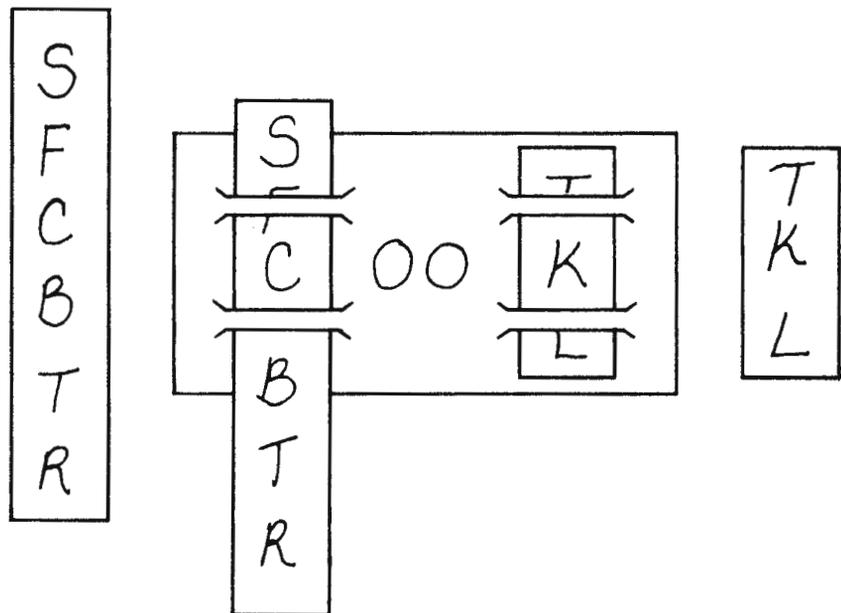
To keep score, players write or stamp down the words they make. Scoring can encourage longer words that use all or most of the letters thrown. Games can be played solo but are more fun in small groups, and partners can check each other. They can also play collaboratively instead of competitively if they keep only a group tally. In any case, players have to pool their knowledge to determine which combinations make real words. “Games of chance” are very useful, because they ensure that learners will have to try to read letter combinations neither they nor their partners may have made themselves. Looking for order in the randomness makes a suspenseful mystery of the game.

LETTER-MOVING DEVICES

One can make with fairly common materials some game devices that allow players to pull or rotate a letter at a time through a little window set among some fixed letters. The effect is a kind of do-it-yourself animation that enables a player to make words by changing letters within a frame of fixed letters. The number of letter places can be adjusted to focus on different word structures and spelling patterns.

PULL-THROUGH. With cardboard or construction paper, for example, you might make a device like that shown in Figure 6.1. Cut slits in a piece of tagboard and slip in strips of letters. Since inventing spellers often omit vowels at first, such a

FIGURE 6.1 PULL-THROUGH DEVICE

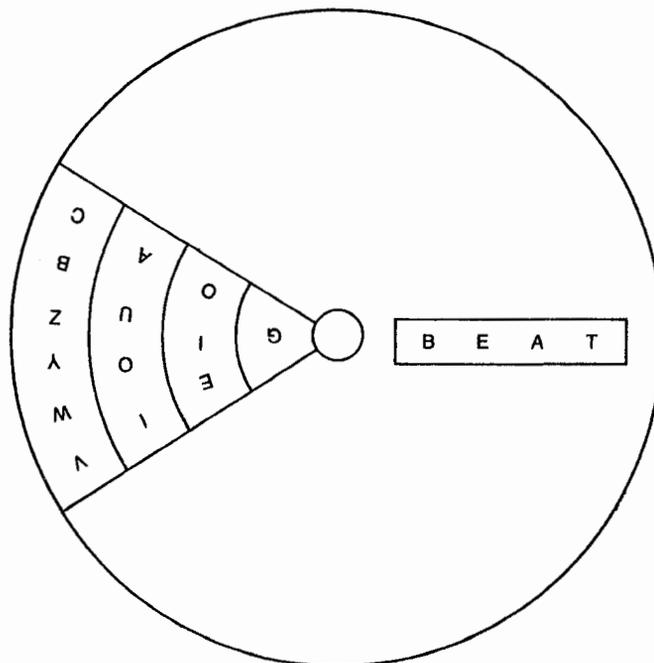


device could focus on three- and four-letter words having a vowel fixed in the middle. Different devices can feature other common vowel-consonant patterns and word structures.

WORD-WHEEL. A more versatile device is a word wheel as illustrated in Figure 6.2. A band of letters is printed around the circumference of a disk, and two or three successively smaller such disks are stacked concentrically and pinned together in the center with a brad that permits players to rotate the disks one at a time by thumb or finger. A cover wheel with a window frames the word formed. The open arc facilitates turning the wheels. The device illustrated focuses on the long-vowel pattern *cvvc*. Since only a handful of consonants can fill certain word slots, a smaller disk can contain enough letters for that position. This aspect of the wheel form, in fact, helps make such a point. Students can make pull-through and rotary devices to explore any sort of spelling pattern. In exhausting the possibilities of real words that can be made with one, they will think of another to make and experiment with.

SPECIAL VALUE OF LETTER-MOVING DEVICES. Making and playing with these devices entails excellent creative and intellectual play that can be done at any level of maturity by varying the difficulty. Older students will enjoy helping younger ones make the devices they need for their next stage of exploration. The learner gets insight about the spellings of English sounds that stick well because

FIGURE 6.2 WORD WHEEL



he has experimented. He is, in effect, systematically trying out various possible combinations in a scientific way and drawing conclusions from his research. By changing some letters while keeping others constant, he can see how the same spelling spells different sounds in different contexts (*flour, touch*) and how the sound value of a single letter changes with changes in neighboring letters it is combined with (*moose* and *mouse*).

And yet, this experimentation is really fun because the learner is controlling or making the device; he manipulates physical objects; the unknown outcomes create suspense; the recognition of familiar sounds in unfamiliar spellings is a pleasure; and the activities permit socializing. Devices can be made in funny and ingenious ways that become interesting in themselves, especially if the form of the word relates to the form of the device. Two windows spaced apart can be eyes; a strip of letters can be a tongue pulled through a mouth, etc. We urge you to make and play with some yourself to fully appreciate the possibilities for students of all ages.

WORD TURNING

How do you change a dog into a cat? By replacing one sound-spelling at a time:

dog—dot—cot—cat

Each change must create a new word. You may add, delete, reverse, or replace a sound-spelling. Making these transformations on a page, chalkboard, or screen amounts to another kind of do-it-yourself animation. A way to make the game easier at first is to introduce the four transformations one at a time, perhaps on a sequence of activity cards.

Players should always say aloud the starting word and each subsequent word. This helps a solitary player keep focused on sound changes and helps partners check each other. They can either stamp or write on paper, write on a chalkboard, move solid or cutout letters or letter blocks, or change settings on letter-moving devices. The advantage of writing or stamping lies in seeing the whole sequence of steps when finished and in having a record. This is desirable because players sometimes compare different steps to the same end or score by counting the number of steps.

As a solo game, the point is simply to find out how to get from one word to the other and so is like a kind of puzzle. As a partner game, the point may be to get from one word to the other in the fewest steps or to otherwise compare different solutions, since usually more than one series of transformations will turn one word into another. Or if only one way exists, players may time how long it takes them to get the second word. One version of the game is to see who can make the longest string of words when all players start with a common word. Finally, players may work out transformation chains then give each other the first and last words to see if their partners can figure out the steps in between.

The rule that you change sound-spellings, not merely letters, induces valuable insights. Consider the following game task of transforming *loot* into *sick*.

loot—look—like—lick—sick

Is this legitimate? players may wonder. First of all, in replacing the *t* sound by the *k* sound, we have secondarily changed also the sound value of *oo*. It's good for players to notice that how a spelling is sounded may depend on what follows.

Second, in replacing the sound of *oo* in *look* by the long *i* of *like*, we have had to add a final mute *e*. But this too adheres strictly to the game rule about changing sounds, because if you put a long-vowel sound into this slot in this kind of word structure, you have to add the mute *e*. Next, changing long *i* to short *i* (*like*—*lick*) makes us drop the *e* again in favor of final *-ck*, and this transformation is a variation of the *bite*—*bit* transformation that applies generally to short and long vowels. Encourage players to discuss together whether certain transformations are legitimate. They will then have to thrash out the spelling rule because of the implications of the game rule.

■ WORD-RECOGNIZING GAMES

CARD DECKS

Clumping together *which*, *while*, and *what* or *aid*, *mate*, and *say* is like making books of hearts and jacks. Cards may each have just a word on them or have a word on one side and on the other side a picture of the object that the word denotes. Decks might specialize in short or long vowels, easy or hard consonants. Decks you buy can serve as models for students to make more. Common games like rummy and concentration are good and can be supplemented by other pairing or book-making games. Pictures permit a simple solo or partner game of matching oral words to their depictions, without looking at the printed words, then of matching printed words to pictures by saying one and looking at the other.

Personal word card collections as mentioned on page 121 are good for games. Phonetically uncontrolled, often irregular, favored by the learner, these cards foster a fine kind of whole-word memorization. *LABELS AND CAPTIONS* suggests other sources for this collection. A good solo game is simply to place the word cards face down, turn them over one at a time, and try to sound them, placing aside those one cannot sound or is unsure of. The learner can get help with the ones he missed, then run through again sometime and compare his scores for both occasions. Playing with a partner gives students the advantage of checking each other and of playing with each other's cards. Or they can sort their word cards by prominent sounds or by word structures, organize them into decks, and exchange and play them by various game rules. This may help older students fasten down sound-spellings.

BINGO

A caller reads aloud words from a call card. Players each have a card bearing, say, twenty-five word squares. Whenever a word is called that he sees on his card, a player covers it up with a chip or scrap. The first player to cover all word squares in one row or all word squares on his card yells "Bingo!" and wins. Bingo affords good practice in word recognition for both caller and player, and game directions can build in a checking system.

Typically, a player will know some words on a card and not others, so some he will recognize from memory of the whole word and some he will have to figure out for the first time. He's greatly aided by the process of elimination, because there are only so many words in front of him, dwindling all the time, that might be the word he hears called, and among those, only certain ones contain one or

more of the sounds in the word called. Since different degrees of difficulty are readily arranged through the choice of words placed on a set of cards, the game can be played equally well by very young or more mature learners. Again, making the games is part of the learning process.

These are only examples. Like preschoolers inventing spelling, students in school will make up other sorts of word-making and word-recognizing games to fit what they or others want to find out, because, given a chance, they work through play.⁵

SUMMARY

So we recommend four concurrent activities especially for becoming literate:

- Following a printed text with the eyes while hearing it read.
- Dictating while watching the words being written down.
- Writing independently by inventing spelling.
- Playing word-making and word-recognizing games.

The read-along takes the reading viewpoint, invented spelling the writing viewpoint, and dictating both. Word-making games emphasize writing; word-recognizing games, reading. All these suit any age, and learners who need them engage in all at once, all the time, in combination with other activities suggested in this book.

Being read to, dictating, and inventing spelling are the beginners' versions of reading and writing. Like games, they occur out of school; they are not activities devised on the assumption that teaching literacy is a professional speciality. This is a populist approach, which means that any literate people can pass on literacy if professionals help them appreciate what they have to give and arrange for them to help initiate beginners into the community of readers and writers.

⁵ For an animated-letter videotape that combines aspects of many of the activities and games described in this chapter, see *Sound Out*, by James Moffett and Bobby Seifert, which was created for becoming literate at any age in any setting. It presents the main spellings of the 40-odd English phonemes in the process of forming and transforming words with them that are further combined into longer text including punctuation. In taking essentially the speller's viewpoint it can be included among those classroom resources that may aid independent, individualized writing. For information on *Sound Out* contact James Moffett, 4107 Triangle Road, Mariposa, CA 95338.

CHAPTER

READING

SEVEN

Reading is interpreting text. The old-fashioned word “construing” reminds us that readers *construct* meaning. Though receptive, readers are not passive. They must “take together”—comprehend—all the cues, ranging from typographical layout to subtleties of phrasing, that render the author’s content and intent. Every text is a skeleton to be filled out or a scaffolding to be filled in. Not everything meant can be said. Writers assume that readers will assume; that only within some shared understanding can they say something new. The reader’s response depends on what she brings to the text, which extends out into her total experience with language, people, and nature. The same for the reader’s motive.

INDIVIDUALIZED READING

The first issue of methodology is control. Who is controlling the selection of texts—the district, the school, the department, the teacher, or the reader? If it isn’t the reader, there isn’t much difference. Official goals for literacy imply that learning to read will get you a job, make you an informed participant in democracy, and increase your personal fulfillment. But it won’t do any of these things unless your will drives it. Will and control go together. What happens to the mind of a child forced to read state-approved textbooks on the American heritage of liberty but not allowed to choose what she reads? How can she associate reading with personal fulfillment while being manipulated through a standardized program in which, moreover, many texts are concocted or excerpted just for “instruction.” As for getting a job, by the time making money becomes real for her she may already be dropping out of the society that gave her too little sense of ownership to “buy into” it. Selecting texts as a way of directing youth backfires, because learning goals have to be set by learners, not officials—in a democracy at least.

People, including small children, fit reading into diverse personal patterns and schedules of seeking fulfillment. We read various sorts of discourse for various reasons at various stages of individual development. It’s futile and mischievous to try to codify all this into one program for all. Just array the kinds of reading and help individuals make their way around in the repertory. Since you and the students both have to know what there is to choose from, Part Three takes up each of the major kinds of discourse in its own chapter. This is the here-is-

God's-plenty method. Watch students' patterns of choice and play to that, as parents do. Freely make suggestions based on what you perceive about them, but let them decide.

Learners pass through phases of being influenced by parents and other adults, peers and friends, and the broader culture or subculture. Often youngsters want to reread texts they already know—a normal and useful part of growth. Often too, reading certain texts fits into some writing or other sort of project or interest they're involved in. An individualized, interactive, and integrated classroom creates dense webs of social and substantive connections that will help students choose as they work out their needs and interests. Even just starting and stopping a text by their own learning schedule makes enormous difference. The power to choose what one reads makes for the best reading program you can have.

Structuring a reading program around concepts of either form or content interferes with individualized reading, which should be initiated as soon as children can read at all and preserved through the years at all costs. Nothing you or anyone else can cook up by way of units or sequence will teach reading so well as guided individual choice in an interactive setting. The real learning will occur as individuals and small groups make up their own sequences and thematic or formal units. Setting up reading material and reading activities according to the kinds of discourse treated in Part Three will ensure coverage of all types of reading including literary forms. Your structuring best comes in the form of organizing a classroom library and activity directions for reading and in conferring with individuals about choices of texts. If you predigest form and content for your students, you will rob them of their education by short-circuiting their thinking.

■ RESPONSE TO LITERATURE

This chapter deals with general processes for practicing reading which hold good for different types of discourse, including literature. But literature does merit special treatment, which it receives in some chapters of Part Three and in the chapters on improvisation and performing. Virtually everything we have to say in this chapter applies to literature as well as to other texts.

The tradition in secondary school of organizing literature around nationalities, periods, or themes works against individualization. Regional, American, and British literature are often mandatory and slated for certain years. We encourage schools to drop this misguided vestige of "cultural literacy." Students will read more of all literatures if they simply *read more*, as they unquestionably do when choosing their own texts. People who don't read don't read the classics. Furthermore, issues of ethnic bias inevitably arise, given a pluralistic school population. You can advise frankly when you feel a student's reading program is unbalanced. Tell her which literature she is ignorant of and suggest texts that will fill these holes and still fit her interests.

Even in a required course of, say, American literature the teacher often is free to select particular works, in which case you can display a lot of texts and let individuals form into groups around their choices. This approach actually acquaints all students with more texts, given an interactive classroom in which different working parties cross-fertilize each other. Trying to ensure that everybody knows the same modicum is an inferior educational strategy compared to letting everybody

know different things and then exchanging what they know. The latter, ironically, would accomplish better the goal of such courses—to sample and survey a literature.

Organizing literature by time and place doesn't do justice to the nature of literature, which is not mainly national or historical. Thematic organization preinterprets. By focusing readers at the outset on preselected frames of reference, both historical and thematic approaches meddle terribly with reader response. Such approaches have made too many students dislike both reading and literature. While taking control of texts away from readers, they also misrepresent literature, which affects people personally in the realm of feeling. It should not be blurred with expository writing but allowed to do what it uniquely does. It is a figurative, artful mode of discourse, an experience itself as well as a perception about experience, created not merely to be understood but to be undergone.

Some specialized literature courses are electives. But electives are just a poor substitute for individualized classrooms, where students can organize their own electives any time about anything and can start and stop them by more realistic schedules than the arbitrary semester. What would be interesting would be for groups or individuals to pursue a subject of interest *across* national or ethnic literatures. Though sometimes this will involve translations, English literature itself subdivides into Irish, Australian, West Indian, South African, and so on.

The historical and ethnic aspects of literature are indeed worthwhile in themselves and often illuminate the texts, like any other aspects of context. Students may very well want to explore these and should be helped when they do, or you can advise readers of a certain text that it will mean more if they get some background on it. The relations, in fact, between texts, authors, and their environments will naturally interest youngsters. But if background becomes foreground, it will filter the text so much as to prevent the reader from knowing what her native response would have been. It's far better education to let individuals and groups explore contexts by their own programs, like one thirteen-year-old girl who became so fascinated with French history after reading *The Three Musketeers* that she read an adult biography of Madame Pompadour and other works about the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Teachers and aides can serve as resources.

Presenting literature through concepts and terms of literary criticism poses a similar problem. For one thing, both literary history and literary criticism contain differing schools of thought, not to say at times vehement disagreement. Students should not be brought up in one or another camp, and surveying all the various factions takes time away from the literature itself. Even old Aristotelian concepts like plot, character, and theme risk stereotyping the way readers think of fiction and drama. The priority for students is to experience the literature itself. Parallel to choice of texts is the second issue of control—who decides interpretations.

The currents of literary theory flow around three poles—the author, the text, and the reader. Which is most authoritative for determining meaning? Factions differ over emphasis on one or the other or over the relations among them. These relations are so basic that if students are enabled to select and deal with texts in the ways recommended here, they will reinvent the schools of literary theory for themselves, which is how they should first know them. Literary history and critical theory can enhance response, but you would do best to bring these spontaneously into students' discussions, performances, or other reworkings of texts, when they can use such ideas to extend their initial responses. Terminology is unimportant.

The principle of plurality underlying these remarks—not one syllabus or framework but shifting alternatives—applies also to the purposes of reading. People read for diverse reasons and in diverse ways—casually to sift, studiously to recall, raptly to become spellbound. The more schools open up the repertory of authentic discourse, the more apparent this becomes. Thus reader response is a factor of reader purpose and the kind of discourse. But response and purpose go back to choice.

THE MISCONCEPTION OF “READING COMPREHENSION SKILLS”

Whoever believes that incomprehension while reading constitutes a special learning case must then believe that “reading comprehension skills” exist and that these can be developed only through reading activities.

One result of this misconception is that many children spend a large amount of time plowing through various programs advertised to increase these so-called reading comprehension skills—“reading labs,” “skill builders,” “power builders,” or “practice readers.” Such programs consist mainly of short, motley reading passages, sequenced for difficulty, about which students are asked comprehension questions.

This is more a constant testing than it is a teaching method. See the critique of it in page 256 of *EVALUATING*. We can concede that the questions might “get a student to think more about what she reads,” but we think that if the same student were choosing her own reading selections to fit her interests and other language projects she was engaged in she would be thinking about what she had read anyway. The questioning, in other words, is used as a substitute for intrinsic motivation. Certainly, as a reading follow-up it is of the weakest sort. What’s needed for good comprehension are strong motivation before reading and strong intellectual stimulation afterward, neither of which this method affords. Many better ways exist, but—and here is the very painful rub—these other ways are not usually thought of as “reading instruction.”

The problem comes down to a contradiction in terms about reading comprehension. On the one hand, the misconception stakes out a vast domain of learning with the word *comprehension*, but with the word *reading* it implies a very narrow methodology for it. This creates an impossible double bind that accounts for much of the difficulty schools have now teaching reading. Reading becomes construed to include general intellectual processes like inferring. Vocabulary building and concept formation are placed in its domain, even though neither of these has any exclusive connection with reading and can be effectively learned through talk. Subject-matter reading, as in science and social studies, is supposed to require additional “skills” that also fall under reading, when in fact what is difficult for the young reader are the vocabulary, the concepts, and the knowledge context, all of which can be learned without ever opening a book. There are educators who would have us recognize dozens of different reading skills; some even count a couple of hundred.

We question the whole concept of reading skills beyond those of visual processing. We see nothing wrong in defining reading broadly to include comprehension, since it figures there as elsewhere, so long as the means of *practicing* comprehension are correspondingly broadened. This means that most of the activities

recommended in Part Two and Part Three teach reading comprehension, as do many other activities in and out of school that develop thinking processes, knowledge structures, and general maturation. Just as interpretive processes extend well beyond reading, so must the methodology for exercising them.

CAUSES OF INCOMPREHENSION

First, some so-called comprehension problems may really be incorrectly diagnosed problems of word recognition, matters of emergent literacy as discussed in the last chapter. Many youngsters in the middle grades never, in fact, learned well enough how to associate print with speech and hence can't access sufficiently their oral knowledge to interpret the text. They have limped along in reading, understanding some things but missing the individual meanings of some words and the total meaning of some word sequences because they still can't recognize in print what they know orally. It's easy to confuse this case with the case of a student who recognizes words well but doesn't have some of the words in her vocabulary or has not grasped certain concepts yet, however they are worded, or has a general cognitive problem in putting facts together, or simply is not motivated to stick with the text.

Textual tests of comprehension will not reveal the difference. You have to remove visual processing as a factor and assess the problem orally. Read aloud to her and ask what she understood. Then if you suspect the problem is word recognition, ask her to sight-read some text to you. All literate adults sometimes read texts they do not comprehend—even when they know all the words orally—because of inadequate knowledge of the subject matter, failure to grasp certain concepts, cognitive difficulty in relating statements, or failure of the writer to make herself clear.

■ POOR MOTIVATION

Given good word recognition, what causes reading problems? A major cause may simply be lack of motive. Some students haven't yet become interested in language generally and in books in particular and do not see what they have to gain personally from either. This problem is clearly not going to be solved by "practice reading" with comprehension questions but rather by receiving and producing language in social activities—listening to oral or recorded reading, singing, asking questions and discussing with peers, dictating stories, playing word games, and doing dramatic activities. Only widespread involvement in language can solve the problem of poor motivation, and that involvement, as most teachers realize, must occur first outside the realm of silent reading. But you will never know whether motivation or something else is the problem unless you allow students to choose activities and texts. Patterns of choice, or even inability to choose, reveal the learner to you as you need to know her to help her.

It is when motivation is an issue that two aspects of the uniqueness of reading come to the fore. The visual processing of text peculiar to reading makes it a faster medium and a more solitary medium than talk. The speed is generally an advantage. Most adults who read extensively find great frustration in other modes of receiving information because they seem so slow. One has to receive video or

audio transmission at life rate. Reading, on the other hand, can go at the pace of thought. Students should have ample opportunity for scanning and browsing in a great number of texts so they can see the value of finding something they want in written form. Thus they can learn for themselves the economical nature of the process of reading.

The solitude of reading, however, will repel some youngsters as strongly as it draws others. Many low comprehension scores just reflect a dislike for immobilizing oneself with a book and giving up social exchange. For some youngsters being alone is virtually a punishment in itself; to be alone and *still* is too much. The whole of *PERFORMING TEXTS* is about how to read socially and move around at the same time.

There's no doubt that the skill of reading is enormously valuable in our culture—more so, in fact, than many students learn about in time to avoid incurring a reading problem. One job of schools is to array all the uses and pleasures of reading so that a learner can explore these to find reasons to make the effort to comprehend what's in books. *Display* the array and let students sample freely. Give them plenty of chances to find themselves in the repertory, their own points of entry into the realm of reading. Many students who seem unmotivated to read are just not interested in the limited fodder thrust on them or resent the thrusting itself.

Also, everyone has a different knowledge-making style, and to assert reading at the expense of these other modes of knowing mistreats the youngster who makes sense of the world largely in the nonverbal mode, by means of visual, rhythmical, kinesthetic, or other patterning, or the one who senses and intuits beyond language and thus is less verbal, or the one who can pick up information orally so economically that she has yet to find reading of value. Too often these types of youngsters (and these are merely illustrative types) are labeled as “learning disabled” or “slow readers” or “verbally retarded” and issued bad report cards.

Good teaching calls for figuring out a way to avoid downgrading a child's native modes of learning all while helping her extend her way of sensing and making sense of the world. We must recognize that for some learners reading will never be as significant or useful as their other modes of knowing. But we don't need to make this judgment, and in any case there's no way of knowing how much reading can mean to a student who is not free to explore it in her own way. For far too many children the process of reading is a testing ground for their worth, a source of anxiety, an activity imbued with grave moral judgment. Nothing damages the motivation to read so much as its negative association with testing.

■ LACK OF EXPERIENCE

Another major cause of reading problems is experiential and, by definition, cannot be removed except through other activities. This doesn't mean to imply that some people have experience and others do not. It's simply that a book may refer to things with which a given reader has no acquaintance. These things may be physical objects, concepts, ideas, or a whole knowledge framework. Because the problem never ceases to exist, it goes far beyond “reading readiness.” A layman reading about black holes in a journal of astronomy will probably have trouble comprehending. Aldous Huxley once said that our education is far too verbal, and that much of the literature presented to young people is meaningless to them because they have not yet had the emotional experiences that are prerequisite for

understanding it. (Huxley was advocating more nonverbal education to the Friends of the San Francisco Public Library!)

Films and television can help enlarge experience and supply vocabulary. The practice of taking classes on field trips is well justified in this respect. Playing games with picture cards will also extend visual acquaintance with objects and living creatures. See *LABELS AND CAPTIONS* for more suggestions for using pictures to expand vocabulary. Emotional experience and point of view can be enlarged by playing roles in dramatic work. The small-group process advocated in this book provides considerable social experience and practice in oral comprehension. Thus schools can, to some extent, acquaint youngsters with the things that words and sentences refer to, but reading comprehension will always stand in some ratio to what an individual has done, heard, seen, and felt in her personal life—exactly as conversational comprehension does.

■ EGOCENTRICITY

All interpretation is subjective. Any reader, as we said, has to fill in words and phrases by her own lights, according to expectancy cues provided by salient letters, syntax, and the drift of the sense. But the problem reader may fail to see how her filling in does not square with meaning cues elsewhere in the text. Certain words or phrases have special power or private meaning for her; they trigger strong feelings or irrelevant associations that act as static to interfere with clear reception. These words or phrases arrest too much of her attention, causing her to ignore or slight other portions of the text, so that she gives a distorted reading, misconstruing statements or the relationships among statements. Or she may be too undeveloped intellectually to infer unstated connections the author is implying. But if all interpretation is subjective, who is to judge?

There are a couple of issues here. One is that the authority of the author must also be honored by trying in good faith to understand what she had in mind. If pure self-stimulation suffices, why read? The criterion for countering narcissism can be completeness. Does my interpretation take into account *all* the cues? Most fully appreciating literature depends on this, but more mundane texts also have to assume for clarity that the reader is not skewing the cues. Objectivity may be impossible, but readers can aspire to impartiality by becoming aware of their partialities. This awareness is the other issue.

One doesn't have to renounce partialities to recognize them. But readers ought to discover that their interpretation and assessment of a text may not be the only one. Since egocentricity consists of being unaware that any other interpretation is possible, the learner needs other points of view on the text, which is exactly what she will get in a small-group discussion with peers. When she finds out that others her age read the same text differently, her egocentricity is challenged, and she may even be helped to understand just how her subjective responses prevented her from seeing what others saw or made her obscure the significant with the insignificant. Once knowing others' interpretations or evaluations, she can of course stick to her own, but her thinking now encompasses their viewpoints so that she reads more richly next time, having then more to bring to bear on the text.

Such learning is much more powerful than being told by the teacher or the answer sheet that one was wrong, for in the latter case children tend to care only about being right, squaring with the authority, and often take a luck-of-the-draw

attitude—"Oh well, next time I'll guess better." In drama work, on the other hand, students enacting a story or poem have to deal specifically with problems of egocentricity because differences in understanding crop up in the enactment and have to be straightened out.

MEANS TO COMPREHENSION

The chief cause of incomprehension in learners for whom these preceding causes may not hold is a need of intellectual awakening and exercising. This covers a number of mental faculties that we will take up one at a time and for which we will indicate practices.

■ ATTENTION

The ability to attend closely to language sequences develops through concentrated, interactive discussions among a small group of peers and through dramatic enactments and improvisations. What each participant says herself depends on what her partners have just said. Unless she learns to attend, she has no basis for her own actions. This habit of interacting makes for responsive receivers and generates that attention to the words of others that is the indispensable basis of reading. Transferring this attentive concentration to the printed page occurs whenever students talk together about a text as described later in this chapter.

■ RECOLLECTION

Recalling depends on attention in the moment and on later efforts to retrieve the information acquired by attending. A common feature of topic-centered discussion is recalling what the group has said. Since recall is usually selective, it inevitably leads to the additional skill of summarizing. The writing process set forth in this book frequently consists of taking notes on ongoing events and basing later composition on these notes. The notes may be on the speech of others, when taking a turn as discussion scribe or when interviewing, or even on texts themselves when keeping a reading journal or taking notes for a project. Frequently a student tape-records and transcribes words. The general habit of deliberately storing and retrieving information—selectively noted—is thus established early and made integral to whatever experience is being registered.

As for recalling texts themselves, this occurs when enacting a piece of literature or when discussing, say, an expository selection. In order to act out a story or converse about a topic drawn from the reading, group members have to recall together the actions or facts. And, of course, performing short scripts requires actually memorizing the text (in which case the actor must try to comprehend it in order to perform it).

■ INFERENCE

Let's turn now to the general and major faculty of putting two and two together, reading between the lines—otherwise known as drawing inferences and conclu-

sions. From what an author says is true, one is supposed to assume that certain other things not said are also true. A reader forms an hypothesis about what the author means and confirms or modifies this hypothesis as she reads on. Inference supplies everything from implied conjunctions of time and causality to the syllogistic reasoning that if statements A and B are true, then a reasonable conclusion would be C. In other words, anything that teaches relating and reasoning will foster this aspect of comprehension.

Many activities in this book will develop inference, but dramatization is especially pertinent because it elaborates the text and thus brings out implications. Anything serving as a script—a story or poem or play—is bound to be incomplete. Even stage directions themselves do not by any means spell out everything. The actors must infer many of their positions, movements, expressions, and lines of dialogue, not to mention personality, feelings, character relationships, and thematic motifs. An important trait of drama, in fact, is that no guiding narrator or informant takes the spectator by the hand and explains for her the meaning of what she's seeing. And for the actor, the enacting of the text is one way of making explicit much of what is implicit.

In small-group discussion of texts, inferences are shared and justified by citing evidence from the text. But any good discussion, whether about a text or not, furthers inference. A listener has to infer the implications of what any oral speaker says as much as she does those of what a writer puts in a book—perhaps even more, because speech statements are less carefully worded and organized. All discussion constantly teaches this aspect of comprehension because interlocutors are making and checking inferences at every turn of their exchanges. The effect of discussion on reading has not yet been measured, however, because voluminous, regular, and experienced small-group discussion has not played a large enough role in the language arts curriculum to cinch our claim that reading comprehension will benefit far more from discussion than from a program of reading arbitrary excerpts and answering comprehension questions on them right afterwards.

In discussion, the *reasons* for misunderstanding come out. Comprehension can be explored at its very roots. In the case of inference, for example, no matter what the subject is, the process of building and canceling statements inevitably calls attention to the implications in statements and the relationships among them. In fact, a large part of discussion consists of testing the implications of statements. If the discussion, furthermore, is about a text the group has read, any disagreement not resolvable by pointing to a certain sentence in the text is almost certainly to be about inference. As the group collectively makes clear the implications, each individual learns how to do it by herself.

The small-group cross-commentary in a writing workshop permits writer and reader to approach inference-making from both points of view at once and thus to see how it is a factor of rhetoric—that is, of compositional decisions that determine what the reader deduces and to which the reader must become attuned. Thus the student-reader says what she understood the student-writer to mean so that when one of them makes unintended inferences they can pinpoint together exactly what makes and breaks reading comprehension.

A major issue in writing concerns how explicitly the writer should convey her ideas and how much she can assume that the reader will fill in. Judging this is no easy matter, for the writer has her own problems of egocentricity. The learner should, from the outset, be let in on this issue as both receiver and producer. How

much the writer has to lead her reader by making connections explicit and how much the reader should be expected to do these things on her own are central to an English curriculum. Comprehension must be approached simultaneously from both reader's and writer's viewpoints, in order to understand how misreading occurs and to realize that reader and writer share responsibility for preventing it. Thus writing is one of the main keys to reading comprehension, especially if it includes commentary by the learners on each other's papers.

The writer in a workshop can have the experience of being both understood and misunderstood in print. What did she leave out? What made her reader take a different direction from the one she was supposed to? The principle here is that when reader and writer can talk together they can reach a much profounder understanding of what the written word in fact is than when they deal only with accomplished texts. They get some insight into how both composition and comprehension hinge on the incompleteness of a text. The writer must set cues and the reader look for them. When you become aware of what you as writer are putting in and leaving out, playing up and playing down, you understand that you must, when reading, fill out the text by relating items in it according to the same cues that your own readers indicate you should put in your writing, such as orientation, transitions, contrast, emphasis, and subordination.

A pupil undergoing a reading skills program, on the other hand, would be justified in feeling that the writer is always right, for whenever the pupil misunderstands, it is always *her* fault. By implication, when it's the pupil's turn to be writer, she may feel that the reader can jolly well watch out for herself; any failure of communication is due to poor reading comprehension, not faulty writing.

■ INTERPRETATION

Here we're into the complex mental operation of putting together inferences and structural cues, and of noting tone, focus, and emphasis. It involves sensitivity to word choice, patterns, symmetry, and form. An enormous amount of what students miss or misinterpret when reading can be attributed to a kind of childish passivity, whereby printed words impose themselves with an authority that makes them seem either inevitable or arbitrary; the learner has no sense of the choices that have been made, whether these concern diction or sentence structure or overall organization. Through writing and discussion of writing she can become aware of how texts are created and therefore of how they may be interpreted. In order to interpret well, she must confront choice herself.

One inadequacy of trying to teach interpretation through the read-and-test practice passages lies in the fact that a finished text provides no sense of alternatives. Without a background of alternatives, there's no way to discriminate what the author did from what she might have done. This is why texts remain featureless to some students and hence difficult to interpret. The writing program presented in this book is based on compositional choices that range from the selection and shaping of raw subject matter to alternative ways of phrasing part of a sentence. As the learner works constantly on focus and emphasis in her own composing process, she becomes a more alert and perceptive interpreter of others' compositions.

Dramatizing and performing texts entail close interpretation in order to know what to render and how to render it. Players working up a performance must think

about and discuss many aspects of the text, and this experience pays off handsomely during silent reading. Students become attuned to tone and style by imitating characters and playing roles. The structural cues and patterns of texts encountered in silent reading can often be translated through drama into visual, auditory, and spatial equivalents.

As regards literary form and whole modes of discourse such as poetry, fiction, drama, essay, biography, reportage, research, and argumentation, this principle of learning to read by writing is pursued right to the very foundations of this program. Students produce all the modes of discourse that they receive. By learning these modes from the inside, so to speak, as practitioners, they know more intuitively how to read them. Diversified writing experience makes possible a truly informed evaluation of reading texts, because particular composition-comprehension issues peculiar to each kind of discourse are examined closely under the dual writer-reader approach of the writing workshop, where criteria for judging each kind are generated.

Reading is a vehicle for general development. Amid the anxiety about getting reading scores up, it will be hard for many teachers not to feel that discussing, improvising, performing, playing games, or working over each other's writing compete with "reading instruction" and must give way in priority to it. Shunting aside these other activities for these reasons may well be a fatal mistake. Skillful silent reading is dependent on wide experience, oral language facility, insight about human behavior and feelings, and mature thinking skills. The solitude of mature reading poses special difficulties for people of little confidence, low self-esteem, or habits of dependence. In this way reading adds emotional factors to the perceptual and intellectual. Furthermore, a reader cannot query or otherwise influence a writer as a listener can a speaker. A book seems nonnegotiable.

The following activities aim to overcome the problem of how to understand language when the author is absent. In addition, all of *PERFORMING TEXTS* and much of the chapters on discussing, dramatics, and writing contain activities that directly develop discourse skills needed for reading.

LISTENING TO TEXTS

Long before they're able to decode or read aloud themselves children should hear good oral presentations of all kinds of literature that bring out the rhythm, music, imagery, and sound play of poetry and serve as a model of good speech articulation. Love of language is first fostered through the ear, not the eye, and from infancy onward children need to be fed good literature. Since young children or reluctant readers of any age are introduced to a very high proportion of their working vocabulary through oral rather than reading experience, listening to oral readings of literature is a very effective way to ease them into the vocabulary development that will make the reading process easier.

■ LIVE VOICE

Read large quantities of stories and poems to students, sometimes assembled as a whole class, sometimes in small groups. Before children can read much themselves, this practice is, of course, a necessity if their appetite for literature is to be

both nourished and satisfied. It also makes reading a common part of everyday life and shows many children of nonreading parents what books are all about and what pleasure and stimulus can be associated with them. It also puts you in a giving position. While receiving this gift, learners develop an urge to assume the teacher's power, to become able to do themselves what the teacher does. In this respect, you become a model to emulate.

Continuing to read to children who have learned how to read serves to show what good oral reading is like—how it re-creates a storyteller's voice, how it brings out moods and feelings and meanings, how it follows cues of punctuation and typography. Your interpretive readings prepare students to read to other people.

Call on parents, talented students, or other community people to help you. A local amateur or professional acting group often has people who would be pleased to come in and read to youngsters of any age. Find out if there are any artists-in-the-schools organizations in your state or community. Meeting a writer, learning something of her feelings about writing and literature, hearing her read, and discussing the world of words with her can exert a powerful effect on many youngsters, even cause a turning point in their attitude about books and language. A community reader of the students' ethnic or dialect group will ease identification with books. You may find a good local storyteller, librarian, folklorist, or talented parent who knows both how to read and how to tell oral stories. This program's emphasis on student performing should pay off in good readers who can regale classmates or younger students.

But teach yourself, too. Listen to good readers, live and recorded, and practice, perhaps listening to taped playback of yourself. You will learn a lot that you want your students to learn, about both literature and how to render it.

■ RECORDINGS

On page 59 of *SETTING UP* we suggest putting together a classroom listening library of recordings of books. Two important reasons argue for supplementing live with recorded voice: (1) recordings can provide a far greater variety of dialects, styles, and voice types than, certainly, you alone, and probably more variety than you can muster even from a responsive community; and (2) recordings are available at any moment students want them and hence considerably reinforce individualization.

One of the most effective ways to help students who want to learn standard dialect is to provide recordings that pose a model of standard English for those who do not hear a great deal of it. Parents of these children most often want their children at least to become familiar with the standard form, and listening to recordings is one way to do this without disparaging the dialect of their heritage, "correcting their grammar," or boring them with dull usage exercises.

Standard-dialect speakers, on the other hand, should become familiar with other dialects—regional, ethnic, and national. Dialectical variation constitutes an important part of the rich heritage of the English language.

■ READING ALONG

A perfect transition between being read to and reading for oneself is to listen to a reading of a text while following that text with the eyes, as we described in the

last chapter. Recordings especially facilitate this practice in an individualized classroom. Although following a text while listening is a means of becoming literate, it's also appropriate long after a student can recognize words for herself.

Listening to a text read well helps students learn to read aloud better; it helps them "hear the voice behind the page" when reading silently. They can hear all aspects of print brought skillfully to life—letters, typography, paragraphing, punctuation marks, and line settings of poetry. Pronunciations of words rarely heard in common speech are sounded while the listener is looking at the words, enabling her to read those words aloud when encountered and also encouraging her to use those words in conversation without fear of mispronouncing them.

Modern technical texts can become accessible also despite unfamiliar terms, heavy loading of thought and information, and difficult sentence structures. Hearing Shakespeare can almost obviate the need for textual notes, for professional actors not only can give pronunciations of old words and proper names but can make clear the meaning of words that have changed sense and unravel difficult syntax caused by older grammar and poetic compression. This is in addition to bringing out the drift of whole speeches, the characterization of speakers, and the dramatic interplay among characters. Excellent discussion is often prompted by students' surprise that the voice they hear on a recording does not sound as they imagined it when reading silently.

Students can hear the tunes to songs so that they can sing them later on their own. All of the musicality and sound play of both song and poetry can be fully experienced only when heard. When heard while following the text, they demonstrate powerfully how much the reader must put into a text, how much *any* text is a script. Hearing good models of everything from clear articulation to artistic interpretation will point the way for students' own renderings.

We suggest read-along as a major solution to the classic problem of students in the middle grades whose word recognition does not equal their general comprehension. That is, they read no better than primary-school children, but their interests are much more mature. For years textbook writers have tried to cater to this very large segment of the school population by writing about drag racing and drug addiction in Dick-and-Jane language. Approached this way, the problem is insoluble, because mature content couched in immature language creates a ludicrous effect and does not fool such students, who still feel the childishness and all too often do not respond well. We suggest making available to them recordings of texts that have content and language befitting their life experience. Students who can't read anything but what is too immature drop out in large numbers between grades six and ten, or they linger in misery, accumulating lifelong feelings of inadequacy and resentment.

Listening while reading may be combined in several other useful ways:

- Listen to a text first, then read the text.
- Read out loud along with the live or recorded voice, alone or in a small group. Or sing along.
- Try reading silently a challenging text, then resort to listening-while-following if the going gets too rough, rather than giving up completely.
- Listen to some texts and read others silently when wishing to take in a lot of related material, like a collection of folk tales, but when reading all of them silently would tire.

- Read a text silently, then listen to the recording and compare inner rendering with the oral interpretation.
- Read a text silently, rehearse and record a reading of it, then play the recording from the classroom library and compare.
- Listen to the class recording and use that version as an aid in rehearsing your own performance of a text.
- As a small group, read a text silently, discuss it together, then play the recording and discuss both text and recording, and find out if hearing it changed the ideas gained from reading and discussing it.

READING ALOUD

There are two ways of reading aloud—sight-reading and rehearsed reading. By sight-reading we mean reading aloud a text one has not seen before. By rehearsed reading we mean working up a reading for others by practicing and then presenting it. Reading aloud allows the learner to socialize reading both for enjoyment and for the benefits of feedback. It externalizes silent reading and thus gives the learner a chance to get help. With this help she can improve both her silent reading and her oral interpretation for others.

Some teachers may fear, understandably, that reading aloud encourages the budding reader to continue the habit of subvocalizing that she established when first making the transition from speech to print. Since subvocalizing keeps silent reading speed down to speaking speed and prolongs an inner activity no longer needed, it does seem desirable not to encourage it. But the solution, we feel, is not to eliminate reading aloud, which would exclude oral interpretation, for one thing, but to increase time allowed in school for silent reading. The best course is to sponsor both silent reading and reading aloud, for each is both an end in itself and a means to the other. Besides, individuals have to be able to move from one to another as needed.

■ READING TO A COACH

How do you monitor and coach a student's silent reading? This can remain an issue into high school for students who don't or won't read, or, in any case, read poorly. Constant comprehension quizzing isn't the answer. Let a student read aloud to you from time to time while you follow the text with your eyes. An individualized, self-directing classroom is designed to permit just such one-to-one occasions.

How a reader sounds out a text reveals many things. It may well be the best means of perceiving what's going on in a learner's head as she reads alone. On the basis of these perceptions you can give pointers and counsel accurately about which methods and materials will help her most. If nothing else, the sessions show your interest in her personal growth in reading.

There's a tradition in elementary school, however, of dividing a class into three or so "reading groups" of different levels, within which each student reads aloud while the other members sit idle with the same book in their hands. This is very inefficient and actually only an unrealized effort at individualization. These old reading groups assume that all students in a group are reading the same thing at the same time and that they need direct instruction by the teacher to get meaning from the text. The division of the class into groups aims to make some allowance, in rate at least, for individual differences. But it doesn't go far enough

and ties down the teacher. A major reason for instituting self-direction is to free you to tutor.

While other students are doing various other activities, you can listen to readers one at a time, just a few a day perhaps. Coaching and monitoring can be just one of many things you do as you move among your students or as they come to you. You might simply move over to someone who's reading silently and ask her to read aloud to you some portion as yet unread of the selection she's starting or working on. Or you might tell the class you want everyone to bring something to read to you two or three times a week. If you think a selection isn't challenging enough to show what someone can do, pick another for her, but make sure that sessions include some reading aloud that allows the learner to feel her competence. A sight-reading passage can be repeated in a session until she reads it well enough to take some pride in her performance.

Sometimes students might read to you a text they want to read to classmates or to younger children or their parents; let them use you for rehearsal. Not everyone will need coaching and monitoring, but they may all want to read to you, especially if the sessions feel positive. For small children the spirit of it might be "Now I'll read to you."

Encourage students to work up readings of selections or passages to do before a small group, or, if they wish, before the whole class. They bring to you whatever they're working on and try it out on you so that when they perform it for classmates they can enjoy some success. Distinguish between this and sight-reading, though some of both might be done in the same session.

If a student reads laboriously, she doesn't suffer the embarrassment of her peers waiting her out and getting restive or contemptuous, and you don't have to worry about group management and trying to quell those who are getting bored. You're not now trying to do tutorial in a group. Let readers see you as a supporter who makes it possible for them to get competent and to feel good about themselves. The teacher who looms as only a negative judge is one who simply doesn't know how to be specifically helpful. So concentrate on noticing the kinds of difficulties a reader manifests and on showing her how to overcome them. This is the serious, learning part of the sessions, but the tone of them can be warm and playful, and by all means make the student aware of her strengths. When students are working on different sorts of reading matter, you can sincerely be a lot more interested in listening than when all are reading the same thing and you have heard it year after year.

A bonus to these tutoring sessions, which need not last sometimes more than three to five minutes, is that you're evaluating as you teach and will feel more directly in touch with the progress of individual students. Sight-reading reveals best the sort of things taken up below.

ANALYSIS OF ORAL READING

Try to become as expert as possible in interpreting your students' misreadings, in doing what Kenneth Goodman and his colleagues have called "miscue analysis." Become familiar with this practice.¹ All readers miscue somewhat and reshape the

¹ See Kenneth Goodman, ed., *Miscue Analysis: Applications to Reading Instruction* (Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1973).

text in their own way as they try to make sense of it. They omit some of it, add to it, alter it, and sometimes go back and change their first version. Miscuing should not be regarded as bad but rather as indicative. It can very usefully reveal to you the mental processes of a student so that you can help her more.

Since you want above all in these sessions to listen in on how a student reads when she reads silently, it's better not to interrupt or correct her but just to attend closely and tape if you can. Your eyes have to be following the text as she reads, of course. You could choose a text in advance, make a copy for yourself, and annotate it as you listen, if this degree of formalization doesn't inhibit the student. You might tape the reading and make notes later. You may want to think about her reading or replay the tape before talking with her about it. After you have distilled for yourself what some characteristics of it are and what they imply about a student's learning needs, then you can convey to her in some practical form what you think you perceived. You can coach at the end of the session or later on. Now you're looking for the student's deeper and general reading traits.

Our recommendations are a free adaptation of miscue analysis. As the student sight-reads a reasonably challenging text, note the following:

- Which elements of the text she ignores—certain word endings or other parts of words, whole words or phrases, or punctuation.
- Whether she replaces words and grammar with dialectical variations of these, that is, whether many of her miscues are really a fairly systematic translation, common for some children, between their dialect and standard dialect.
- Which kinds of miscues she corrects herself and whether they're important to the meaning or not.
- Whether she reverses sounds and words or otherwise rearranges elements.
- Which substitutions seem to constitute "reading into the text" subjective expectancies, preoccupations, stereotypes, and so on.
- Which sounds, words, or punctuation she inserts into the text.
- Whether her phrasing and intonation fit sense as well as syntax and punctuation.
- Which spellings she sounds out incorrectly, not because of dialectical variation but because of inadequate understanding of sound-spellings and spelling patterns.
- Whether she follows punctuation and capitalization and, if not, which kinds she ignores or misreads.

Remember that you're not keeping score; you want to spot patterns of miscuing that will apply to other readings. Why do you think the student is reversing or rearranging elements or inserting or substituting things? How close are the intonational contours to how she would speak the same sentences if they were her own? What do her self-corrections show? Of the three main kinds of cues—phonetic, grammatical, and semantic—which do you think she is following most? Least? Would her reading benefit from changing the ratio among these? Too much backtracking, for example, might mean she isn't using semantic or syntactic cues enough to foresee or recognize upcoming possibilities.

If problems still lie in word recognition, a student can't gain enough access to sentence structure and word meaning, which are locked, after all, in the reader's oral knowledge. She needs reinforcement of these graphic cues. For her you might counsel certain word-recognition games. Some, on the other hand, may be

so hung up on visual detail that they can't process larger units. They may need more of some of the activities in *BECOMING LITERATE*.

Consider other cues too, such as typographical layout, headings, illustrations, captions, paragraphing, and so on. Advise students to orient from overall organization downward to detail. It is heeding and relating *all* cues that makes the best reading. Certain specialized graphics such as maps, charts, graphs, tables, and codes become issues in some kinds of discourse, as in *LABELS AND CAPTIONS*.

COACHING

The coaching part consists of reflecting a reading back to a student so that the reader can see how to adjust it. This may concern the general goal of becoming a competent reader or the more specific goal of performing when reading aloud to others. It's for the first that you draw especially on the miscue analysis, but of course this overlaps with expressive rendering. "Oral interpretation" is, after all, *interpretation* and concerns both ease of word recognition, which mustn't distract the reader, and unconscious altering of the text as the reader assigns meaning to it. she's interpreting letters and punctuation at the same time as word meanings and overall sense.

Let the reader know if she's reading too softly or indistinctly, failing to follow punctuation, or misunderstanding the sound value of certain spellings. If the reading is very halting, try to determine if the reader is puzzling out (1) word recognition, (2) the meanings of individual words, (3) the sentence structures, (4) the coordination of these three, or (5) the main continuity of meaning. Say what you think will help that particular individual in the light of what else you know about her as a person and about her literacy development.

If she reads inexpressively, merely telling her "put more expression into it" is not very helpful and may even lead to contrived vocalizing. It's better to ask her what she thinks is the feeling under the lines, or the mood of the story situation, then to ask her to "make me feel that" or to "bring it to life the way you do when you're talking." In the "read-to-me" spirit convey the idea that you like to be entertained just as much she does. But expressiveness best comes from example. Encourage readers to listen to live or recorded readings by more skilled performers. Suggest vocalizing a passage different ways and choosing the best one to render the text. Demonstrate variations yourself from the text at hand, but let the reader choose which is most appropriate. See *PERFORMING TEXTS* for more on rehearsing texts.

Aides should share this coaching role, which you can all improve if you meet occasionally and troubleshoot together. Tapes of miscue and coaching sessions can be extremely valuable for this, and these meetings ought to become part of any regular inservice program. Talk about both the student's reading and the teacher's responses.

■ READING TO CLASSMATES

Classmates can not only serve as audience but can also coach each other to some extent.

PARTNER READING

Partner reading is taking turns sight-reading aloud to each other in a group of two to four that has chosen to read a text together. Partners may have a copy each of

the same text or may pass one book around. The activity teaches more if all have a copy to follow while others read. The purpose is to allow weak or dependent readers to read collectively while socializing and to pool their skills to read a text that any one of them alone might not have enough knowledge, courage, or motivation to get through. More accomplished readers can choose to do this too but more as a way of working into the casting and rehearsal of a reading performance such as described in *PERFORMING TEXTS*.

Partners help each other with word recognition, pronunciation, and comprehension problems while enjoying the social interaction. Activity directions explain that they should let each other know matter-of-factly when they think the reader has made a mistake. If they're not sure, they should ask or consult a dictionary. It's usually the case that if one mispronounces or asks what a word means or leaves a sentence hanging because she doesn't understand it well enough to read it properly, one of the others can fill in. If not, they still have more resources for formulating a question or otherwise getting help than if reading alone.

Part of the point is not even to help each other but to read collectively for the sharing of responses. Asides are more than welcome. Excellent discussion, in fact, often follows from casual comments interjected into the reading. Members compare interpretations or predictions, swap observations or tales prompted by the text, and generally enrich each other's comprehension at the same time that they become more aware of their own reactions to the text. This is how students come to value personal responses to reading. This is also the genesis of literary criticism.

Sometimes members play with different styles or voices with which to read. Books of jokes, rhymes, riddles, limericks, or fables lend themselves to easy role-playing because they contain short dialogues and caricatures. Playing with voicing leads naturally into cross-commentary that becomes more helpful the more coaching they have got individually from you. Another possibility is to decide to read all together in unison, which is a good step toward choral reading (see page 184). All these variations and perhaps others can be suggested in activity directions for partner reading.

Groups can form by choosing themselves or by your suggestion, but either way it seems most natural that members won't spread very much in ability, for the activity assumes more or less equal contributions, and if a member reads much better than the others she should choose or be steered to an activity such as the following.

READING FOR AN AUDIENCE

A student works up a reading to present to another individual, a small group, or the class. The idea is definitely to entertain and be entertained, so both reading and listening are well motivated. Part of your role may be to help the reader choose a selection and a length that will go over well after she has rehearsed on her own and with you. This is an activity that has to be voluntary, but once some students read to others, the more timid may eventually be drawn to do so also, especially with a little encouragement from you and the reassurance of help as they rehearse. Experience doing unison reading for others, or taking part in choral reading, will also bolster courage.

A modest way for a student to begin is to read to just one other person—to a coach first, if she wants, then to someone at home perhaps, or a younger child in a lower grade, or a classmate not as advanced. A student reading "below grade level" anyway can not only save face but gain self-esteem reading to someone

less skilled than herself. Increasing the size of the audience generally requires more confidence. An easy way to do this is to start with a collective reading group such as just described above. Members can agree each to rehearse a selection for the others and present it in turn with the others on the same day or a sequence of days. The selections can be individually chosen or assigned by the group from some collection they're reading together for some reason such as a project requiring that they all know the same selections. In addition to acquainting all members with all selections, taking turns reading has the extra advantage of sustaining student interest across a large number of texts.

READING SILENTLY

Listening to others read, listening while following the text, sight-reading to a coach or with partners, rehearsing and reading aloud for an audience—all these reinforce each other and prepare simultaneously for both performance activities and more independent silent reading. When students go off and read, there's nothing you the teacher (or anyone else, for that matter) can do for the reader. That is the plain and most important truth about silent reading. The reader is on her own. And it's a good thing. If the reader engages in the other activities of the last chapter and this, she will also teach herself when reading alone.

But many teachers don't fully believe or trust this. Only if the silent reading is followed by a comprehension test do they feel all right: after all, this way they can know what went on in that head during that silence, can weigh it and feel that it had a purpose. But to let a student read something she chose, to take no part in the act, never know what went on—well, that seems just too spooky. The feeling is unnecessary. For one thing, you can be sure that if you have done your part by stocking the room with plenty of good reading matter of all sorts, helping the reader find what interests her, coaching her if she needs it, setting up the many possible partner activities, something good will happen during that silent reading. While alone with her text, the reader will increase her proficiency in visual processing and comprehension, because the very act of reading teaches itself as it is exercised.

So arrange with confidence for students to curl up and pore over a book alone. Until they're clearly doing this out of school, make plenty of room for it in school by counseling individuals to do it if they're not. The practice in elementary and middle school of setting aside time for everybody, including adult staff, to do "sustained silent reading" dramatizes the neglected need for it but becomes unnecessary when built into daily classroom functioning.

Some silent reading will be done as part of a group or individual project for which activity directions stipulate follow-ups. Or, if cross-referenced to activity cards, books themselves may route readers to follow-ups. Reading will develop best when set in a web of other activities leading into and out of it, because these will make most sense of it. Interwoven activities carry silent reading along in their momentum. Many of these will be social activities that offset the solitude and create a balanced interplay of inner and outer life.

But silent reading should not always be followed up. The sharing of what one has read is important, but so is solitary rumination. If students are always made to feel that reading in the classroom is preparation for something else, they may not perceive reading as a valued end itself—a way to pursue interests and entertain and develop yourself.

■ READING JOURNALS

A student reading silently needs a way to *register* her responses—bring them to awareness—equivalent to uttering responses in collective reading. Annotating the margins of a text would be the most direct way, but most often the text is not the student's own. Occasionally, however, students can photocopy a short text so as to leave unusually wide margins for annotating. Suggest sometimes that a group silently reading a text in common do this and bring their annotations to the ensuing discussion. Or individuals could do this for a one-to-one conference with you.

Annotations link responses directly to words, phrases, or passages that prompted them. Encourage students to underline, circle, draw arrows, or invent other graphics to single out and relate these citations to each other and to the marginal remarks. Make clear that they may jot down anything that comes to mind while reading that text—memories, images, feelings, observations, all sorts of associations. These may not have anything to do with *explaining* or *evaluating* the text, though they might, if desired at some point, be used for that. Annotations are a record of a reading experience for later reference in discussion or other follow-up.

Since making copies is cumbersome, especially for longer texts, each individual might do marginal annotations just enough times to accustom her to making notes on her reading responses; from then on she can keep them as a journal. In whichever form, these notes provide material for talking and writing. It's impossible to stipulate an age for reading journals, because its rightness depends on many factors of temperament and development. Suggest it for certain students who seem most likely to take to the idea. Annotation should lead easily into journals and establish the idea of registering responses immediately and relating them specifically to certain parts of the text.

Readers will probably not always jot entries into journals *during* reading, but perhaps the close textual focus of marginal annotation will carry over into journal entries made after the fact. For some people, stopping to write notes might interfere with reading involvement. Even summary remarks entered soon after reading will serve the purpose well. Students can discuss when and how to make entries.

Some readers find a double-entry journal useful. On one half of a journal page they note what occurs to them about a text and leave the other half for a later response to the response. They may ask the teacher or someone else to write on this blank half what occurs to them about the original entry. This can become a very valued and valuable dialogue about reading experience.² If you are writing the second entry, you might make all sorts of personal observations, sometimes in the form of questions, that you think will enrich, encourage, and enlighten the reader. This can be a fine way of counseling by staying in close touch with a student's reading experience. Or the reader herself might make the second entry at a more removed moment, perhaps after reading something else during the interim. This gives her a chance to think again about a text or her response to it in another frame of mind.

Readers bring their journals to conferences or group discussions and refer to them while sharing. They can also mine them for writing ideas, which are often

² See the periodical about dialogue journals of all sorts, *Dialogue*, edited by Jana Staton, Joy Kreeft Peyton, and Shelley Gutstein, Center for Applied Linguistics, 1118 22nd St. N.W., Washington, DC 20037.

triggered by reading. The habit of attending closely to what one thinks and feels while reading, and of relating these responses to specific places in the text, is exactly what can make members of a writing workshop valuable to each other. But practical uses aside, keeping a reading journal simply raises awareness of what's going on within. Most readers of any age respond much more to a text than they realize but lose track of themselves and can't recover their responses. This means they lose material about themselves that has value in itself and that provides wherewithal to parlay their reading into continuities of thought and creativity.

GROUP READING ACTIVITIES

A lot of reading choices will, in fact, be group decisions, as with other language activities. An individual chooses to throw in her lot with others to get the pleasure and practical benefits of partnership and group collaboration. Your role is to help students know each other's interests—who's doing what—and to help them take advantage of these human resources.

A classic question repeatedly arises about whether students should be grouped by ability for reading (usually determined by "reading" test scores, perhaps combined with teacher judgment). If reading is interwoven with other activities and put on an individualized basis, the question hardly makes sense. If students are choosing their reading matter according to personal interests, as influenced by your counseling and by interaction with classmates, then the groups in which they read will be formed automatically on the basis of reading compatibility. They want to do the same thing at the same time—pursue a type of reading like mystery stories or memoirs or a subject such as horses or slavery or a theme such as getting lost or gaining self-control. Compatibility of intent is a better principle than homogeneity based on test scores.

Ability will probably range enough within this common interest so members can learn from each other but not so much that they can't settle on the same title and purpose. Better readers can tolerate weaker readers if the weaker ones don't force them to read something beneath them, as in fact happens necessarily when everyone in a class reads the same thing. The expectation of support from the stronger members encourages the weaker to take on a selection that would daunt them alone. Tolerance varies of course a great deal among youngsters, but the longer experience they have with small-group process, the more easily you'll be able to help them achieve the balance of similarity and difference that they will learn from the most. Interweaving reading with other activities helps grouping more than you might imagine if you haven't experienced the effects of it, because individuals will choose each other for a group according to abilities in activities other than reading, such as a skill in drawing or a knowledge of baseball, that will be useful to a project and make tolerating someone's weaker reading worth the effort.

■ EXCHANGING RECOMMENDATIONS

Solo reading can benefit from the diversity of the classroom population. Students should have ways of exchanging tips on titles and perhaps lending the reading materials themselves if they own them and if their family consents. An area of the chalkboard can be reserved to write titles one liked and wants to pass on. Work

out a system for indicating how the title can be obtained. Another way to share suggestions for reading is to have each student who has finished a good book put a card with the title and author on one side and the reader's name on the other in a "book bank"—a box or envelope on the bulletin board. Other readers can look through it for ideas and query each other for further information. Young children may draw pictures of each book on their cards; older students may write a brief statement telling why they recommend the book. Some students may prefer to record their recommendations on a tape for other readers to listen to. The important thing is that this activity be perceived as a sharing of good ideas, not a "book report" for the teacher.

Another way is for individuals to follow activity directions to meet as a group and bring with them a book or selection they want to recommend to others. Each displays and tells about her book and perhaps reads aloud a passage from it to sample the flavor. They invite questions. Often these help the speaker to think more about the selection. But it's important that these groups generally not have you present, because peer candidness and ease are what will make them work. Try to make the classroom a mental and physical central exchange for reading possibilities.

■ WHOLE-CLASS PROJECTS

Nothing in this curriculum prevents a whole class from pursuing a single broad subject or theme so long as within the framework there is opportunity for student choice of activities. Some projects that call for collaboration of subgroups can be worked out by the whole class, including satisfactory roles for subgroups and individuals.

If a whole class occasionally reads the same piece of literature, such as a novel or play, small-group process may still be employed. Each group can take a part of the text and work out a rehearsed reading of some sort, an improvisation, a dramatization, a panel discussion, or a translation into another medium to share with the rest of the class. For instance, if most of the class members are reading Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet," one group may read "Pyramus and Thisbe," another may read the script of "West Side Story," and then all see the film versions and make comparisons. Let students generate themes. It often happens, for example, that one group gets hot on something and either draws the interest of classmates or calls upon classmates to help them enlarge their project. The original working party may want to find out more about a subject than their number permits and try to interest others in a division of labor so that different groups research different sources. Keep an eye out for such situations, and bring the possibility of the project before the whole class.

■ COMPILING ANTHOLOGIES

Using other books as models, a group can put together a collection of any type of writing that interests them—jokes, riddles, brain teasers, advertisements, photos of signs and other outdoor writing, letters, poems, stories, and so on. Although ultimately this can become an individual activity—and personal poetry collections have great significance for many adolescents—it fits a group well because members can sift different sources and pool favorites and brainstorm ways of collecting and organizing.

Like dramatizing, performing, and other types of transforming of texts, anthologizing gets students to think a lot about what they have read and to share these ideas with classmates. They have to develop some criteria, implicit or explicit, on which to base their selection. How do they define the type they're trying to collect—proverbs, for example? Which riddles are better than others? (Both of these types, by the way, are often based on a metaphor.) What kind of letters? Or suppose the anthology is to cut across forms and center on a theme? What's the theme and how many ways can they find it written about? Or it could contain short stories about animals. Shall the stories be truth or fiction? Realism or fantasy? How do ghost stories and murder mysteries differ? Fantasy and science fiction?

Shall the order and juxtaposition of selections have any significance? What's the purpose of the anthology? Should that be explained in a preface? What about writing transitions between selections? These questions of organization can be considered along with the physical matters of whether selections can be compiled by copying or by listing and citing sources. The motive is to pass on to others what one likes.

■ DISCUSSING READING

Discussion of a text students have read has traditionally been led by the teacher. As we noted in *TALKING AND LISTENING*, this is seldom a true discussion, and, besides, despite the intentions of both the teacher and the class, it's usually perceived to be a check on the student's reading. True discussions of texts are explorations and honest conversations. These can begin with partners as soon as children read aloud. Without a teacher present, they will share naturally with one another whatever responses they may have as they read. Spontaneous comments then are the basis of partner discussions. Asking a classmate for help in understanding some point in a text should become a natural habit in the classroom. Comparing reactions and understandings with a partner often starts a good discussion because each can refer to the text in hand to support her reading of it.

In addition to activities like partner reading that invite discussion and to others that entail discussion—straightening out written game directions, rehearsing a script together, commenting on partners' writing, sifting information for a project—there should be activity directions for getting together after reading a selection just in order to discuss it. When a group of learners has finished reading a selection, they may come together to raise questions about things they know they didn't grasp, something they want to know more about, or issues in the selection they want to talk about. Activity directions say to write these down and bring them to the group. Make clear that factual questions are not to be of the quiz-kid type but ones to which discussants really don't know the answer. They may share opinions or feelings about what they've read and compare their interpretations. This comparing is of vast importance, for it allows the reader to discover that her reaction or interpretation may not be the only one justified by the text.

Older students who have each read the same text and have each written down a few questions on slips of paper may first spend a few minutes extracting subjects from the lists, noting overlaps and other connections among them before they begin their discussion. Several other procedures are possible, such as select-

ing only one issue from the slips, or taking several issues in order, or framing a single topic so as to include several points raised on the lists, or answering small factual questions first and then passing on to larger interpretive matters. Often, it will happen that the sorting itself will launch talk, and procedure will sometimes take care of itself. Basically, this process could be simply a specialized version of small-group discussion, for which reading selections supply the topics.

The topics must come from the students' curiosity, puzzlement, or interest. We believe that these discussions should essentially just extend reading responses into conversation. You could take part in some of these as recommended in *TALKING AND LISTENING*, but take care that your presence doesn't cause some students to try to hide their incomprehension or, indeed, to show off for you their remarkable understanding. Students should feel that their candid questions and acknowledged confusion won't be used against them by adults or ridiculed by peers. You can help set a tone not only of collaborating on comprehension problems but also of just wanting to know how different people respond to the same text.

Such a group is, of course, ideal for sharing entries in the reading journals. The habit of keeping the journals will improve discussion enormously when students meet to talk about a text they've agreed to read silently in common. They extract or paraphrase ideas from these reading records and then respond to each other's responses. Once students are familiar and fluent with it, there is no more powerful way to enrich understanding of texts and increase the range of reader response. It will do more for the study of literature than any other activity you can sponsor. Students experienced with this sort of discussion and confident enough not to be intimidated by you will value your participation and be able to learn much from your responses to their responses. But you have to play honestly to what they say, not exploit the occasion to make certain academic points you already have in mind. Be sure to share any uncertainties of your own about the meaning of a text.

■ GRADUAL REVELATION OF A TEXT

A very effective way to provoke good discussion of a text is for the group to agree to stop reading the selection at one or more points and talk about what they think will happen next or how the piece will end. If you know the selection, you may suggest one or two stopping points, or the group may ask a student who has read it to do this. An option is for group members to write individually or collectively their version of the rest of the selection. They compare and discuss their individual versions, then finish the text and discuss again, or they discuss their ideas while writing a collective version and compare it with the text.

Very short selections like poems, jokes, riddles, limericks, and fables can be written out piecemeal or revealed piecemeal on an overhead projector so that halts are made at provocative junctures. Group members might take turns selecting and revealing a text. When something appears incomplete before us, we tend to anticipate the rest and to complete it ourselves, especially if we know something of the form it should have. This mimics of course the basic process of reading itself, which proceeds by confirming or modifying hypotheses about the message of the text. The skill of the presenter is to pick the right stopping points. To make the activity clear and appealing, you might demonstrate it once to the class or an interested group. We will demonstrate here with a haiku.

The game is simple and enjoyable and makes students think about a great many things. In order to complete the poem, one uses all cues—the sense, the image or action, the syntax of the suspended sentence, the rhyme and meter, and basic rhetorical devices like symmetry and parallelism, contrast and reversal. One asks herself what, given the poem so far, would complete all these things and provide a fitting climax. And yet the presenter asks no question, analytical or critical, especially no question to which she knows the answer. She asks for a creative act, and that act entails a lot of intuitive analysis.

Suppose the haiku begins:

The falling leaves

Without saying so to herself, a reader looks for a predicate denoting any act appropriate for leaves, but the obvious one, *fall* is already in the participle. So she looks for another. Spin? Rattle? But what tense? If she's familiar with haiku, she will probably put the predicate in the present. But other things could follow here besides the predicate. An appositive? A relative clause? (She doesn't have to know these terms in order to look for them.) The absence of a comma after *leaves* may cue her to the unlikelihood of either of these two. By now the group has volunteered a number of lines and made judgments about which would be best. The presenter reveals the next line:

The falling leaves
fall and pile up; the rain

It was *fall* after all! Perhaps our student perceives a connection between that repetition and the second predicate *pile up*. And again now she has before her a subject without a predicate. But she also has an image of autumn, a piling action, and a semicolon. Perhaps she's already getting a feeling of balance from the semicolon and the fact that the second clause is starting off just like the first. In thinking of an action for rain, she'll consider the season and mood, the sentence pattern, and perhaps the likelihood of more repetition. A clever student may say "the rain rains" and then think of a rhyme word for *leaves*: "the rain rains and grieves." But she senses that the meter is too heavy (too many stresses) and adds a word to lighten it: "the rain rains down and grieves."

This thinking can go on out loud and benefit from other students' ideas. All the presenter has to do is ask which version they think completes the poem best; reasons are given for preferences, and new tries are made on the basis of these reasons. Whatever lines they arrive at, they've done some imaginative thinking and entered into the poem. They will appreciate the particular sense of climax and closure that the poet created, and understand better on their own what she was trying to do in the whole poem. It is surprise, half-divined, that delights.

The falling leaves
fall and pile up; the rain
beats on the rain.³

³ From *Introduction to Haiku*, copyright © 1958 by Harold G. Henderson. Reprinted by permission of Doubleday & Company, Inc.

The gathering perception may be of a very different pattern from this one, but always it's a multiple perception—of language, things, and feelings—for the words move with the movement of sensibility.

TRANSFORMING TEXTS

To transform a text is to take the essence of what it expresses and transfer it to another form of writing or to another medium altogether. Dramatizing and performing are transformations of text, discussed in their respective chapters. Transformations make fine follow-ups to reading. They can motivate reading in the first place, then use reading to launch other worthwhile activities. They deepen comprehension by bringing students back to the text to rework it, often with partners, and secondarily, they permit you to evaluate comprehension, because they externalize students' understanding of what they read.

■ STORYTELLING

Any tale that a learner has read can be shared with others by telling the events over again in her own way, paraphrasing. Imaginative and individual re-creation of the story, not fidelity to the written version, is what the best storytellers throughout history have always presented, and students should be encouraged to do no less. For most elementary-school children, hearing a story told makes them more, not less, likely to read the story later for themselves (just as seeing the movie makes adolescents want to read the book). Thus the process benefits both the teller and the listener.

■ TRANSPOSING TO OTHER GENRES

A prose fable can be rewritten as a poem, an anecdote as a script, a story as a series of letters, a biography as an autobiography, a diary as a memoir, or a mystery story as a film script. In changing a selection to another genre, readers are confronted with the limitations and possibilities of a different point of view, an altered scope, and a new ratio of scene to summary. Dealing with the text as writers now, they have to reconsider it very differently and hence understand it in new ways. For other examples of transposition, see page 213, where it is treated as a writing assignment.

■ TRANSLATING TO OTHER MEDIA

Of course, rewriting prose or poetry as a script automatically shifts the medium from book to stage, radio, film, or television. Converting a short story to an audio script for radio or taping teaches a lot, for one has to render everything by sound alone. What does one do with author narration? With important visual features? What makes one author's fiction easier than another's to transpose into sound alone?

Students with some training in music or dance might undertake to make a musical play of a story or to choreograph a story. Reading a brief text to the accompaniment of music or movement makes a modest beginning. This can be

followed by conversion of a text to a musical script in which material is changed and some words chosen to set to music. Action might be stylized by means of the vocabulary of dance movement. Some whole texts, like Samuel Beckett's *Act Without Words*, might be pantomimed or danced.

ILLUSTRATING

Teachers have long known how much children enjoy drawing pictures to illustrate stories they've heard, read, or written. Because nonverbal experience precedes verbal, very young readers find transferring words back into a more familiar nonverbal mode a very gratifying accomplishment. This valuable process should not be confined to the primary years, however. All through school, students need ample opportunity to extend their experience of text by re-creating it in a nonverbal mode. Since true comprehension means capturing for yourself the quality of the author's sense of life, whenever this profound understanding comes, it effects a new synthesis of the elements within the reader. Often this new synthesis cannot be easily expressed verbally. Students should be encouraged to draw what they sense after a significant experience with literature. How much of some haiku can be caught by a drawing or photo? Which aspects *cannot* be illustrated? Suggest posting text with illustration for others to contemplate.

A single drawing may be used to represent a selection that a student wants to recommend to others, as she talks about the selection. Or she may make a diorama of a scene inside a box used as mini-stage. A series of drawings of key scenes, settings, or characters could be presented on a projector or monitor while reading from or describing the selection. Students might mount a series of captioned photos on a bulletin board, or make them into a book. Photos might be made of people pantomiming actions and of settings like those in a story, and this series could be presented as a slide show.

FILMING

Students can do a film or video version of a story or poem or play. Shooting without sound, one student scripted and filmed e. e. cummings's "balloon man," aiming to evoke with the camera the vision and feelings of the poem. Videotaping with camcorders makes dialogue possible and opens up considerably the range of adaptable material.

Even elementary-level students in some schools have made animated films by taking one frame at a time with a plunger attachment to a movie camera as felt, cloth, or paper cutouts of characters were inched about patiently into the story actions. Another way is to shoot frames of different cutouts of a character in successively different positions, which produces a more realistic effect of action. Dolls or clay figures and so on may be used in the same way. See "Media Alternatives" on page 334 for more possibilities.

■ IMITATING TEXTS

One of the best ways to appreciate the qualities of the literature you read is to write in that same mode. For example, a person who has tried her hand at writing reportage or sonnets is likely to read either with greater enjoyment and perception. Writing in any genre can enhance a learner's sensitivity to that form and thus

provide a stimulus to reading it. See Part Three for specific suggestions for reading and writing activities in various kinds of discourse. There we have treated reading and writing together to emphasize that learners should write in the same forms they read.

One kind of imitating always popular with youngsters is parody. They can retell familiar nursery rhymes in dialect or make over old legends with modern caricatures. To make fun of or have fun with a style or content, you have to get to know it well. Older students might want to try parodying a particular author or work. “Story in Disguise” is a game of retelling a well-known story to see if classmates recognize it. Parodying and retelling can be either improvised or written.

MATERIALS

Books are not the only reading matter. The shrewd teacher takes advantage of the many other forms of print and writing in addition to putting together the fullest possible classroom library.

■ WRITING IN THE ENVIRONMENT

The classroom itself should be a display of reading matter—on bulletin boards, chalkboards, walls, and mobiles. For children who are still working on word recognition, tagboard labels beside each object provide another link between thing and word. Photographs or posters can have captions; learning centers need labels and lists of directions posted. Bulletin boards should be repositories for student-produced writing for others to read (see *LABELS AND CAPTIONS*).

The environment out of school that most youngsters live in is plastered with words already—street signs, advertisements, store signs, markings, and directions. These can be photographed or copied and displayed in the classroom to help make the tie between streets and books. Many students will in fact enjoy making books of environmental writing for themselves and as primers for literacy beginners.

■ TEACHER’S HANDBOOKS

Keep handy a large, varied anthology or two from which you can pluck any kind of poetry or prose that seems right to read aloud or hand over to students.

Much of the first matter that’s read to young children or that they read themselves should be poetry. The three Rs of poetry—rhyme, rhythm, and repetition—teach children a lot about individual words and patterns of words, and they do so in delightful and memorable ways.

■ CLASSROOM LIBRARY

On page 59 we described a classroom library based on individualization rather than class sets. The chapters of Part Three, “Kinds of Discourse,” set forth all the kinds of reading matter that should be stocked in the classroom and that, indeed, are produced and read in our culture.

■ PRINCIPLES OF SELECTION

1. Materials should be chosen for the quality of their writing only, not for any pedagogical paraphernalia or thematic development.
2. Materials should represent as wide a range of types of reading as *any* students in the growth stage of your students might conceivably want to read if known to them—literary, utilitarian, and scientific. Naturally, the exact types of reading material will differ somewhat at each of the four main stages of development see (page 57), but a classroom of any year should represent all ten kinds of discourse in some forms.
3. The range of difficulty should be very broad, fitting the reality of the classroom, not some fancied “typical” third or tenth grader. This not only allows for individual differences in reading skill but also facilitates the rereading of favorite selections or books or of reading “below level” as well as seeking challenges over the horizon.
4. The materials should represent a maximum variety of formats, from highly illustrated picture books and comic books to tightly printed, adult-looking texts. The ideal is a tradebook rather than textbook look—diversity in type styles and sizes, styles of illustration, trim size, and general format. Graphics should vary a lot within one book sometimes and certainly across books, mixing color with black-and-white, painting and line drawing with photos and collages and cutouts. The idea is not merely to appeal to everyone but to demonstrate graphic creativity and its relation to reading material. This is part of a multimedia curriculum, and older students do not outgrow art!
5. Try to get books that each contain only one kind of reading matter—riddles or reportage or science fiction—because such a physical breakdown facilitates tremendously a self-directing, individualized, small-group system that cross-references books to activity cards and other interrelated materials. Readers can be helped to focus on the genre and define what it is by seeing instances of it all in one book. The different genres will not need to be defined by the teacher or rote-learned by the students as information because those who read enough instances of a specific form, such as legends, will evolve their own definition of it and refine it as they try their hand at producing their own legends, looking back at the models when necessary.
6. Informational, social studies, and science books should be authentic and up-to-date and do justice to their subjects.
7. The preferences and reactions of the learners must play an important part in the selection of materials.

In keeping with the concept of a library, obtain in general only one copy of each title. The more you go from single to multiple copies the more you move away from individualized to standardized reading. If multiple copies of one title are obtained, to accommodate group reading, five or six copies is enough. If the whole class decides for some reason to read a selection in common, this can be done a group at a time. For class singing or choral reading, copy the text on the chalkboard, project it, or photocopy it. (You or a leader may want to move a pointer, to synchronize.) Sometimes a group rehearsing a play script may need more than six copies if the cast is large and all are on stage at once. But for these few occasions it's definitely not

worth buying whole-class sets of books, because if you do you won't be able to afford the variety of titles required by any individualized reading program.

The reference list below indicates the kinds of reading matter we recommend. Ideally each would constitute a separate book or so. The levels indicated are the four growth stages outlined on page 57. Actually, most kinds of writing hold good over a much longer growth range than one level, and many hold good for every age, but we suggest some shuffling and redesignating as students mature. Fiction, for example, can be broken down at first more by content—animal stories, mystery, sports, adventure—and later more by form—fictional autobiography and fictional memoir, fictional diary, and so on. But science fiction remains such all the way through. As a general principle, reading types become more finely discriminated, like the following point-of-view breakdown of fiction and the breakdown of poems into at least a few particular forms. Limericks, ballads, haiku, and sonnets deserve special focus, we believe, because they relate well to writing and exemplify some basic features of poetic form. Isolating other poetic forms could also be useful.

The breakdown of fiction by point of view in the secondary years certainly is no necessity. But it's the only breakdown by form that is basic and entails no preinterpretation by you or editors. It calls attention to fictional technique without a word being said, and it parallels the breakdown of nonfiction, which is significant, since fiction simulates documents. Autobiographies, memoirs, biographies, chronicles, letters, and diaries correspond, moreover, to library divisions, another worthwhile consideration. *Points of View: An Anthology of Short Stories* and *Points of Departure: An Anthology of Nonfiction* array for high school or college these point-of-view fictional techniques in parallel with their documentary counterparts.⁴

■ BOOK TYPES

LEVEL ONE

rhymes	animal dictionary
poems	comics
songs	how-to-make directions
game songs	signs
game directions	animal stories
jump-rope jingles	scary tales
animal encyclopedia	nature stories
folk and fairy tales	modern stories
riddles	jokes
rebuses	tongue twisters
	captioned photos

LEVEL TWO

poems	songs
story poems	limericks

⁴ Available in paperback from Penguin USA/New American Library, Mentor series.

adventure stories	dictionaires
animal stories (true)	recipes
animal stories (fiction)	jump-rope jingles
sports stories	tongue twisters
mystery stories	jokes and puns
fanciful stories	insults
science fiction	riddles
true stories (autobiography, biography, etc.)	rebuses
information	codes
science encyclopedia	brain teasers
game directions	proverbs
directions for how to do and make	fables
charts and graphs	folk talks
maps	legends
signs	myths
humorous stories	plays (all media)
	comics
	captioned photos

LEVELS THREE AND FOUR

diaries	adventure stories
fictional diaries	sports stories
letters	mystery stories
fictional letters	science fiction
autobiography	humorous stories
fictional autobiography	jokes
memoir	limericks
fictional memoir	comics
biography	riddles
fictional biography	brainteasers
chronicle	codes
fictional chronicle	signs
charts and graphs	captioned photos
maps	Readers Theater scripts
advertisements	dialogues and monologues
dictionaries	proverbs
information	fables
eyewitness reportage	legends
third-person reportage	myths
essays of reflection	parables
essays of generalization	epigrams and sayings
transcripts	songs
theater scripts	ballads
radio scripts	narrative poetry
film and TV scripts	lyric poetry
	haiku
	sonnets

For Level Four the main difference is an increase in the amount of research reported in reportage books, an increase in the number of more philosophical and theoretical essays, and the addition perhaps of a whole book of sonnets. For Level Four you could drop codes, limericks, comics, riddles, captioned photos, ads, and jokes, but the fact is that all of those can be very sophisticated. Unless very hard pressed, stock any reasonable possibilities when in doubt.

This progression, in fact, is really an accumulation, and dropping is hardly an issue. By adolescence, Level Three students should be offered all the types of reading matter; throughout secondary school, the changes occur in the maturity of form and content within these types rather than in the introduction of new types, except perhaps for rarer poetic forms, which can be encountered in mixed-poetry anthologies. Note that Level Three includes both content categories like adventure or sports and point-of-view categories like diary fiction and biographical fiction, so that students may search and learn either way. For fuller definition and detail about these types, consult appropriate chapters in Part Three, "Kinds of Discourse."

Note that the types are not sequenced. For one thing, no one knows what a proper sequence might be for all students, and many kinds of reading matter are equally mature. Let students find their own level, but if you feel someone is merely afraid to advance, then suggest something more mature that you think the person would enjoy, or steer her into a group that would involve her in more mature reading. This is tricky; don't push too hard. If you're patient, most students will get bored reading easy stuff and will be influenced by those already reading more mature works. That's one reason you want the class heterogeneous and interactive. When material is not sequenced, no stigma attaches to reading easier books, and the weaker reader can build up self-esteem and, again, move on.

It's not necessary for you to have read all the books or other reading matter in the classroom. In fact, if you limit their choices to what you have read, you'll jam up the whole program. It's obvious, however, that the more familiar you are with types and titles of reading material, the more able you will be to suggest what a youngster may read next. If an individual or a group is hot on fish, suggest ways they can track fish across fables, a science encyclopedia, animal fiction and true stories, poems, songs, and so on. You and they can make a whole impromptu curriculum out of fish that will help them see how the same subject is treated differently across different modes and genres.

CROSS-REFERENCING

Cross-referencing books is extremely handy not only to point out interesting connections among books but also to build in more self-directing structure to help students make decisions about what to do next. Cross-referencing consists of writing or printing into a book some optional routings, usually several choices, of where to go next: "See *Parables* or *Proverbs*," or "Now try the activity card 'Voice Chorus' or 'Make a Slide Tape.'" Emblazon conspicuously and show students where cross-referencing is. Use your own system, of course, if the materials have not been made this way.

Cross-referencing can route students to another book that is related (fables to parables) or to another that is a step up in difficulty (comics to humorous stories) and to a couple of follow-up activities appropriate to that book (acting out a story for fables or performing a text for transcripts). If you route specifically very

often—to one selection in a book—you'll be programming; the possibilities are various enough without resorting to that. Students should understand that if they have a strong idea of where to turn next when finishing a book or selection, then they can skip the cross-referenced routing, but if not, they can try one or several of the options. As they discover connections among materials, they can contribute their own cross references.

A small team of teachers can best work out and build into their materials a cross-referencing system by pooling ideas and knowledge about the books they can get. Some continuity from teacher to teacher would help everyone. Several teachers might have their students share several classroom libraries organized the same way and perhaps cross-referenced from one room to another, for greater choice. Doing this work once will make daily life far easier.

FURTHER READING

It will be extremely helpful to have for each type of reading matter a list of some more titles of that same type available to the students, so that if they want to read more science fiction, say, than you have stocked in the classroom, they can consult this Further Reading List to know what other titles they might try to buy, borrow, or check out of another library. Ideally, a Further Reading List would appear at the end of each book, but you and the students might make and post the lists in a notebook or on a wall. Such lists should contain periodicals and reference books also: if an adolescent reads a lot of factual material on nature, she should know not only about magazines like *Natural History* but about the various readers' periodical indexes to science and nature magazines.

■ SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY LIBRARIES

No classroom library, even if rather well heeled, is likely to suffice for a truly individualized curriculum. No school can afford to stock its classrooms with enough books if the reading program really takes fire. It's possible that the excessive control built into traditional reading and literature series is unwittingly designed so students don't read beyond the school's financial resources. Youngsters who really get the reading habit and who start asking many questions may very well exhaust the whole classroom library or at least those portions of it pertaining to their interests. They are ready to venture to a school or community library.

Welcome this development and make the transition to the library as smooth and gratifying as possible. This is not done by elaborate and often defeating "library units" in which children are taught everything from the Dewey decimal system to the number of holdings in the library. Children don't need to learn how to become librarians; rather, they need to feel competent and comfortable as library users. A heavy load of information about how to do research—in the abstract—is seldom anything but a burden. A friendly librarian who takes seriously a young learner's question about, for example, where penguins keep their eggs warm, can show her how to use the index of the children's encyclopedias or browse through the books on animals and birds on the science shelves. If she still has trouble, the librarian can hand her a book to scan for her answer. By meeting the learner where she is, the librarian gives her one successful experience in finding out what she wants to know; on this, she can build further research tasks.

Later, when she's bursting with another unanswered question, she can be shown the subject guide to the card catalogue or the adult encyclopedias.

■ ACTIVITY CARDS AND DIRECTIONS

A major type of reading material for both the beginning and intermediate reader is the list of directions for an activity. Lists should be short, relatively simple, well-illustrated, if possible, and action-oriented. They provide reading matter of high interest, for they show students how to do things they want to do and how to utilize the environment. Many youngsters who for some reason are not ready to read much in booklets may read a considerable number of directions just in order to know how to do the activities. The carrying out of directions is a natural check on reading comprehension. Since it's usually done in the company of partners, learners can check each other's reading. This reading material is by nature expository writing and therefore accustoms learners to comprehending this utilitarian type of discourse. It also provides a model for direction-writing.

Whenever you find yourself giving oral directions, you should ask if these would not better be written and either posted or filed where students who need them could read them. Whenever learners prefer to ask you rather than read for themselves, you should send the learners back to the written material to find out what they need to know. If you set up a pattern of answering their questions, they become all the more dependent on you, and you will have a classroom of students waiting impatiently for you to help them. Individualized process will thus get hopelessly clogged.

With beginning readers, of course, you will often have to read directions with the youngsters at first, moving your finger over the words as they watch. Once they've heard and seen a certain set of directions read to them, and once they have some knowledge of the activity itself, they will have some excellent aids to help them reread the directions for themselves later in the activity or on another occasion:

1. Since most of the activities call for partners or groups, learners can pool their knowledge and their deductive powers to figure out the words.
2. Illustrations help them remember the important actions.
3. Many of the same words recur frequently in all sets of directions.
4. Often the activity itself makes clear what certain words have to be and hence gives high payoffs to deduction.

Because activity directions encourage multiple cuing and are used constantly, they constitute a major portion of the reading program.

■ OTHER STUDENTS' WRITING

Students following the curriculum in this book will pour forth an abundance of writing. They'll be reading each other's productions constantly. This reading material has several advantages over printed texts: it's naturally controlled for maturity of content and expression, vocabulary, and sentence structure, and it's of interest because it's peer-written. It allows learners to talk to the authors and thus recognize the tentative nature of any writing. They can begin to discriminate tex-

tual features by seeing the texts change and thus become aware of these features in a book. In other words, the locally written texts of classmates not only provide additional reading material having a special social interest but also bring reading down from the remote perfection of the printed page into the everyday realm of works in progress.

Some student writings will be in unfinished form as groups or individuals meet to exchange first drafts for reactions and commentary. Some of these will be printed and distributed for voluntary reading, or projected before the class. Some of the writing will end in booklet form, thus joining the commercially published materials in the classroom library. The student-produced books are a kind of homemade version of the library because students write the kinds of matter that they read, that is, all the kinds of discourse arrayed in Part Three. Youngsters will read generously in each mode of writing because doing so is entailed in group process. Surely, the quantity and variety of student writing constitutes a formidable reading program. Student-produced material won't replace the vitally needed, rich input from the maturer culture, with its greater resources of language and experience, but it will virtually double each pupil's reading practice. It builds a bridge from her local world to that cultural legacy she meets in published books.

REMEDIAL READING

Prevention is always the best remedy. The concept of "remedial" reading arises out of ineffectual programs that overcontrol the learning processes and thus leave a wide wake of casualties. Remedial reading shouldn't be necessary, certainly not in the sense of special classes, programs, and teachers. The supposed need for these just means that commercial packages and managerial systems can't identify and accommodate the personal and social nature of language. Individualized, small-group processes make remediation unnecessary for the simple reason that by their flexible and pluralistic nature they keep up with each individual and give her what she needs when she needs it. They don't let problems go so far that crisis intervention seems the only answer.

If you look at successful remedial programs you'll find that they give students what they should have had in the first place—the activities recommended in this book. The first thing they do is create separate small classes or subgroups of a class that permit a teacher to work more closely with individuals—read to them, read back and forth with them like partners, talk while they read, choose texts appealing to them in particular, scribe for them, and monitor and coach them one-to-one. To increase the human resources, they also set up collective reading with partners and buddy them up with tutor aides, often volunteers. They surround them with diverse material resources in addition to books—manipulable and multisensory materials, games, charts, and perhaps some attractive sound-spelling presentation, among which they route individuals according to need.

When "remedial" programs work, they work because they de-institutionalize the institution. Their secret is not a trade secret. It's a human truth made to look like a secret by the imposition of commercial and bureaucratic artifacts. Like good alternative schools, they begin by decentralizing decision-making and resources so that the right learner can come together with the right resources at the right time. They abandon managerial systems and in fact set about offsetting the cumulative negative effects of such systems. "Remediation" should be so well

built into daily processes that no extraordinary, belated circumstances for it are ever required. That's exactly what we've aimed to do.

If, however, you teach in the middle or upper grades and inherit students who read poorly or not at all, they can become good readers through the practices described in this and preceding chapters. These include ways for you to analyze, monitor, and coach individual reading performance and ways for students to learn word recognition and comprehension. Such learners do not have to be segregated into special classes, because your classroom can provide everything "remedial" classes do. If one or more teachers in your school specialize in remedial work, they can come into mainstream classrooms, tutor poor readers there, and help organize other aides as well. Mainstreaming problem learners avoids stigmatizing and lets them benefit from all the advantages of heterogeneity.

TEACHING LITERATURE

One teaches literature by setting up the learning processes we've been outlining here, not by explaining texts to students or by extracting answers from them in class "discussions." Since these processes exercise the construing of texts, alone and with partners, they all teach literature. But as we said, comprehension is not everything with literature, because it exists to be undergone as well as understood. This makes performing and transforming of texts especially important. Besides experiencing the literary work more existentially through these activities, students do close textual reading because performing and transforming texts *entail* it. Too many literary texts have died during classroom vivisections. Analysis for its own sake, with no other motive, presupposes a prior sophisticated involvement with literature that few students have—not at least until they have first done analysis less directly and more functionally, as a means to another end.

The following are all ways of learning literature. Some have already been treated above; some we will describe below.

1. Partners take turns sight-reading aloud to each other, remarking on the text along the way.
2. Partners dramatize a text or perform it after rehearsing it.
3. Students listen to and watch performances of texts.
4. Students extend or transform a text by creative writing.
5. Members of a small group discuss without the teacher a text they've read separately.
6. Students take notes of their responses while reading alone.
7. The teacher leads discussion of a text by questioning students and parlaying the responses.
8. The teacher lectures to students about a literary work.
9. Students write essays about literary works of their choice.
10. Students write in the literary forms they read in.

Some of these activities will obviously work better if preceded by others. Activities 7, 8, and 9 are downright dangerous without plentiful experience with the others first. Some may be done by either small groups or individuals but would best be done first with partners. Only the last four have not been described yet.

■ TEACHER-LED DISCUSSION

Usually this presupposes that a whole class has read the same work, and usually the teacher has in mind an interpretation or appreciation of the text that she wants students to have before they leave the room. So it could prevent both personal choice and personal response. But you can lead discussion in a subgroup that has read a text of their choice, and you can play to students' responses instead of imposing your own or those of literary critics and historians. You can question, but your questions can invite them to say what they thought and felt about characters or events or passages. Follow these up with particular questions about their responses to your open-ended questions, such as, "Were you surprised, then, when she suddenly decided to take a vacation?" to help a reader fit together her responses to different acts by the same character. You might ask if others in the group had a similar reaction. Your *kind* of questioning can serve as a model for group members to explore what they constructed from the text and how this affected them.

■ LECTURING

Wrongly used, as it often is, lecturing can be fatal to the independence of student thought, especially if done frequently or to the exclusion of the other activities. Also, it too usually presupposes that a class is reading a text in common, and most often the lecture situates it in some historical or thematic framework. Actually, furnishing factual background could help and interest students if they're already involved in the text for reasons of their own. A subgroup might ask a teacher to do this for them as or after they read a text they've chosen. But fitting a work into Romanticism gives it an interpretive spin that only the most independent-minded readers can recover from and make good use of.

If the lecture constructs an interpretation by pulling together a lot of specific textual cues, it may demonstrate just how much a thoughtful, experienced reader can get out of or see in a literary work. This can be a way of letting students benefit from your literary expertise. But if you do this, give it as a free gift, we advise. Go ahead and do a number on it—make it a good show—but offer it just as your own appreciation of the work, and don't hold the students responsible for it. If done in this spirit, students may really enjoy it and be inspired to emulate your example—the best way to pass on what you know. If the text is short, you might read it to them or pass out copies for them to read first. Or pick a text they already know. Let them ask you questions after the lecture and discuss your interpretation.

A very thought-provoking possibility is to interpret a work from the viewpoints of several critical schools—say, feminist, Marxist, "new criticism," structural, and deconstructionist. Try to avoid technical terms, and contrast the differing positions in common language.

Invite students to work up their own analysis of text or appreciation of a work, voluntarily, and present it to the class.

■ STUDENT ESSAYS

Putting together some kind of a talk on a text, followed by discussion, would ease students into writing about literary works, which for most of them can be a for-

bidding and unwelcome activity. Everything depends on how it is built up to and whether volition is built into it. Writing about texts is difficult even for well-educated adults and requires unusual motivation. It works best with people who have come to love literature and to register their responses to it. Ideas come easily if one is accustomed to reacting honestly and spontaneously and to acknowledging what one feels and thinks. We suggest not forcing students to write about texts but making the possibility attractive by keeping it closely tied to pleasurable sharing of reading experience. If they choose a text that they feel they have interesting ideas about, if they do an oral draft first with a nonthreatening audience, and if more confident or older students show the way, then you may be surprised at who volunteers.

REVIEWS

No one has to think of this as formal literary criticism, which has, after all, a different context, but emulating book reviewers can make writing about books seem familiar. Reviews abound in magazines and newspapers, and seem functional, since they aim to steer other readers toward or away from certain books. Reviews may contain background information, comparison with similar works, story summary, stylistic analysis, and interpretation of meaning, the material for which comes essentially from thought associations one has while reading or while reflecting on the text afterward. Some of the best criticism and appreciation is done just as a form of personal essay about some reading experience, like Thomas DeQuincey's "On the Knocking at the Gate in *Macbeth*." Indeed, reviewing can parlay personal-experience essays about books into more formal analysis or interpretation.

■ WRITING IN LITERARY FORMS

Students who have tried their hand at writing fiction, poems, and scripts have an inside track on understanding what professional authors do with those forms. Participating in writing workshops focused on them may constitute the best possible literary education, because not only are learners role-playing the poet, playwright, or short story writer, they are reading drafts of similar efforts by partners. Being part of the creation of these texts as both author and audience sensitizes them to many issues of craftsmanship that increase enjoyment and perception manifold.⁵

In the next chapter we take up another way of responding to texts—performing them. In the final part of the book, on kinds of discourse, we treat developmental reading as an expanding repertory of kinds of reading matter. This expansion occurs in two general ways—by reading more across the abstracter reaches of the spectrum and by differentiating more discriminatingly among the types of texts already familiar. But like other human development, the development of reading takes an individual course with each person.

⁵ For elaboration of these ten activities see "Ways of Teaching Literature," in James Moffett, *Coming on Center* 2nd ed. (Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 1988).

CHAPTER

PERFORMING TEXTS

EIGHT

Performing a text is rendering it for an audience. Players either hold the text and read from it or memorize it. Either way, they “stick to the script.” In contrast to improvising, performing texts emphasizes fidelity to an author’s material. Players rehearse.

Including performing among the language practices amounts to laying a second reading curriculum over the first—and a rigorous one at that—because performing entails both silent reading and reading aloud, close textual analysis, and discussion of meaning and technique. It both deepens and displays reading comprehension. Like small-group discussion, informal classroom drama, and other oral activities, it deserves a solid and continual role in the language arts program at all ages. This means we are concerned not just with one or two big productions but with many small performances all the time.

Strictly speaking, of course, a script is material that is written specifically to be performed. In other words, a script is a planned oral presentation, written first and spoken later. It is a blueprint for others to follow. But since any reading matter can be presented orally, any text can be considered a script. If it has a character voice or voices, as in a story, poem, or series of letters, it can be the script for a dramatic performance, even though it was not originally written for that purpose. Considering script then broadly, a large proportion of what students read, including each other’s writing, is available for performance.

In addition to scripts written expressly for performance and other texts that can be treated as such, there is a third source of material for classroom performance—transcripts. Transcripts represent unplanned speech, spontaneous colloquy among different minds, spoken first and written down afterward—shaped not by some artful intention but by some communication need or public event. Because a transcript of such a colloquy is not as complete as the event itself, it begs for re-creation.

A couple of activities from other chapters lead well into performing. One is for an individual to rehearse a selection with the help of coaching from the teacher, then to read it to a small group of the class (page 156). Another is to dramatize a story by borrowing the main events and improvising the details of dialogue and action (page 104). Young children tend to find the latter’s mixture of fidelity and invention a more natural way to enact a story they have read than sticking to a script. Even when they perform a text they tend to ad-lib some of it. The more developed they become as actors, however, the more they understand the great

amount of leeway any script must allow anyway for creative interpretation and technique even when one sticks to it. The improvisational activities of *INFORMAL CLASSROOM DRAMA* provide excellent background for the vocal expression of rehearsed reading, and the body-English activities stand players in good stead indeed when staging the full action of a script.

A general continuity might take a student through these activities:

- reading to a group after getting coached
- reading in unison
- working up a reading with a partner for taping or live audience
- participating in choral reading having voice parts
- staging reading in one of the special techniques described later in this chapter
- memorizing and performing a play

TEACHER ROLE

Your role in helping students perform texts is not to direct the productions but rather to feed into the rehearsing groups pertinent alternatives as to how to proceed. This parallels your role in improvisational drama and in writing workshops. Try to encourage independence by giving the students responsibility for carrying through their own selection of text, rehearsals, and final production.

■ COACHING

During rehearsal you can suggest variables they can experiment with, such as:

- variations in volume, pitch, rate, and tone of voice to convey various qualities of emotion
- the use of solo versus chorus for a voice part
- the division of the lines among actors in unscripted text
- the use of pantomime and physical action
- pauses in the flow of words to allow action to happen or to provide emphasis for words or actions
- physical placement and stance of actors and position of objects on stage
- onstage versus audience or offstage eye focus
- the use of actual physical objects versus people playing the parts of objects
- the use of representative “props” or a portion of a costume
- the use of chants, songs, light, dance, music, media
- the casting of roles among players

Rotating roles or playing at half or double speed will help students discover potentials they may not otherwise be aware of. Sometimes you can help recharge a scene by introducing a “What if... ?” question, such as “What if you were facing another direction when you said that?” If the reading seems “canned” or dull, improvising a scene in the players’ own words can engender spontaneity in the next reading of the script.

The practical importance of a performer making himself heard clearly and of projecting gives you a good opportunity to encourage distinct and forceful articu-

lation of speech sounds. Omitting or weakening final consonants is a common trait of American speech. Point this out sometimes when you hear it, and demonstrate occasionally how to articulate vowels fully. Although it's not advisable to turn rehearsals into elocution lessons, still they are a natural occasion to practice "speech" in that sense. Sheer involvement in the emotions of a role will energize and clarify the voice. Pointers from you will also help; so will working with scripts that call for various dialects and listening to recordings by professional actors, to serve as models of effective, euphonious articulation.

Act as a mirror to players to reflect to them what they sound and look like in rehearsal, the pace and pitch of their scene, and the mood or character relationship that comes across to you. That helps them to know if they're expressing what they intend. Set an example of mirroring and suggest that one of a cast do it for others rehearsing.

■ ARRANGING FOR AN AUDIENCE

As with much other small-group work, a workshop situation prevails in which members not performing at the moment react to those who are. If a script contains several scenes with different actors, those offstage feed back to those onstage. If the script contains only one scene with only three roles, the group might include six people so that two casts can alternate performing and responding. They might present both versions to the same audience, who can compare them in discussion afterwards. Or they might discuss versions themselves and decide to meld the two into one, or present both to different audiences, or tape one version and perform the other live.

Members work out their own and each other's problems together. Each member gets an inside-outside view of both his work and the work of others. While learning the art, he also becomes a sensitive, informed responder. All members are participants; there are no detached outsiders. For this reason a workshop provides a comfortable transition to acting before an audience.

As students request opportunities to perform for a larger audience, you need to schedule whole-class sharing or sessions for other audiences. As students become accustomed to small-group process and to looking on other students as the recipients of their productions—not only for performances but for writing, research, improvisations, media presentations, and other productions—a relatively large proportion of time will be spent in sharing. Part of your job is to balance the needs of the readers or actors with those of the audience. Keep in mind that witnessing each other's productions gets everybody interested in similar adult productions and gives them ideas for their own creations.

Workshop process can be built into the activity directions for the performing practices to be described next. Each practice can be set forth on activity cards for self-directed work. However, you may want to lead an activity once or twice to introduce it to some students before relegating it to a card.

REHEARSED READING

Reading aloud is the base from which performing a text is a natural extension. Working up a reading with one to three partners prepares well for bigger script

rehearsals. A small group can render a text by simply reading in unison or by reading aloud one at a time. The goal may or may not be presentation to an audience. As a development of partner reading, playing with the text may itself be enough of an incentive. Or the group may rehearse until they perfect a version to record.

Activity directions can make clear that players experiment with different voice volume, pitch, rate, pause, and tone. Encourage creative tinkering. For example, students can try out a tiny, soft voice, then a loud, bold; high, shrill; shaky, scared; stumbling, unsure; clowning, funny; or sad, sobbing voice. They can take turns reading in imagined situations such as at the bottom of an abandoned mine shaft or on a mountaintop where the voice echoes; they can try reading as if they were laughing, hiccupping, cuddling a sleepy baby, or standing on a lonely highway in the rain. They can assume roles that demand varying voices and read the passage again as it would be spoken by a king, a slave, a holy monk, a tough street-gang leader, or a lively entertainer. After the various readings the players can talk about how the meaning of the words themselves change with each reading.

Practice for rehearsed readings can include emphasizing different words in a sentence to illustrate how stress communicates meaning,

- *I like that painting.*
(*You may not, but I do.*)
- *I like that painting.*
(*It really pleases me.*)
- *I like that painting.*
(*I am not crazy about the others.*)
- *I like that painting.*
(*It's the thing I like among all the other kinds of objects.*)

If you lead the whole class in some practice like this while doing choral reading, then small groups working without you can exploit the idea as part of working up any reading. Help them think of other contrastive ways of delivering the same words.

The general procedure for rehearsed reading is to sift and discuss some reading selections, talk some about the main point and approach of the text chosen, try reading parts to get a sense of who should take certain voices and how the piece should be generally treated, then cast and rehearse. Typically, this process interweaves silent reading (as members study the text a bit to size it up), trial oral readings (as they sound the text to listen for ideas about meaning and the best rendering), consulting the dictionary and other people for pronunciation and definition and other information, discussion of author's intention and characterization and so on (as they work out the content to be expressed), and textual analysis (as they dig for helpful particulars).

A student working alone may be directed to try out, and preferably record, several versions of a poem or other text. Then he can ask you and certain other students to listen to his versions and say how they differ and which is preferred for which reasons. Finally, the student can record or perform his synthesis of different versions. If a selection has several obvious or potential voice roles, this provides special challenge to the solo reader. If a small group chooses such a selection, however, it's better for neither you nor they to prejudge the number of voice parts when deciding how many members the group will contain. Let stu-

dents discuss how many “voices,” in one sense or another, a text that is not a script contains.

This is an extremely valuable learning that you don’t want to short-circuit. If the group decides that a poem, say, would best be divided into three voice parts but the group contains four people, two can either double on one of the parts, often an interesting decision in itself, or one member can critique rehearsals. If short a person, the group can look for another member or decide to let one of them read more than one voice part. Help students get away from the idea of merely a one-to-one correspondence between members and roles so that they can take advantage of the many techniques described below.

A whole class may decide to combine their small-group efforts into a concert of readings that deal with a particular theme or event, interspersing individual and group readings.

■ CHANTS AND SONGS

Chanting in unison with others is a very pleasant way to perform a rhythmical text. Young children especially delight in chanting together nursery rhymes, jump-rope jingles, and rhythmical games. See page 266. As rhythmical texts are chanted, the children can keep the beat by clapping, snapping their fingers, stamping, or using simple rhythmical instruments. A “conductor” can speed or slow pace and vary other dynamics.

Melody may be added to chanting. Community singing is fun, and its value for language development should not be overlooked. For poor readers, it provides another stimulus to sight-reading. For all students, it builds confidence in expression. Follow the directions for choral reading given on page 184. A small group can listen to a recording, learn the lyrics, perform the song for others, and then also teach the song to others. Some students may opt to accompany their songs with instrumental music. An interesting variation is “sing-say,” a kind of delivery that emphasizes meaning but retains some of the melody. Encourage practice of this half-speaking, half-singing, for it produces interesting results and can help normal voicing become more euphonious.

■ PANTOMIME

One of the simplest procedures for young or inexperienced students is to read aloud while other members of the group pantomime the action. A poem such as Mary Britton Miller’s “Cat” is useful for this type of performing: in delicious detail a black cat yawns, stretches, stands up, licks, arches, and pads away.

When students are pantomiming a story, have them “be” each new character that is introduced. Everybody plays all roles, including those of objects, if they choose. This is a good way to “celebrate” a student story also. As he reads it, his classmates pantomime the action.

For more mature students suggest sometimes that they slow the pantomime for greater clarity and that the reader adjust his pace to match. Instead of strictly pantomiming the action, players can express the mood of it with whole-body motions that are slow or fast, smooth or staccato, tiny or large, carefree or deliberate, delicate or powerful, and so on. At this point they have moved the motion close to dance, of course.

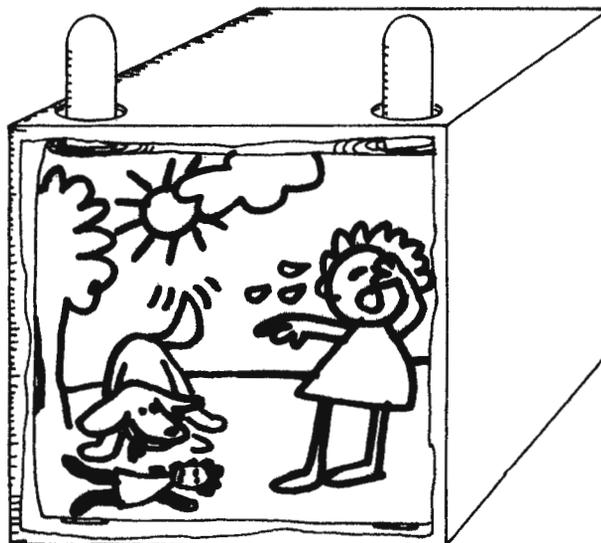
■ OTHER ACCOMPANIMENTS

Dance and music are effective accompaniments to the rehearsed reading of poems or other mood pieces. Images may be projected using slides, movie films, or overhead transparencies. Performers may decide to put a set of illustrations for a story or poem onto a long strip of paper and roll it around two broomsticks that have been inserted into holes near the open end of a cardboard box. The pictures can then be rolled in front of the audience as the story is read (see Figure 8.1). Drawings or paintings of characters and scenery can be backed with pieces of felt or flannel material and placed onto a board covered with felt to illustrate the various scenes of a story as another person reads it. At other times the best accompaniment may simply be swatches of colored material or projected colored light to reinforce the mood.

Every effort should be made to awaken students to the potential of synesthesia—the interpretation of one sense by another. This transmodal perception gives words a new power to evoke images and become symbols for wider experience. Without this perception, reading will remain for many children an experience isolated from all else they know. Rehearsed reading with multimedia accompaniments helps students extend the words back to the sensory experience the author is writing about. The power of the voice to evoke should remain central, but synesthesia can link this power to the power of other arts for a fuller experience.

Building on their experience with completely improvised puppet shows, students can move into scripted ones. One can read a script or narrative while the others perform the actions of the characters through manipulating puppets. This activity provides another opportunity for skillful interpretative oral reading. Both original scripts and adaptations from other narratives can be produced by students for puppet shows. More mature students may find putting on puppet shows for younger ones a face-saving way to continue a mode of presentation they may otherwise consider too “babyish.” See page 96 for more on puppets.

FIGURE 8.1 ROLL-THROUGH STORY BOX



■ FOR RECORDING

Any rehearsed reading or singing can be put onto audio- or videotape and played later for an audience. This method avoids the problem of having the audience's presence inhibit the performance, and it has the added value of allowing the performers to listen to and assess the quality of their rendering, redoing it if they're not satisfied. As they listen and discuss changes between tapings they become sensitized to various voicing of text. Producing a tape provides a powerful stimulus to read. And the tapes become part of the classroom library for other students to listen to themselves or to use with the text for read-along.

Recording a story, poem, or song might be the final stage in a progression that begins when a student:

1. listens to a selection that is read to him by someone or played on a tape and follows the text with his eyes
2. reads it back and forth with a partner, practicing variant readings
3. reads it silently alone
4. reads it to a less-developed reader
5. works it up as a reading to be taped and placed in the classroom library

An audio recording can be presented as a radio script, which relies entirely on voice and other sound. Much of the art of radio's golden era consisted of conveying everything without vision. Sound effects and narration play an important part, but the expressiveness of the voice must reign supreme. Scripting for radio requires special, skillful compensation for the lack of video. So as students work up readings, they may think about whether they will present them with or without visual presence. One way suits radio and audio-recording, the other TV and live performance. Encourage students to gear their rehearsals to the medium they have chosen—or to choose the medium according to how rehearsals have gone!

If students are doing a radio script, they will have to focus on what the microphone picks up and not rely on gestures and actions that cannot be heard. Peers who are critiquing a rehearsal may do well to turn their backs on the performers in order to better focus on the auditory experience. Casting is best done with eyes closed. The performer frequently hears his own voice better if he talks to a wall and cups his hands behind his ears. The group may appoint a director who is responsible for the overall aural effect and timing. Pace is crucial, because without visual clues understanding is often dependent on slowing down certain moments. Students will pick up techniques from listening to recordings of real radio shows.¹

A TV performance, on the other hand, is played for both what the microphone picks up and what the camera sees. There are many more middle and close-up shots than long shots, so the actors' faces and voices are emphasized. It's an intimate medium. Broad gestures appropriate for theater seem overplayed on a TV screen. A camera can go many places and play many visual games. Anthologies of radio and TV scripts are highly desirable classroom materials.

¹ Tapes of old radio shows are available at most public libraries and many bookstores or can be ordered through Brentano's Bookstore. Call 1-800-833-BOOKS.

■ CHORAL READING

Sometimes called “voice chorus,” choral reading can be a very pleasurable and effective way for students to practice reading texts aloud. Often a large-group activity, it is social but unthreatening. It serves well to boost skill and confidence to the point of more individual performance. Besides strengthening students’ literacy, choral reading helps to develop their feeling for the artful flow of words, the intonations of voice, and the rhythms of language. Supported, and sometimes corrected, by the voices of the group, each individual can hide in the herd and let himself go.

Better readers can carry along the less able ones, though it is also true that the latter can mumble uncertainly through, and that’s why individual coaching should supplement the choral reading for these students. Nevertheless, shaky readers can be bold, make guesses when they are not sure, and suffer little risk of failure. They can hear from the better readers whether their guesses are right or not. Often, however, choral members learn texts by heart anyway.

For choral reading, a common reading text is useful, but this can be written on newsprint or blackboard, or projected overhead. If the texts are written large and hung up around the classroom, they can provide occasions for informal small-group practice or individual rehearsal at other times in the day. Texts for choral reading should have strong rhythms and cadences and varied and interesting “phrasing” (in the musical sense). Poetry is excellent, and songs especially will help teach phrasing and rhythm, since the melody usually parcels out word phrases according to musical phrases.

Texts that contain possibilities for different voice parts are useful for dividing a chorus into subgroups having different “roles.” These voice parts might represent not just different characters but different moods, themes, places, or other elements that shift or repeat in a text. Deciding together how to assign text to subgroups can become a valuable part of preparing a choral reading and proves a very effective teacher of literature. And dividing a chorus into voice parts prepares very well for individual reading of roles in play scripts.

Working with photocopies, a transparency projection, a chalkboard, or easel-stand poster enables the group to annotate the text with “stage directions” about how to read certain lines and who is to read them. Annotations can be written in by a leader as the group tries out and decides on various renderings.

Some leader is needed both during this arranging of the text and during practice. You or a student can conduct the group somewhat like an orchestral or singing conductor, working out certain hand and head signals for changing volume, tempo, and so on. Depending on the literacy proficiency of the students, the leader may need a pointer to synchronize voice with text. After some whole-class experience in choral reading, the activity may be pursued by subgroups of the class with the aid of only activity directions, if needed. The conductor may be needed during performance as well as rehearsal, as for a musical concert.

On occasion you might proceed by dividing the class into groups, each of which works out its own rendering of the text. Then you bring the groups back together after each has worked up its own version. Let them perform for each other and compare versions toward the selection of a final rendering to do as a single large group. This process should help prepare the students for later work in self-directed groups.

Large group or small, the steps for choral reading are these:

1. Choose a selection and read it together or in pairs until everyone understands it.
2. Decide how to arrange the text for a choral reading. Although there are books that do this for you, the process of working out a good arrangement is a valuable one, so students should be encouraged to do their own arranging.
3. Have each person read a line so you can decide if his voice is high, medium, or low. Group all the voices of the same range together and use them for certain lines.
4. Decide together which, if any, lines should be spoken by a solo voice, a subgroup, or the whole group and whether such lines would best be vocalized by high, low, medium, mixed, or other sort of voices.
5. Read through the entire selection as arranged and make changes if needed to emphasize the important parts.
6. Practice expressive fluency by making a list of the most important words and phrases and then reading them aloud in quick succession, one after another, changing voice and facial expression rapidly as the meaning changes.
7. Read through the complete text again, using a different volume level for each different idea. Decide which volume and pitch level is best for each part to clarify the meaning. Try out various kinds of phrasing, intonation, and other vocal expression.
8. Experiment with pace. Decide which lines should be spoken more slowly, which more rapidly.
9. Decide who is going to read the solo or duo parts.
10. Rehearse; tape the rehearsals to hear which parts, if any, need more work. You may decide to add a guitar, piano, humming, or other accompaniment.

Share your voice chorus with an audience.

SPECIAL TECHNIQUES FOR GIVING A REHEARSED READING

■ READERS THEATER

Definitions of Readers Theater vary somewhat. We're using the term to mean a rehearsed reading of a text in such a manner as to establish the locus of the piece not onstage with the readers but rather offstage in the imagination of the audience. The performers of Readers Theater see the action as they read and project that vision to the audience. Instead of acting out the play in a realistic manner, they suggest character by using voice, facial expression, and stylized gesture. Action is symbolized and implied; the audience fills in the details. In this sense Readers Theater is closely allied to the performance of radio scripts, which also rely on vivid oral rendering and the imagination of the audience. Readers may assume several roles apiece by creating different voices for different characters, one of whom may be a narrator or other sort of presence. For the very versatile, a one-person show is possible.

Staging is simple, bordering on stark. A common arrangement for Readers Theater is for players to sit or stand in a line in front of the audience, but sometimes they deploy themselves on two or three platforms of different levels to sug-

gest certain relationships in time, space, or status. Typically, stools for the actors to sit on are the only props, although minimal lighting and costuming are sometimes used.

Usually readers have scripts in hand, although some groups prefer to memorize their lines. This option depends on how much emphasis one is to give to voice and how much to gesture. In the conventions of Readers Theater, the script is a way to distance the audience from the physical action and to place a premium on language.

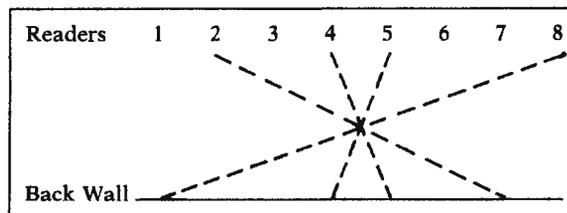
When speaking, the readers may look somewhere over the heads of the audience at a spot on the back wall. They pretend that a mirror hangs there and that all of them are reflected in it (see Figure 8.2). When reader number eight speaks to reader number two, he looks at number two's imagined reflection on the back wall. Their eye lines cross in the middle of the audience. If readers four and five are speaking, their eye lines appear to be almost parallel. It seems odd at first, but then it becomes clear: they are talking to one another even though they are not looking at one another. This "offstage" focus is a unique technique of Readers Theater. It's an indirect way of visually addressing both the other characters and the audience that distances the drama, all while effecting a more direct and personal relationship with an audience than is customary in a conventional play. The relation is like that of reader to book. Perhaps just because Story Theater (see pages 188–190) and Readers Theater bring texts to life, they have proved very popular in schools.

MATERIAL

Play scripts make convenient Readers Theater material because all that students have to do is cut them to suit the time limits and adapt stage directions to the techniques of indirection described above. Adapting other literature like poems or short stories poses a greater challenge, but Readers Theater has had the greatest success precisely with adaptations, no doubt because in bringing to the stage texts not written for performance it uniquely fills a special need. Like the popular taped readings of books for home and car stereo, it utilizes another medium to bring people and books together.

Not surprisingly, then, producers of Readers Theater often make scripts out of texts most people would probably not read on their own, like personal and public documents of various sorts. Instead of merely adapting fictional dramas from literature, popular productions have often capitalized on the inherent drama in

FIGURE 8.2 OFF-STAGE-FOCUS TECHNIQUES IN READERS THEATER



Source: Floren Harper.

biography, history, or issue-centered material. Dylan Thomas's radio script *Under Milk Wood; A Play for Voices* evokes small town life from personal memory, and Jerome Kilty's *Dear Liar* pieces together correspondence between George Bernard Shaw and Mrs. Patrick Campbell.

Some of the most successful Readers Theater scripts, in fact, are collages of extremely diverse reading matter, including not only snatches of stories and songs but also nonliterary material such as ads, signs, notices, documents, memoranda, and news articles—any sort of material that may relate to the theme or subject matter of the script. Thus, like Martin Duberman's *In White America*, many Readers Theater scripts are documentaries, made up of many kinds of writing not originally intended to be part of a script.

So student scripts can relate rather directly not only to adaptation of literature but to radio-scripting and to documentaries, with the very interesting possibility of developing and orchestrating an idea or a theme by selecting and sequencing excerpts from many kinds of reading matter. Scripts especially created for Readers Theater are available and might give students an idea of its possibilities², but making their own scripts should be regarded as a major part of doing Readers Theater. Whenever students select materials from different sources, juxtapose them, and add transitions, they face problems common to most composing. In order to collage a script together students actually have to rewrite and write as well, starting with the simple deletion of "he said" and other conversions of narrative-to-script and ranging on to the writing of introductions and continuities to glue together their collage. Of course, students may prefer instead to write a wholly original script or to collage some of their other written work.

PROCEDURE

Readers Theater can be introduced to students of any age who seem ready to specialize their other rehearsed reading in this direction. The group size for Readers Theater varies substantially, depending on the nature of the material used and the experience of the students. Keep in mind that each person may play more than one role. Small groups, even a pair, are usually better for beginners. Groups of four or five are sufficiently large to provide an interesting diversity of points of view for the task talk and can cover a number of voices if individuals are experienced. If inexperienced, better to keep down the number of roles so that a larger group won't be necessary.

Timing becomes especially important if students are creating a script as well as rehearsing it. For certain students, script-making plus rehearsal may do well to evolve slowly over an extended period concurrently with other activities. In making their own scripts, students need to read extensively enough to gather the necessary material and intensively enough to perceive the potential of the selections for Readers Theater. Then they need time for sessions of mixing discussion, writing, and rehearsal. During the first several days of the rehearsal period, students

² The Readers Theater Script Service, P.O. Box 178333, San Diego, CA 92177, sells script packets for all ages and video cassettes of skilled performances. The Institute for Readers Theater, P.O. Box 79193, San Diego, CA 92117, gives workshops and puts out *Readers Theater News*. Look for a similar organization in your region, often represented at meetings of local affiliates of the National Council of Teachers of English.

work on interpreting the texts for themselves. As each person reads, it's best to let the words suggest images to play in his mind, to create, as it were, a visual presentation, a film in his head as he reads. Then he can begin to use his voice as if it were an accompaniment to the film. He can decide what the character he's assuming is like and read his lines as if he were that character. He can compare his rendering of a role with that of others in his group, and based on these trials the group can decide who will read which lines. They can experiment with several students reading each part or with each person playing several roles. In order to understand how to read their lines aloud, they must naturally pay attention to specific features of the text that provide cues, such as punctuation, pronunciation, and definition of words. The rendition evolves as fellow readers coach each other and continue to revise the script and staging. A group may decide to appoint a director to facilitate making decisions.

As the vocalizing progresses, the readers consider whether to add stylized, underplayed body movements. If this is done in slow motion, the impact is greater. For example, one group of students³ staged a fight scene as part of a Readers Theater performance of John Lewis Carlino's *The Brick and the Rose*, a play about a boy who gets hooked on drugs and dies of an overdose of heroin. The players kept the fight scene in offstage focus. They feigned short punches in slow motion aimed not at one another but in the same direction as the eye focus—toward the back wall. The one receiving a blow, also facing the back wall, contracted his body slightly to receive it. The impact of these suggested movements was strong even though the readers held a book in one hand.

MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION/EXPERIMENTATION

- How each reader is to “enter”—by lifting his head from a nodding position, by turning to face the audience, by standing or sitting down, by actually walking onstage, or what? Other changes of position later?
- Aspects of style and variations in style that the readers have to communicate—how to savor the sounds and rhythms of the phrases and sentences, the particular diction and imagery of different voices.
- Whether and when to shift eye focus from offstage to onstage to audience. A narrator might address an audience directly as a host, or characters might address each other directly sometimes to indicate some shift in relationship.
- Changes in volume, pausing, pacing, and other dynamics.⁴

■ STORY THEATER

Story Theater is a technique for dramatizing narratives. As the text of a story is read aloud or delivered from memory by actors representing the narrator and the characters, the action of the story is rendered by others in movement and pantomime and often in music as well. The style is poetically evocative. Story Theater

³ These students were working with Floren Harper at Staples High School in Stamford, Connecticut.

⁴ Floren Harper, “A Readers Theater in Your Classroom,” *Connecticut English Journal*, 1 (Spring 1970). We are also indebted to Floren Harper for valuable help with other parts of this chapter.

has special appeal for children, who will enjoy both performing and witnessing it. This makes it also an ideal technique for older students to use in performing for younger ones.

Deciding how to divide up the text is part of the creative process of Story Theater, as it is also for Readers' Theater and Chamber Theater (see pages 190–192). Activity directions, for example, should array the options—to have one narrator throughout, or to have each character take his own narration in addition to his own dialogue, or to have a group play the narrator as a chorus while the characters do their lines and actions, or to have one group as narrator, one group reading dialogue, and another doing actions. If some players do only action, they need not hold scripts and are free to pantomime, thus creating an interesting contrast in dynamics with the relatively immobilized readers, though readers may of course choose to memorize text and thus free themselves also.

Experimenting during rehearsal builds insights about how Story Theater productions can be effective. Players can try out, for example, different ways to accompany or back up a reader or pantomimist who is featured at a given moment—making background sound or movement or chiming in vocally. A group should try out different uses of its members to get across the story and get effects. When the players in their assumed roles feel the need for dialogue, the narration might stop while they improvise it. Story Theater remains faithful to the text but at the same allows transformations to occur. For example, if the narrator says, “So they walked hand-in-hand into the deep forest,” he must pace himself by the actors as they discover together if the ground is firm or muddy, if the weather is hot or cold, if the trees are close together or far apart, and so on.

Actors work with only the simplest, most suggestive props, if any, and wear only the simplest costumes, if any. Ordinary objects may symbolize elements in the setting and can sometimes be used to represent more than one object. A ladder or a set of steps, for example, can be a window, a balcony, a mountain, or heaven—or all of these at different points in the story. If all the players are clad in leotards of a neutral color, one monocle, mustache, broom, head bandanna, glittery necklace, or handcuff can very effectively suggest a character and his stance in relation to the others.

MATERIAL

Paul Sills's production, *Story Theater*, is probably the best-known professional example of this technique. Audiences delight in the way his company is able to lead them into a world of dreams where the imagination was needed, where the audience experienced creation right along with the performers. John-Michael Tebelak's *Godspell* was another Broadway production that relied heavily on Story Theater techniques. It drew on Biblical parables, and the material that best lends itself to Story Theater is such simple narrative—stories from the oral tradition such as fables, myths, legends, and folk tales that are stripped down to action.

PROCEDURE

As usual, take an inexperienced class through once or twice yourself. Then let subgroups of the class do it with their own director, following activity directions. One way to introduce Story Theater is to have the class choose a story, break into groups, and each develop one scene from the story, if the children are very young,

or develop the whole story. If each group does a scene, these can be strung together for a whole performance; if each does the whole story, these different renderings can be compared. A third possibility is for each group to do a different story and present it to the others. Whichever of these three you choose, you should move around among groups helping them discuss decisions about how to perform the text.

Warm-ups are crucial for Story Theater. Begin with some theater games such as mirror exercises that call for sensitivity to one another and to what is evolving. Players need to sense when one player is to take the lead and the rest are to support his improvisation and when all are to pantomime as a group. Next, you or another leader can call out objects or animals that figure in the story and have the players get together in groups to form these shapes with their combined bodies—for example, a cow, a tall beanstalk, a golden goose. This helps them learn to collaborate spatially and to avoid stereotyping things. For example, if three or four students have to combine themselves into a tree, they are less likely to stand in a traditional “tree” pose and more able to change to a tree swaying in the breeze, blown by a gale, budding with blossoms, or frozen in ice.

SELF-DIRECTED GROUPS

After selection of a story, encourage general discussion about what happened, what the characters are like, and what mood or theme needs to be brought out. Then as one person reads the text, everyone else can pantomime all the actions simultaneously (as for “Pantomime” on page 181) just to get a feeling of the events and how they flow in the tale. For a second read-through, some members can volunteer to read or pantomime parts and others can take turns reading the narration or dialogue. By a combination of discussion and trials, the group can cast and get into rehearsals, which become a kind of perpetual composition. Again, members may want to make someone the director to facilitate final decisions.

■ CHAMBER THEATER

Another dramatic mode we highly recommend is Chamber Theater. It was originated by Robert S. Breen of Northwestern University and further developed by Carolyn Fitchett Bins. Chamber Theater is a technique for staging narrative texts that takes full advantage of all theatrical devices available but at the same time preserves the original narration. The chief distinction is that an actor plays the narrator while other actors play the characters. Chamber Theater has the advantage of dramatizing the very element of written narrative that poses a problem for some readers—namely, the presence in the text of a storyteller’s voice and controlling intelligence mediating between the reader and the action.

MATERIAL

The only material for Chamber Theater is narrative text, and the text becomes a script with virtually no changes. This may be any short story, folk tale, narrative poem, or nonfictional account such as memoir, reportage, or biography, including students’ own writing. Broadway productions that employed Chamber Theater technique are Edward Albee’s treatment of Carson McCullers’ *The Ballad of the Sad Café*, Thornton Wilder’s *Our Town*, Tolstoy’s *War and Peace* as directed by Erwin Piscator, and James Joyce’s *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* as adapted by Frederick Ewen, Phoebe Brand, and John Randolph.

PROCEDURE

A small group begins Chamber Theater by choosing a short scene from a narrative. A story with a good balance of action, dialogue, and narration works well. The narrative is not rewritten as a play but interpreted dramatically as if already a script except for such minimal changes as removing "said Alberta."

This automatically focuses on the narrator's relationship to the characters and to the audience. In a first-person story one of the characters will be the narrator himself, usually of a former time. The chief ways of indicating these relationships are the narrator's physical position vis-à-vis the characters and the audience, and the division of lines in the text between narrator and characters. Working out passages for staging forces the students to look closely and critically at the text itself, not only to determine what the narrator says but also to infer his tone or how he says it.

Dividing lines between narrator and character does not depend simply on separating narration from the characters' directly quoted speech, or even from their indirectly quoted speech and thoughts. Nor need the divisions of lines coincide with whole sentences. A narrator who is privy to a character's thoughts and feeling may share with him both narration and dialogue. That is, a character may utter certain sentences or clauses of narration that describe his reminiscence or state of mind, just as he may take over from the narrator those portions of indirect discourse that paraphrase what he said or thought. Likewise, when the narrator is recounting events or summarizing a situation in the style of the character, the character may do the speaking. Conversely, during a character's inner debate, the narrator may utter one of the opposing positions to dramatize the conflict of selves. During some of the moments when the minds of the narrator and character become fused in the narration, the actors playing both may decide to read the lines in unison. This interplaying allotment of lines is the most intriguing and original feature of Chamber Theater. It gives topography to a text and throws relationships into relief.

The way the narrator shows his relationship through his physical position dramatizes the fact that a storyteller floats free in time and space. He may stand behind a seated character with his hand on his shoulder and speak either directly to him or to the audience. He may pose aloofly on a raised platform or stair. He may face a character directly and speak to him. He may move close or far away from the audience, address it or not. He may move in and out of scenes or remain central. Thus he is able to indicate stable relationships throughout a story and shifting relationships within a story. He may act omniscient, take a detached stance, speak in a lofty tone. He may speak confidentially about a character's thoughts and feelings or comment satirically about him to the audience. He may become his former self for a while, alternate between objective reporting and identification, and so on. All of these bring out the narrator's stance, tone, and style.

The important thing in Chamber Theater as in most other student performance is to experiment. Players may decide that there is no "fourth wall" between the characters and the audience, so nothing is hidden from the audience. Instead of making entrances and exits, the actors may decide to remain in the background when they are not in character and move down to the main playing area when they are. They may pantomime the props instead of having actual objects or add actions implied by but not written into the scenes. Scripts may be read or memorized, and the production videotaped. Again, a student may direct.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL INCIDENTS

Much of this technique's effectiveness lies in what precedes and follows these readings. One of Carolyn Bins's contributions is in asking students, before they dramatize professional texts, to recount and then enact incidents from their own life. If the story is not initially written but taped, it can be transcribed to create a text.

Students other than the teller may direct versions of the incident and may take the role of narrator without seeing each other's versions; then the student-author himself directs a version, playing himself as narrator while someone else plays him as participant. Interesting combinations are possible. The author's version allows the audience to perceive, visually, just how close the narrator is to the story he is telling. This stance will probably be different from versions that others direct or play narrator in, and these versions can be compared in discussion.

Whether the material is professional writing or their own, comparing versions of Chamber Theater productions provides a chance to sort out points of view more clearly and powerfully than most students are able to do when reading silently. Chamber Theater technique is a brilliant way to translate flat print into tangible human dimensions. This makes it a prime method of studying literature. Unlike adaptations that make narrative into something else (also a legitimate endeavor), it brings out what is peculiar to narrative.⁵

■ SUMMARY OF THE THREE TECHNIQUES

Readers Theater, Story Theater, and Chamber Theater all consist of rehearsed reading. All divide text among actors in creative ways. All evoke rather than simulate realistically. And all assign actors to the narrator role. Whereas Story Theater and Chamber Theater stage narratives only, Readers Theater stages any material whatsoever. In Readers Theater and Story Theater, several actors may play one role or one actor may play several roles, but in Chamber Theater each actor takes one role, as in realistic theater. Each features certain techniques: Story Theater, the interplay of voice and pantomime; Chamber Theater, the interplay between narrator and characters; and Readers Theater, the distancing of action and the evocation of language. Readers Theater is broader, and Story Theater and Chamber Theater are more specialized. Story Theater suits elementary school best, Chamber Theater suits high school best, and Readers Theater suits both very well.

ENACTING SCRIPTS

Acting out memorized scripts is what most teachers think of first when they envision performing texts. This often evokes images of hours of rehearsal and the frantic tension of the final production of a play—complete with costumes, stage, lights, properties, and so on. If this is what performances of texts were as a regular routine, few teachers could justify them as a staple classroom process, as we

⁵ Chamber Theater provides a splendid dramatic method to accompany *Points of View: An Anthology of Short Stories*, ed. James Moffett and Kenneth McElheny (New York: Penguin USA/New American Library, Mentor series, 1966).

recommend. Occasional performances of memorized scripts for a large audience are enjoyable and stimulating, of course, but regular rehearsed reading, text in hand, for an audience of people at hand is by far the more valuable experience for the total language development of the student.

The point of enacting a memorized script inheres precisely in the fact of an audience. The whole purpose of a script is to hold actors to a presumably superior version of the action, a circumstance of little value to participants playing just for themselves but important to beholders. Scripts can be performed without being memorized, of course. In this case the action is somewhat inhibited by the scripts students hold, but the performers have the advantage of needing less time to get a play ready to share with their peers. Sight-reading of plays is shortest and simplest but worth least. It's all right as a way of becoming acquainted with an easy play, but advances in learning come from the work of rehearsals, which entail rereading, thinking, and discussing.

Play performing should begin much earlier than has been the norm heretofore. Many primary-school children can read a play silently or sight-read together, take the parts of characters and read it as a play in a small group, rehearse it, then perform it from memory or while holding scripts.

■ MATERIAL

The younger the students the more difficult it is to find appropriate play scripts for them, because most plays are written for commercial performance for adults. This provides excellent motivation for students to write their own scripts. But scripts published for school age do exist, sometimes as play anthologies. For beginners of any age scripts of one continuous scene or two or three scenes are best. It's wise to put off very long or difficult plays until students have benefited from some of the other dramatic experience recommended up to now. Otherwise, for one thing, you will end up doing too much. Also, students might often do well to choose their long, difficult plays from among some they already know. For example, let students reading Shakespeare first listen to recordings of his plays as they follow the text, stopping to discuss scenes along the way. Among much else, this gives them pronunciations and meanings of the strange or strangely used words and straightens out intricate sentence constructions.

Rewriting stories or poems into drama scripts is, of course, a valuable composition task and an excellent way to approach literature. Having the author of the script easily available for consultation with the players provides the actors with guidance beyond what is actually written. Student authors also get valuable feedback as the performers and directors face various script problems from which they can all learn: they can't tell how to read a line from the way he has punctuated it, or don't understand the timing of actions or what kind of person a character is, or don't know what the point is of a certain action or speech, or cannot figure out what the set really looks like, and so on.

TRANSCRIPTS

These are a splendid source of scripts that schools rarely take advantage of. Transcripts of interviews, trials, speeches, Congressional debates, talk shows, hearings—all can be performed for an interesting challenge in oral interpretation.

Although not composed or intended for performance, they look, in format, as if they were. While recapitulating the original dialogues, student actors are role-playing various real-life players in the society. Transcripts are potentially dramatic because of the give-and-take, often adversarial (which is why so many fictional dramas contain trial scenes).

Students can edit a transcript into what they consider a performable version. The script of Peter Brooks' Broadway play *The Investigation* is essentially just an assemblage of excerpts from the transcripts of the Nuremberg trials of World War II criminals. In most cases stage directions are not part of a transcript, so students have to fill in action and position according to their interpretation of what's going on. Tone, characterization, motivation, and some of the interplay all have to be inferred from the bare dialogue—a fine kind of practice in comprehension. If possible, recordings of the original dialogues should be found so that students can compare them with their own rendering—after the students have performed them.

■ PROCEDURE

Selecting a script is a process not to be hurried; it provides a good motivation for wide reading to screen many plays. Not only texts but also professional recordings or student-produced tapes can be used for the selection process.

READING IN ROLE

After reading or listening to the play, the group members decide together who will read each part and meet together to read the script aloud. After they do this, they may, in some cases, decide this is not a script they want to perform, and look for another. They can reread the play, rotating roles and working out characterizations, relationships, mood, and theme.

REHEARSALS WITH MOVEMENT

After the students have become familiar with the script and begun to conceive how it should be executed, they're ready to add movement, following but also filling in the stage directions. A student director can block the movement by drawing a ground plan or floor plan and showing entrances, exits, placement of furniture, and levels and stairs that may be used. Then, scripts and pencils in hand, the cast can walk through the action in the playing space, discussing and amending the director's plan. Each actor can write his movements, or blocking, in the margin of his script to show which lines he moves on and where he goes. He should figure out why his character is making each of the moves he makes. When actors become distracted by the figuring out and stop listening and responding well, they can set aside their scripts, improvise the scene, and then go back to coordinating dialogue with movement while holding scripts.

During rehearsals, the cast will discuss whatever problems they have in acting their parts. The director can lead this talk toward decisions or, when disagreement is strong, can make the decisions himself. Directors change from one play to the next, but the most capable students can be appointed at first. Students understand that whoever is director has the last word as regards performance, and that the script can be changed, but only through negotiation with the author in the case of a student script. One typical matter that a group has to decide is the degree of

realism that a given play calls for, in their view. Decisions about realism will affect also the use of props, costumes, lighting, and other aspects of staging.

Halfway through rehearsals, lines should be memorized if they are ever going to be, since depth of character occurs after this is accomplished. Scenes can be videotaped and played back to help the actors evaluate what they are doing. While working on interpretation, you and they can coach speech articulation also, reminding actors to enunciate both vowels and consonants more deliberately—without losing feeling and dramatic momentum.

The first full run-through of the play should be a nonstop performance. If at all possible, videotape this. The director can also take notes to give the cast afterward. A double-time or fast rehearsal is good at some point to help concentrate on picking up cues. This can be done while sitting down if each player tells his action as he says his lines: "Moving to chair. 'Whew!' He sits." The director should make sure everyone can be seen and heard in every part of the audience area. An audience can be invited to see a run-through and make comments. Then comes a technical rehearsal for final adjustments by the technical crew, and finally a full dress rehearsal with costumes if the cast has decided to wear them.⁶

THE VALUE OF PERFORMING TEXTS

The processes involved in performing obviously *develop interpersonal skills*. Students get better at discussion as they practice it during selecting and rehearsing of texts. They also learn how to give and take constructive criticism. They have an opportunity to overcome shyness gradually and to develop poise before others. The pressure of putting together a performance emphasizes a common goal and puts a premium on working effectively together.

Like all oral performing, enacting texts *teaches "speech"* in the sense of articulation and elocution. In this curriculum such vocal traits as musicality, dynamics, enunciation, and expressiveness are considered factors of feeling and involvement that can develop best in speaking situations that release feeling and tie into real motives. Performing texts makes good articulation and expression a practical matter about which the student usually welcomes feedback and coaching.

In rereading, rehearsing, and performing a published script, *one comes to possess the language* in it. This means that students enrich their native vocabulary, phrasing, sentence structure, speech rhythms, and dialects by incorporating those of creative writers beyond their immediate world. This is a much more powerful imprinting than occurs from merely reading a text once silently. And of course such new intake influences how a student speaks, writes, and reads in the future.

As audience for other students' performances, an individual becomes acquainted with more dramatic works than he would read alone. After a while he becomes a fairly sophisticated playgoer, ready for professional productions, and at the same time *becomes conversant with dramatic literature* of his maturity level. This happens not just from the turnabout sharing of performances but also from the sifting and discussing of scripts that goes on as different groups try to select

⁶ A good acting primer for high school students is Charles McGaw and Gary Blake, *Acting Is Believing: A Basic Method*, 5th ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1986).

ones they want. This collective knowledge is absorbed by individuals and also stimulates them to read.

As a performer, a student *deepens his reading comprehension*. At the same time, he externalizes it, providing the teacher with a clue as to how well he understands what he has read. In order to interpret well, a student must read carefully and critically, taking on, if necessary, a new language style and tone and making it his own. The consulting of textual notes and the analysis of text, so tedious in silent reading, come more easily as part of the practical and social process of working up a performance. The emphasis that dramatic treatment places on speaker, voice, and circumstance of utterance helps a student gain insight into all the literature he reads, whether aloud or silently. The careful reading that the performing process demands leads to insightful and authentic discussion about literature in order to solve problems of interpretation that are real and immediate.

From the reader's point of view, then, any text is a script. It leaves much to be completed by the reader from experience and imagination. In both rehearsing and directing scripts, one learns to fill out the text. Without a narrator or other authorial host, one has to infer more in reading scripts than perhaps any other sort of text. Who explains why the characters do what they do, what they have in their heads, what the point of a scene is? In drama as in raw life itself, you have to learn to become your own guiding interpreter. Students used to treating all texts as scripts will understand intuitively that they must actively take over what they read and make it mean something. To do this they role-play the writer himself and recreate his voice, his intonations as indicated by punctuation, his style or tone as indicated by word choice and sentence construction, and his ideas and intentions as indicated by pattern and organization. Silent reading is playing out a text on the stage of the mind.⁷

⁷ *Teaching Theater* is a national journal that teachers may find most helpful. It is published by Educational Theatre Association, 3368 Central Parkway, Cincinnati, OH, 45225-2392, which also sponsors conferences around the country at which workshops are given relating to activities in this chapter and in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER

WRITING

NINE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

DISSEMINATING WRITTEN PRODUCTS

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

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

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

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

■ DUPLICATING

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

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

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

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

■ MAKING BOOKLETS

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

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

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

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

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

COLLECTIVE WRITING

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

THE WRITING WORKSHOP

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

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

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

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

■ PROCEDURES

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

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

ENCOMPASSING THE TOTAL PROCESS APPROACH

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

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

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

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

RESPONDING TO DRAFTS

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

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

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

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

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

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

WORKING IN THE REPERTORY

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

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

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

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

■ TEACHER ROLE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CONFERENCING

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

■ MID-COMPOSITION DIALOGUE

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

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

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

■ COACHING

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

■ COUNSELING

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

WRITING STIMULI

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

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

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

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

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

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

■ THE WRITER'S NOTEBOOK OR JOURNAL

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

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

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

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

■ LEARNING LOGS

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

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

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

■ PICTURES AND FILMS

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

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

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

■ MUSIC

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

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

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

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

■ LITERARY FORMS

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

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

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

■ CHANGING MEDIUM, MODE, OR POINT OF VIEW

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

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

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

For more on this see “Transforming Texts” on page 164.

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

■ RECAPITULATING IMPROVISATIONS AND PANTOMIMES

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

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

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

SENSORY WRITING

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

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

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

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

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

■ ONE SENSE AT A TIME

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

SOUND

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

TOUCH

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

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

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

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

SMELLS OR TASTES

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

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

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

■ ALL SENSES AT ONCE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

REVISION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SPELLING AND PUNCTUATING

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

■ SPELLING

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

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

SPELLING THROUGH WRITING

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

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

SPELLING THROUGH READING

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

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

SELF-DIAGNOSIS

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

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

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

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

CLASSIFYING MISTAKES. Let’s take some errors from an actual piece of student writing:

ferther stoping srill fawsett
cloged kichtion turpintine

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PROOFREADING

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

SPELL CHECKERS

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

SPECIAL GAMES AND BOOKS

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

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

THE VALUE OF SATURATION EXPERIENCE

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

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

■ PUNCTUATING

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

LEARNING PUNCTUATION BY VOCAL INTONATION

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

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

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

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

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

SEQUENCING

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

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

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

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

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

PRESENTING PUNCTUATION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PUNCTUATING UNPUNCTUATED TEXTS

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

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

PUNCTUATION GAMES

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

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

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

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

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

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

COMPOSING AND TRANSCRIBING DIALOGUE

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

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

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

READING ALOUD

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

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

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

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

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

■ TRANSCRIBING

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

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

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

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

WRITING DOWN ORAL LITERATURE

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

DICTATION FROM CLASSMATES

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

TRANSCRIBING FROM A TAPE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER

EVALUATING

TEN

Evaluating is itself a learning activity inseparable from the language arts, because feedback is part of communication. But it must be done very thoughtfully. Much waste and much harm occur when evaluation is run off routinely without considering its exact function and the possibility of negative side effects.

Collecting periodic data on reading ability, say, as most schools and school districts do today, merely for “knowing” what is happening is a monstrous waste of time and money and often merely misleads the public.¹

DIFFERENT FUNCTIONS

Language arts evaluation usually serves about five functions. It should indicate

- to the individual student, how fully he is developing in discourse.
- to the parent, how much the student is learning in school.
- to the teacher, the needs of the student, for coaching and advising.
- to the administrator, how good a job the teacher is doing.
- to the school board and community, how effectively the curriculum and materials reach their goals.

Too often educators expect a few standardized test scores to fulfill all five functions at once, and yet it's obvious that one such narrow type of evaluation cannot serve such different purposes. Students need to know if they're making themselves clear to others and understanding what others are saying or writing. Standardized tests will not tell them this or give them perceptions that they can use in the future. Of course students sometimes care about test scores or grades but mostly just because adults do. Otherwise, they don't need the blanket judgments of themselves, comparing one with others, except to the extent that the environment whips up a competitive atmosphere. Comparison satisfies a need many parents feel to know where their child stands in relation to his peers.

¹Richard L. Venezky, *Testing in Reading* (Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1974), 5-6.

Grades, too, exist mainly for this comparison, since they provide only a blanket judgment based on some idea of a norm. Some tests, like those administered by the National Assessment of Educational Progress for each subject every four years, compare not individuals but whole state or district school systems. Such testing purports to aid curriculum development, but since comparison with other school districts is misleading and irrelevant, it really serves only political purposes and public relations.

If the teacher is assessed by the very same test scores that assess the student, this puts the teacher in an impossible conflict of interest. No one wants to turn in a bad report on himself; if job or salary depends directly on these test scores, teachers may teach to the test and precious little else, or simply cheat, or try to drive out of their class those students who score low, or compete to teach in schools with high test scores. This sort of evaluation explains some teacher hostility to disadvantaged children, some of the proliferation of separate classes for the so-called handicapped, undue pressure on counselors to classify some children as learning disabled, the commitment to tracking by ability, and large numbers of "force-outs" from school. Far from guaranteeing students good teaching, tying teachers' jobs to their students' test scores creates a me-or-them atmosphere hardly conducive to learning.

Standardized test scores do reassure (or unsettle) the administration and the community about the efficacy of various programs in the curriculum, and this is really what they are for. But to coach and guide individuals, teachers must have far more specific and extensive information about them than standardized tests can provide. These tests merely show where a student ranks against past and present peers on a few skills, not what he needs to do next or where he's coming from or the pattern of his whole verbal life. They are for people outside the classroom, not for those inside, who will have to find out what they need to know in daily ways as they go about their real business.

How is it possible to do justice to all five of the functions outlined above, indeed, without letting evaluation take over the classroom? And how may different parties be furnished the right sort of evaluation for their purpose without interfering with the sort the others need? The best answer may be to follow strictly two cardinal principles.

The first principle is: *Each party should do its own evaluating.* No one should be asked to evaluate himself *for another person.* Some teachers feel, for example, that letting students grade themselves is fair and "liberal," but actually it shifts unfairly the teacher's burden to the student and merely bypasses an important issue of internal versus external assessment. These teachers exclaim that students usually rate themselves too low rather than take advantage of the self-grading, but that's not a good sign, and the student should no more be put in the position of evaluating himself for another's purpose than the teacher should. If good reason exists for others to have an evaluation of students, then others should do it, availing themselves of the students' self-evaluation as part of their own. A dual inside-outside view makes for excellent assessment. But a student should evaluate his work only for his own reasons and by his own means.

Likewise, the administrator must size up a teacher's ability and effectiveness by more means than such evidence as the teacher collects and passes up to him. To prevent self-incrimination teachers can make this evidence self-serving when job security is at stake. Observations and talks with the teacher may be considered

along with the pattern of the teacher's activities and attitudes, with broad, consensual assessments of the teacher by parents and students, with student performance as measured by outsiders, and with student progress and performance as measured by the teacher.

Nor should the school or the system be judged by its officially promulgated results, which could cover up, intentionally or not, a low quality of education. Parents judge schools, in fact, not just by grades and scores but by what learning they can see for themselves when they observe and talk with their children. This is right and healthy.

The second cardinal principle is: *Evaluation should not dictate, distort, or displace what it measures.* It is difficult but essential to follow this rule, for to the extent that the institution breaks it, it defeats itself. Learning is the mission. The only goal of evaluation is to further learning. If evaluation ends by determining what is taught and how it is taught, by grossly or subtly turning learning from one thing into another not originally intended, it is bad evaluation. If it appropriates to itself the time and energy that could be used for more learning, it is bad evaluation. Most traditional assessments break this rule by shrinking the curriculum to fit their own instruments. Teaching to the test causes it to act backward and determine what it is only supposed to measure. The evaluation tail wags the curriculum dog.

Because standardized tests are less frequent, they hurt perhaps less than the daily and weekly tasks that are assigned only or mostly to get a grade off of students or a glimpse of what's going on in their heads—the quizzes, oral questioning, “reports,” and so on. In this way, school writing has been too much just a testing instrument of the reading. And the “marking” of papers in the name of evaluation has made generations of students hate to write even so much as a personal letter later in life and probably accounts, more than any factors of intrinsic difficulty, for the poor writing ability of most high school graduates. Likewise, constant testing for reading comprehension by oral or written questions makes students feel punished for reading. So long as educators give reading such negative associations, it is pointless to rail about the abominations of television and to blame other extracurricular factors. Until schools divest reading and writing of the stunningly negative effects caused by breaking this second cardinal rule of evaluation, no one will ever know how well they can compete with other media. Incessant testing can virtually kill off the very two R's everyone is most worried about. Then as scores decline, schools frantically increase testing! The more score-keeping, the lower the score.

So we seem to face this dilemma: a lot of evaluation is needed, because a number of different parties and purposes must be served, and yet a lot of evaluation destroys the very learning it's supposed to facilitate. A narrowly programmed curriculum that teaches small things in small steps seems to solve the problem because of the claim that all items are taught and tested at virtually the same time, but the kinds of items that can be so taught and tested do not rise to a high enough level of mental organization to constitute significant education.

EVALUATING WITHOUT ACTIVITIES THAT ONLY TEST

A solution does exist to this dilemma. Evaluation can be done by means of valid learning activities themselves without making students do additional activities

only for the purpose of evaluation. The most efficient curriculum allows students to spend all their time learning without winding up in the position of accounting for something that is of little account. The dilemma is unreal. An environment that fosters authentic communication makes learning and evaluating compatible. The same passivity, paucity, and poverty of classroom dynamics that can make learning to read and write seem harder than they really are make evaluation seem like an inevitable parasite. The brute fact is that *ordinarily students don't produce enough to provide the evaluator something to see*. But if students are constantly producing and receiving discourse in great volume and variety, and if the teacher is freed from emceeing to circulate and observe, then good evaluation becomes possible without resorting to special activities that detract from learning and make students hate reading and writing.

To understand this point well, consider the difference between assessing receptive as opposed to productive activities. If a student says or writes or performs something, an observer can see or hear it and make a judgment about it. There is overt behavior or a tangible product. No need to make the student do something further to yield wherewithal for evaluating. When a student listens or reads or witnesses, however, there is ordinarily nothing to show for it. In order to turn the student's head inside out to look at his comprehension, the evaluator has to make him do an additional, unnecessary activity that produces something—traditionally, answering oral or written questions. The more the curriculum is oriented toward the receptive language arts, the more serious looms this problem of evaluation.

Now, listening, reading, and witnessing may be followed up by productive activities that while secondarily permitting the evaluator to see and hear a student's comprehension are, foremost, valid learning activities that students might do anyway for their own sake. Performing, discussing, and extending texts through writing externalize reading comprehension. A teacher or other evaluator witnessing performances or sitting in on rehearsals and other small-group discussions of common reading may not only note well the points of incomprehension but have a chance to hear incomprehension itself discussed in some detail. *INFORMAL CLASSROOM DRAMA, PERFORMING TEXTS* and *READING*, contain numerous productive activities that follow up reading and are valuable for their own sake. Translating texts into other media, such as illustrations or film, demonstrates comprehension also.

Among other virtues, oral and written directions are by nature meant to be carried out and hence naturally lend themselves to translating comprehension into visible action. Enacting words, in fact, is the chief way that truly scientific researchers—psycholinguists—employ to ascertain comprehension. It's of no small interest to us here that they do not measure comprehension the way schools do, by pencil-and-paper tests that translate words into other words; they go from verbal to nonverbal and thereby rule out the ambiguities involved in matching language to thought. They have subjects point to pictures or move game tokens according to verbal directions, and they watch what they do.²

² For example, consider a game called "Talk and Take," which Henry F. Olds, Jr. developed for a Harvard Ph.D. dissertation in psycholinguistics. Each card that players draw directs the player to move a board piece, and each direction represents a type of sentence of a certain difficulty: "Move a circle to any orange space, but do not capture a piece unless it is a square." A player who moves correctly according to this direction has to understand both the logic and the language in it.

Simply including directions as a category of discourse in the curriculum—how to do and make things—enlarges greatly the means of evaluation by increasing occasions for translating words into deeds. Using activity cards and game directions helps considerably also, because every time a student attempts to carry out their directions, he provides an observer an opportunity to assess his comprehension. In sum, evaluate comprehension mainly by seeing how students translate what they understand into either action, other media, or other words.

Implementing individualization, interaction, and integration in the classroom change utterly the picture of evaluation. Not only do they free you to observe constantly but they ensure the volume and variety that make daily observation the ideal means of evaluating. Even productive activities can be hard to assess if quantity is too limited. You may be uncertain how to judge learning from what a student says or writes or performs on only a few occasions but not from numerous samples. Similarly, if discourse is restricted to only a few types, you have no way of knowing what a student might do with other types and have insufficient data on which to base general evaluations about language strengths and weaknesses. Interweaving all of the language arts naturally alternates receptive and productive activities and allows one valid learning task to display what was learned in another. Consider, for example, a working party reading, discussing, acting out, and writing fables.

Finally, the pattern of decisions a student makes shows a lot about him. True individualization lets a student sift himself into those methods, media, and modalities he needs or prefers. You may decide, for your part, to intervene in this pattern, and that's part of counseling, but the point here is that by picking up on students' spontaneous patterns, you can assess tendencies you would not be able to see if they were all following a single, prescribed course. In a standardized curriculum evaluated by standardized tests, students all look alike except for some spread of scores. Individualization brings out their real differences, their full profiles. Much so-called diagnostic testing will tell you far less than what you can readily observe as individuals initiate and carry out their own programs of activity. Teachers who have worked with the curriculum described in this book say that they know their students as they never knew them under a traditional curriculum. This knowledge forms the basis of the most realistic and useful evaluation possible in the classroom, alongside of which standardized tests and quizzing seem slipshod and superficial.

EVALUATION FOR THOSE INSIDE THE CLASSROOM

Let's go back now to the different functions evaluation must serve for different parties.

■ SELF-EVALUATION

How does the student evaluate himself? The very essence of the action-feedback model of learning is self-evaluation. A person talks or writes or performs for a reason and for a known audience that responds to his production. Partner work, small-group discussion and improvisation, the writing workshop, rehearsal and performance, coaching from the teacher—all these reflect back to the learner the effects

of his language actions. If that action is receptive, it is linked to further action that is productive and hence can be evaluated by feedback. There is no other way, in fact, that people can ever know how their understanding of something compares with that of others than to take further action with it and see the results.

The curriculum presented in this book is so thoroughly committed to learning by doing, trial and error, interactive processes, and a responsive environment that student self-evaluation is a foregone conclusion and takes care of itself without need of any more setting up than the activities and materials already built in. We are saying, in fact, that only by continual self-evaluation can practice make perfect, and that language arts methods consist mostly of human feedback activities. The effects of action should be reflected back by as many different people as possible, by peers, teachers, aides, and whenever possible by outsiders and students of other ages. The practice of having students grade each other's work, by the way, will confuse and undermine this authentic feedback, because grades are an administrative matter and aim essentially at parties outside the classroom.

JOURNALS

From time to time students may find it valuable to reflect on all of the responses they have received, consider how they themselves feel about what they have done, and otherwise take stock of their own progress. A journal entry can be the focus of this. For beginners, suggest such prompts as:

I seem to be making progress in. ...

One thing I need to work on is. ...

One new interest I've discovered over the past few days (or weeks) is. ...

Veteran journal-keepers will find their own ways of expressing self-assessment. By looking at or talking over these entries you can get a picture of what is important to the student—information you can use in conferencing with him and setting up individual goals. See "Conferences" on page 250. See also page 158 on reading journals, which a student can draw on in pulling together his thoughts about his work. He can also look back over his portfolio of writing and over other productions such as tapes.

■ TEACHER EVALUATION OF STUDENT WORK

As the teacher, you have to assess student work not only for yourself, in order to coach and counsel, but to some extent also for students, as part of their feedback, and for parents, and for administrators. That is, what you perceive about student's work will naturally be of great value to all the other parties, because of your special, close-observer position, even though they should also assess independently of what you perceive. But you do not need to do separate evaluations for each outside party. All you have to do is transmit the same perceptions to each in different forms.

DAILY OBSERVATION

Follow the principle that evaluation is an organic part of your everyday role, not a separate function done on special occasions. Detailed, composite pictures build up

before your eyes of what each student can and cannot do, needs and doesn't need. The beauty of what you see when free to circulate and observe in your own classroom is that it gives you a slice-of-life view of the truth, because students are not thinking about being tested.

You stand near a group discussing a story they've read together and hear a student defending an interpretation that shows the same literal-mindedness you have noticed in the way he responds to others' figures of speech in conversation. You sit in on a group helping each other to revise some essays they've written individually and note what they are able to help each other with and what they are not, who shows confidence in his writing, who has trouble taking constructive criticism, and what aspects of essaying this particular writing activity is helping different students in the group to understand and create. You coach a student as he reads to you alone a selection he wants to work up to perform for others; while using you for rehearsal he's letting you assess his word recognition and comprehension. You join a group in playing an educational card game and can easily tell from the way each member plays how much he knows about the content, how well he can classify items, or how strong is his memory or understanding of directions or social cooperation. Watching a group perform a rehearsed reading of a poem, you note when the interpretation shows insight or incomprehension. You stop for a moment to watch a trio improvising and see how well they listen to and pick up on each other's words and body English, how inventively they exploit the situation, the range of language and role they take on that is not ordinarily their own. As you pass by the bulletin board, you note some new fables for old morals that a group has written, illustrated, and posted. And so on.

There is hardly anything you do to facilitate the learning itself that won't help you evaluate, for in order to coach, counsel, and consult, you must observe constantly anyway. The same information you act on daily you can selectively communicate to student, parent, or administrator when you need to.

Active, involved students produce so much to judge that it's not hard to remember your judgments, and less bookkeeping is needed. Immersed daily in this richness, you have stronger, deeper judgments that you won't easily forget. You probably should carry around a little notebook, however, in which you can jot down specific observations. Gradually you'll find out how many such notes you need actually to write down. If you have aides, involve them in evaluation. Ask them what they notice about different students and use their commentary to corroborate or complement your own observations.

Oral work particularly requires this ambulatory observation. Although many improvisations, discussions, rehearsed readings may get taped so that you can see and hear them out of class, many of them pass forever, and since you can catch only a certain fraction of what's going on at any one time, you need to overhear or sit in a lot. A major reason oral work usually gets so little emphasis in the curriculum is that it leaves no record for evaluation. Encourage students to tape often so that they can evaluate themselves and so that you may listen later if you were not present. It's critical not to slight, or let students slight, the many valuable speech activities simply because they do not leave marks on paper. Let all parties know that all activities are assessed all the time, but don't ever give the impression that the assessment is intended for anything but help and encouragement.

For many years, researchers working with group process inside and outside education have been developing various ways of doing "interaction analysis" of groups according to their emphasis—on the content of the task, the dynamics

among members, the emergence of leaders, the roles that various individuals take, or the differences that changes in size or purpose or organization make. But this is an excellent occasion for teachers to act as their own researchers, because you understand your students, and as teachers you have special things you want to know about group process.

We suggest you practice analyzing group process with a small group of other teachers. Listen together to an audiotape or watch together a videotape of some student exchanges, discuss afterward what you perceived, and develop criteria for assessing the processes of improvising, small-group discussion, writing workshop—what students are doing for each and what each is getting out of it. Work out for yourself and with other teachers some ways of analyzing what happens in groups so that you can assess the worth of the exchanges. In doing so, you can evaluate both individuals and the group process. If each teacher supplies some material from his class, and if you critique these together periodically, you will generate for yourselves about the best kind of staff development possible. Pool insights, troubleshoot together, and share the burden of formulating what to look for and how to evaluate these difficult but vital processes.

The chapters in Part Two, “Basic Processes,” contain or imply things to look for. For some criteria of dramatic interaction, for example, see “The Value of Informal Classroom Drama” on pages 91–94. For help with evaluation of reading, see pages 152–155; of spelling, page 227; of talk, page 82; of performing, page 178; of the writing workshop, page 206. The specialized chapters in Part Three provide many indications of what to look for in the writing and reading of various kinds of discourse. For help with many specific aspects of development in language and thought see *Detecting Growth in Language*.

STUDENT FOLDERS AND PORTFOLIOS

You can best judge a student’s work by generalizing from as many instances of it as you can have access to. Ask each student to keep a student folder into which all writing eventually goes after it has been posted, printed, performed, or whatever. Besides compositions (both early drafts and final versions), this folder could contain drawings, some sorts of journals, and any other productions or records that establish what a student has been doing. Actually, a box will replace a folder very soon if students are very active at all.

Review a student folder or box periodically, before a conference with student or parent or when you have to make reports. Some of the compositions you will know already from having seen them performed, from reading them posted, from hearing them discussed in a writing workshop, or from simply having read them alone for a conference. Other of the compositions you will encounter for the first time during your review. Students need to write more than you can process, and papers should not be simply gathered and “marked” or “corrected.” They should be used first, as intended, then accumulated in the folder, sometimes after copying.

As research has demonstrated, most commentary written on papers is wasted. It’s better to confer periodically with individuals about their writing, at which time you can talk about both particular papers and general tendencies. We recommend a mixed approach. Give some of your feedback during writing workshops, some during conferences, and some via written comments on papers. Don’t insist that you should personally respond to all writing. When you do respond, take the role of a real reader who is also a helpful coach.

Ideally, written work is passed on from one year to another, or at least some selection from the student folder, which becomes a portfolio of items the student and perhaps also the teacher consider representative of the best the student can produce. The process of selection of a student's best efforts can in itself be a very valuable experience. Who selects? The student can bring his folder to his writing workshop, or to the teacher in a conference, and discuss criteria for selection—whether this or that piece is better and for what reasons, etc. Teachers who have a portfolio of work from a student from the previous year can counsel on a more informed basis. Also, students can look back over their work and sometimes use an old composition as a starter for a new one. Looking backward also helps students feel their progress. Passing on portfolios can replace so-called diagnostic testing.

Schools and teachers may do many different things with portfolios, depending on purpose and the coordination of them with other activities for learning and evaluating. Portfolios may, for example, be very selective and contain only one kind of work or only certain samples of the work. Other writing and material might go into another folder. You and your students can work out understandings about different sorts of folders according to who sees the material and for what purpose. Some journals and certain other writing, for example, might be accessible only to the author and the teacher, whereas if a school or district or state wants to sample student writing in various genres, a student's general portfolio might be available to copy compositions from if the author is consulted. A sound principle might be to save all or most material in the student folder or other container until the end of a year, making selections from it at any time for any purpose, including a selection to comprise the portfolio to be passed on to the next year.

The process of keeping student folders and selecting from them for assembling portfolios is a valuable educational activity, whether or not these portfolios are ever used for evaluation by those outside the classroom. However, portfolio assessment has now become an alternative way to conduct large-scale assessments at the school or district level, and state boards of education, state university systems, and the Educational Testing Service are discussing ways to use portfolios and to implement statewide portfolio assessments of not only writing but reading and math as well.

Not surprisingly, because the idea of portfolio assessment is so popular, the testing divisions of commercial book publishers are responding to this innovation by developing assessment tools they market as necessary parts of a portfolio program, and many of these are not the authentic assessment and teaching tool that a portfolio can be but rather a new way to sell simplistic reading, writing, and grammar tests. Teachers must ever be alert to the ways that good ideas get turned into commercial marketeering slogans and into commodities. The only authentic "portfolio product" is the portfolio itself. To look at either a student folder or a portfolio together, all a student and a teacher need is their combined experience in reading and writing themselves. They don't need commercial checksheets or lists of criteria.

CHARTING EXPERIENCE

On page 25 we described the charting and counseling system necessary for individualizing. The student needs to keep some kind of record of what he's doing, and the teacher needs to translate this into coverage of general language arts goals.

STUDENT TRACKING CHARTS. The form of these has to balance simplicity against utility. Don't overburden students with bookkeeping. All one can expect from primary students is probably a checking or coloring or circling or dating of kinds of materials worked with. Whenever possible, it is very valuable to know the titles of activity cards, reading selections, games, recordings, and so on, but less mature students may do well just to check or date an activity category, such as "Making Up Stories" or "Reading Books." During conferences you can elicit more detail from the student, such as specific titles.

THE TEACHER'S EXPERIENCE CHART. You'll probably want to keep an individual experience chart for each student. Some teachers find that all they need do is keep a photocopy of the student's record in their own file with a note as to the general overall quality of each piece of work for the end-of-term assigning of grades.³ Others prefer a record that shows how often a student has worked toward each of the language arts goals in each of the kinds of discourse (crossing Part Two of this book with Part Three). Basically this consists of some layout of the ten kinds of discourse (stated as objectives on page 18 and treated in Part Three), permitting you to log under each kind the amount of experience a student has so far accumulated. Since these kinds of discourse are to be practiced orally and in writing, as sender and receiver, you could log not only the experience accumulated toward each goal but also indicate by which language art—listening, speaking, reading, writing, or performing—the experience was gained. An experience chart helps you in counseling. You can look at a student's chart before advising him about which areas of discourse and kind of activity to stress next. Teachers' records of cumulative experience can be passed on to other teachers at the end of the year or term in a portfolio or in a computer data base when teachers can agree on a common format.

Such a chart registers "how much," not "how well." That is, it doesn't attempt to measure quality of achievement. But because experience consists of direct practice of the target language activities, the charting of work with recommended materials and activities should in large measure indicate higher achievement in each goal area. Comparison with other measures such as direct observation may show that experience is high and achievement low in some areas. This may yield valuable knowledge about a student's learning efficiency. Other measures may indicate that a student is already so proficient in a certain goal area that he does not need any more experience in it, even though your chart shows he hasn't yet spent much time in that area.

CONVERTING FROM STUDENT CHART TO TEACHER CHART. Translating an individual's particular selection of materials and activities into general learning terms is hard, but because the very feasibility of individualizing depends on it, the difficulty must be faced. Many activities and materials may teach toward many discourse and literacy goals at once. You're not trying to determine if each student did certain required specific activities, because what is required are not *certain*

³ Nancie Atwell carries around a status-of-the-class chart attached to a clipboard. See Chapter 5 of *In the Middle: Writing, Reading, and Learning With Adolescents* (Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 1987).

activities but *some* toward each general objective—as many as each student can do, given where he started from. If the curriculum array comprises the rich variety that we advocate and that effective teaching requires, and if students themselves are constantly making and bringing in other materials, any correlated listing of goals to materials and activities would not only constitute a staggering compilation job but would be mind-boggling and time-consuming for you to consult if you had to keep looking up items in order to connect them to goals.

Such a job fits a computer perfectly, of course, if furnished with some kind of data-base software. Computers can, in fact, do both the students' and the teachers' record-keeping, including converting an individual's work into terms of language arts goals. If computerization could be limited just to logging student activities and correlating them to goals, without altering the activities or interfering with the student-teacher relation, it could be a strong help in solving a difficult problem.

Lacking such mechanical aid, the most practical way to convert a record of individual experience into goal coverage seems to be an informal means worked out differently by different teachers but relying a lot on conferences, where various records can be pulled together and you can find out from the student what each activity accomplished.

CONFERENCES

Meet the student with his portfolios, journals, experience record, and your own chart of his cumulative experience. Other useful materials are notes you may have made observing the student at work, doing miscue analysis of his oral reading to you, and examining his products. Incorporate into your perceptions those of aides who may have worked with him. Go over all this with him and note patterns, such as emphasis on one language art or type of activity, sameness or variety in both the materials and the people he chooses to work with, and any other traits or trends that will be helpful.

Try to think of this session as an opportunity to find out further how the student feels about his work and to help him set goals, rather than an evaluation or grading meeting. The more you can get him to level with you as he elaborates, the more you can help, and the more he will learn, but he must feel that frankness won't be used against him. This is how grades make counseling difficult. To encourage him to break ground in new activities, assure him you'll protect his grade by allowing for temporarily reduced success as he grapples with new challenges. Be sure to give reasons for recommending new directions, shifts of emphasis, and particular activities and materials. This is part of the student's education, and the more he understands the kinds of discourse that exist to become acquainted with and the ways you are trying to open for him toward all language use, the more he can successfully take over this decision-making.

Say what you see in his writing and other products. Try to describe rather than rate. Mention which *kinds* of spelling and punctuation errors he makes, what you notice when he reads aloud to you, the roles he takes in groups, the sort of reading and writing he gravitates toward, and so on. Generally focus on traits and trends. Although these often imply a value judgment, they emphasize fact and act as a useful reflection of the student to stimulate and guide growth. This makes you an ally instead of a judge.

Because of parental and societal pressures, students' feelings of self-worth and competence are in large part determined by their perceptions of their academic

progress. Many of them need to see evidence of this progress often (though this not need be in the form of a “grade”). One goal of a conference should be to enhance the student’s feeling of mastery and progress. Try to do this in such a way that you wean him away from dependence on your judgment, however. You might start a conference with a question like “How do you feel your work is going?” or “What were you trying to do in this paper?” Concentrate on keeping the ownership of the work and the goal-setting with the student and not with you.

EVALUATION FOR THOSE OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

The best way for outsiders to evaluate results is to see and hear what students have done. Again, the typical slice-of-life most convinces, because it doesn’t depend on rare, special occasions, as do standardized tests.

Parents have a right to know how their children are progressing. The same variety and volume that provide you with plenty to judge also display for parents the evidence of learning. They should see many of the papers from the folders, hear audiotapes, and whenever possible see routine performances, live or video-taped. Compositions and transcriptions will show handwriting, spelling, and punctuation and the creative abilities to think and imagine. An audiotape can catch an improvisation, discussion, or rehearsed reading. If a curriculum enables students to reproduce for themselves the kinds of materials they find in the classroom—books, recordings, learning games, photos, films, and so on—then you’ll have no problem rounding up many things for outsiders to examine.

The problem is how to bring parents and products together. Open houses and parent conferences are fine to the extent that you can succeed in getting parents to come to the school. Alternating the two is a good idea. Many parents will not come to an open house but will come when appointments are made systematically. For conferences, arrange time so that they may look over their child’s portfolio of work, sample tapes they may have made, and examine other of his creations. Then you can talk together.

You can describe traits of their child’s work as it appears to you. Global value judgments mean less than specific comments about which kinds of talking, reading, writing, and performing their youngster tends to choose on his own, or has most and least experience in, which skills come easiest or need more work, habits and patterns, areas of recent progress. If you think you see why a learner is having trouble in spelling or in comprehending literature, explain this and say what you’ll be recommending that he emphasize next. If you think, for example, both the spelling and the literary comprehension will progress better from reading while listening with recordings, then you could explain the connection to parents who might not understand how this practice can teach these two skills.

■ PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Try to involve parents as much as possible in helping as aides. The more they work with your students, the more they’ll understand how the curriculum should function and will be able to assess results the same way you can, by observing while facilitating. These aides can help other parents to understand how much their children are learning.

Opening the classroom to the community not only shows confidence in yourself; it actually can head off unduly negative criticism of you. It often happens, for example, that parents concerned about “basic skills” will not understand why literacy is not isolated into drills and will fail to see how the skills are being taught by ways other than those they are expecting.⁴ Such parents may believe that their child is just having fun and not learning anything. The more contact you have, one way or another, with parents, the more chance you have of correcting this misunderstanding by explaining to them where in their child’s work these skills are being practiced and improved.

■ GRADES

Grades may be made up independently of any particular curriculum and may be done in myriad ways. We recommend that teachers not give a grade to individual activities but only to the totality of a student’s work if they need to give grades at all. Make comments on work mostly descriptive and functional; make value judgments only to the extent that it serves a really good psychological purpose. The assessment of writing would be added in to evaluations you make of oral work and reading. Then, for a grade, make a blanket judgment on the whole of a student’s work for the marking period. This is easy to do when you look it all over at once and confer with the student about it. Bookkeeping for grades alone is minimal this way.

Students who are used to receiving a grade on every piece of work may experience some frustration for a while, but they will come to appreciate the intrinsic rewards of authentic productivity. Once a school has operated this way beyond the memory of its current student body, most students won’t even require adjustment. Practical feedback implies value judgments anyway, but if value judgment is minimized in favor of relating a learner’s intents to his effects, the learner stays focused on the inherent learning issues instead of on grades. You can distill value judgments to satisfy parents and the institution from the evaluation you do anyway for purposes of coaching and counseling. Reporting that permits descriptive statements about a student’s strengths, weaknesses, needs, natural tendencies, and so on (*qualitative* evaluation) will do more good than a letter or number on a report card, since it informs parents better and better facilitates administrative decisions within and between schools, including decisions about college admission.

Teachers should work toward the elimination of grades. Both students and parents must and do evaluate for themselves anyway. Grades maintain a competitive atmosphere that militates against learning. Students who receive low grades develop a low self-concept that often makes them perform worse than they would if no one had labeled them. Students who get high grades often think they know more than they do, especially if the grades are based on just a couple of things like reading-comprehension scores and grammar tests.

⁴ A useful pamphlet to help parents understand the approach to writing recommended in this book is *How to Help Your Child Become a Better Writer*, available from the National Council of Teachers of English, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801.

So long as grades must be turned in on students, collaboration tends to be viewed as cheating and is therefore discouraged, because individual marks become harder to make up. Thus a powerful learning force is stymied. Further, growing up in an atmosphere that favors competition over collaboration produces adults unable to cope with either personal or public problems of today, which require collaboration. Surely the argument that school competition prepares for life must stick in the throat today, when all evidence indicates that far from helping people in life, competition is itself one of the major causes of both personal and interpersonal difficulties, not to mention international.

Grades distract students from the actual goals of effective communication. While competing and comparing themselves, they are also aiming to please adults, which should not be a school goal. Youngsters allowed to keep a pure learning focus will naturally please adults by becoming powerful learners. Methods and materials that cannot engage students without grades, extraneous rewards, coercion, or other irrelevant and artificial motivation do not belong in schools. It's not at all idealistic to assume that communication has its own rewards. If this has not appeared so in schooling, that's because purposeless exercises have too often reigned in place of real discourse.

Social reinforcement naturally plays a part in communicating and hence will always play a part in learning the language arts. Precisely because it is built into authentic communication, however, it does not need to be reintroduced by a reward-punishment system. Sender-receiver relations are broad and various and must never be simply boiled down to commands from a superior. Students should not practice discourse because big people make them, but that's the message implied by grades. A major goal of education is, precisely, self-evaluation. Grades constantly orient a learner toward what an outside observer thinks of his performance and encourage him not to judge for himself the effects of what he's doing. One judges communication, it's true, by its effects on others, but the "other" must be an authentic receiver, not a wielder of power over the sender.

Grades determine advancement to the next station, including eventually higher education, jobs, and careers. To the younger child, grades indicate acceptance or rejection of him as a person. To the older student they represent control of his destiny. Both feelings about grades play havoc with the learning process. The time must come when society removes entirely from schools this misplaced function of certifying. It is not the business of schools to certify people for jobs or for college. Again, each party should do his own evaluating. The mission of schools is learning, and that mission is impaired so long as schools continue to act as screening agencies for other businesses and other organizations, most in the private sector.

■ STANDARDIZED TESTS

One conventional way for those outside the classroom to evaluate what happens inside is to institute periodic testing with instruments sanitized supposedly against any bias of the teacher or the school. For this purpose many commercial tests are put out both independently and as part of curriculum packages. They are not of course sanitized, because teachers whose promotion is linked to their students' test scores may teach so closely to the test as to bias results heavily toward favorable scores. The only advantage of such evaluation is that student performances

may be compared with those of other times and places, which is not an advantage to those in the classroom and of dubious value to those outside.

For most well-known standardized tests, this comparison is either norm-referenced or criterion-referenced.

NORM-REFERENCING

In a norm-referenced test the score of anyone taking the test now is compared to the scores of some original "normal" student population. So a student obtaining today a reading score indicating "third grade, fourth month" is simply being scaled by the norms of that first population. Second, a student today may be compared with his contemporaries throughout a school district or, in most cases, the nation. The great weakness of norm-referencing, of course, lies buried back in the original "normal" population. How was its normality determined? Is it normal for today also or only for when the test was designed? But most of all, do norms established by performance of *any* population in public schools as we have known them do anything but set low standards? In an era of school reform this question becomes especially relevant. Norm-referencing reposes on what some students *did* do, under all the usual handicaps of conventional language teaching, not on what students *could* do under improved learning conditions. Teachers, parents, and administrators happy with "third grade, fourth month" may be accepting a meaningless standard, possibly a very low standard that holds back many youngsters.

Furthermore, comparison itself should be challenged. It serves, of course, the immediate practical purpose of selecting out students for this group or that class or certifying some for admission and employment. In other words, the more schools operate by limiting membership or admission, by segregating and screening for their own or other's institutional purposes, the more comparative evaluation seems to make sense. Parents need comparison only to the extent they're using their child to keep up with the Joneses. The student doesn't need comparison to "know where he stands" because good learning processes always show him by feedback how well he's performing, so that his only reason for comparing his performance with others' would be to know where he stands in the eyes of adults manipulating his destiny. For your own coaching and counseling purposes, ranking students has no value.

CRITERION-REFERENCING

To ensure meeting "minimal standards," schools are choosing more and more another type of test called *criterion*-referenced, which measures students absolutely, against a fixed standard, rather than relatively, against each other. The idea of it is by no means new. A Civil Service test to screen applicants for a certain job simply tests for those skills necessary to do the job, with little regard for how many applicants are likely to fall above or below the passing point, so long as enough pass to fill the job vacancies.

If you give a test to your students and grade afterward "on the curve," that is, by setting the passing point only after seeing how students do, you're setting up a kind of norm-referencing, because although you have no prior set of scores to go by, still you're scoring each individual according to norms that the class as a body

provides. If, on the other hand, you decided in advance how many errors constituted a passing grade, how many an A, and so on, without knowing how well students would do, then you would be criterion-referencing the test, because you're setting standards according to a desired performance, not according to comparison of student scores.

Is there, then, any more use for criterion-referenced testing than for norm-referenced? Is its specific performance a virtue? Consider the main purpose of criterion-referencing. It isn't to distribute students against each other on a curve. It's to find out which students or how many students can do certain tasks. The tasks tested tend to set a floor, because they are selected as indicators that student and teachers are achieving *at least* such and such. Any testing tasks have to gear themselves somehow to realistic expectations of what students may achieve. If this gearing is not built in by some kind of averaging of what students do in fact achieve—that is, by norming—then it has to be accommodated another way, because schools find it politically disastrous to administer tests which too many students fail.

Criterion-referenced tests ensure that too many do not fail by including mostly safe items. They focus on “minimal standards.” They're a pass/fail kind of test and assume that the large majority of students will pass. But how can they assume this without a prior score group? Obviously there *is* a kind of score group—in the minds of the test-makers—only it is not a particular population actually run through a particular test but rather a general notion of what most students have done, and can do, based on common school experience. Most children learn to master the long-vowel spellings—at least long enough to pass such a test, even if they never really read.

The chief value of criterion-referenced tests is to cover schools against charges of negligence or malpractice. It came to the fore in an age of legalistic accountability. Since each teacher must cover himself for each individual, students are tested each year for virtually the same material and hence taught the material again each year, so that they tend not to rise far but rather to hover over a required floor. In short, criterion-referencing differs not so much from norm-referencing as might appear at first blush, because both set low standards based on lifting large masses a short way. In a democracy, schools must keep a low center of gravity so that students can be passed on up the line. Standardized testing, ironically enough, tries to implement the democratic ideal of equality for all. But it is individualization, not standardization, that realizes this ideal.

For true individualizing, the only relevant measure is the student against himself. If schools take each individual as far as he can go, charting experience year to year, they will accomplish manyfold what they attempt by standardizing. If student achievement is measured by student-to-student comparison and by minimal thresholds, school achievement will remain low, perpetuating low standards and further low achievement.

Direct observation and direct examination of student products are the best ways to measure individual student progress. Standardized tests don't measure nearly a broad enough range of language activities or over a broad enough range of difficulty to be useful in individualized learning, which requires the same breadth of possibility in evaluation that it does in curriculum array. Tests covering all learning by all individuals would be impossible and obviously contradict the whole idea of standardized testing.

Criterion-referenced tests can be used as only one, inadequate sort of evaluation—just to reassure everybody that most students are getting over a threshold. School districts with students who are performing poorly will be under pressure to buy easier tests and to give students textbooks that are simpler to read, so the district can look as if its students are performing “at grade level.” Any major evaluation would have to go far beyond these tests. Standardized testing overfocuses on a few, easily testable skills and ignores what is hardest to teach and learn and ultimately most important. The alleged strength of criterion-referenced tests is the concrete specification of the behavior to be evinced by a student on that special occasion of the testing twice a year. To fit the tight time compass, the test catches only the most specific, not the larger, more complex behaviors that cannot be seen or heard on one occasion but can only be built up into a composite picture by continual observation.

All too often what we have is a closed circle of test to textbook to teaching to curriculum guide and back to test. The designers of standardized tests often assure the validity of their test by asserting in their manuals that they have determined which items to include by consulting experts in the field and curriculum guides in use in schools. If these experts disagree, they use items included on at least three other leading comparable tests. Thus the test is devised. Textbook editors in the publishing houses use the tests as guides for designing workbooks and other materials advertised to ensure mastery of skills needed for the tests. Teachers who don't ask what else they might be doing look at the tests and teach by the book. The state or district language arts curriculum committee may well look at what is being taught to decide what should go into the district curriculum guides. Then the test-makers look at the curriculum guides, and round and round it goes—unless someone jumps outside the closed circle to ask what students *should* be learning.

■ READING COMPREHENSION TESTS

A widespread practice, critiqued on page 142 of *READING*, confounds testing and teaching by having students read short passages and answer comprehension questions immediately afterward. In other words, a whole “instructional” program, misnamed “practice reading,” is made out of the examination situation by which comprehension is measured on standardized tests. This epitomizes teaching to the test, which can be carried no further than this.

Scores often do rise in these programs partly because the activity itself is nothing but constant test-taking. In addition, the increased scores may

- show that a student's reading skills may actually be increasing, since any practice may help, even if inefficient.
- mean that a student is learning to take this sort of test. Some youngsters quit reading the passages and simply go straight to the questions, referring to a passage if they need to. “You get used to the sort of question,” as one explained. Even if the student can't see the questions until after reading the passage, he knows as he reads that he'll be questioned afterward in a particular way. This creates a very different frame of mind from ordinary reading. Also unrealistic is the short length of text and the short time span between reading and testing. For most real reading, one has longer texts to remember for a longer time.

- show merely normal growth in thinking and knowledge acquisition that would have occurred anyway without the exercises. This classic bugaboo of testing looms most at precisely the age when reading comprehension is tested most, which is when youngsters' mental growth is bounding along.
- reflect other learning occurring elsewhere in the curriculum such as the growth of concepts and inference through social and environmental experience.

The only kind of control to evaluate the effect of such treatment would be to put the same youngster through the same period of his life twice—once with and once without the treatment. Though a powerful reason to minimize *any* test scores, this lack of experimental control hurts comprehension testing far more than testing of factual material, because people have to acquire facts, whereas they're born with faculties for comprehending that will grow anyway. Such constant comprehension quizzing can never show if youngsters will read if they don't have to, or will want to read. More likely, as many teachers learn the hard way, it will misrepresent reading and kill interest in it.

Finally, the right-or-wrong multiple choice answers unintentionally teach the pupil that only a certain predictable set of implications and conclusions can be drawn from a reading text. (Notoriously, on standardized comprehension tests, brighter students often make mistakes because they see inferences other than the conventional ones the test-maker had in mind.) This falsifies profoundly the nature of reading by making interpretation of texts appear absolute, in contradiction to some main thinking in both literary theory and research in reader response. Readers frequently come away from a text with different understandings and, at the least, different emphases, because they bring to it different knowledge and attitudes.

It may be argued that the comprehension questions in practice readings test only obvious, consensual points. But that itself establishes a shallow value system, as if what's worthiest about reading is the obvious and impersonal, not what is personally significant. But this value system is only part of a terrible mind-set such tests induce. Readers are probationers waiting to be judged by external authorities. You read to provide scores. You read what people put in front of you for *their* purposes. Texts are arbitrary. Even if you answer the questions correctly, the snippets of text from hither and yon are meaningless because they have no relation to the rest of your life. The tragedy of comprehension tests is not that so many students fail them but that so many who pass them recoil from reading for life. The scores do not show this.

It would be hard to find a student who doesn't resent the inevitable quizzing, by the teacher or the printed questions, on what he has just read even when he *has* chosen the text. He has enjoyed the story and now he must face the music, endure the commercial, pay the piper. Has anyone attempted to estimate the damaging effect of this on a youngster's will to read? In rat-and-pigeon psychology, this administering of a pain after a certain act would be called "negative reinforcement," when it's intended to discourage the act. How many adults would read if they had to face a battery of questions afterward? Indeed, how many adults don't read because they *did* have to?

Apparently even designers of state assessments recognize the limitations of their programs. After saying, "Test results are not good measures of what is taught in school, strange as it may seem," the assessors of the Michigan accountability

system continue, “Even if the tests were completely valid and reliable, it would not be possible to attribute achievement gains to the school or teacher.”⁵

It would be very good if a parent committee undertook to study the standardized tests used in your school, that is, to look closely at the tests themselves, read what testing experts say about them, and hear what teachers think of their influence on curriculum. Generally, the more people know about these tests, the less they want to rely on them and the better they understand the destructive side effects. You may find that parents can become good allies for changing evaluation. In fact, only the community may succeed in pressuring school systems to seek alternative ways of evaluating for those outside the classroom, who are, after all, the community and the system. Parents and other taxpayers certainly don’t want learning spoiled in their name, once they know this is happening.

■ HOLISTIC EVALUATION OF WRITING SAMPLES

Blanket judgment of realistic writing samples has now become well-established in school systems that want to assess the efficacy of their writing programs. By holistic scoring, raters assess the total effect of a piece of writing. In order to establish reliability, scorers are trained by reading and discussing large numbers of papers similar to the ones they’ll be rating. Because raters so trained are able to come up with high reliability in scoring, holistic evaluation has become increasingly relied on as a way of standardizing the evaluation of student writing. Like grades, it gives only a rating that permits ranking. Inasmuch as the samples are whole discourses, often now differentiated by actual types as described in Part Three, this way of assessing writing comes closer to fitting the approach of this book than other comparative testing, but it stands only about halfway between other standardized testing and the external assessment we’re recommending.

School systems evaluating writing programs this way, like the National Assessment in Educational Progress, don’t report on individuals but on schools, districts, or states, testing only readily selected individuals. Such scoring of writing samples frankly serves only parties outside the classroom. Even if scores were reported for individuals, they would tell students nothing that would help them to improve their writing. It’s critical not to rationalize assessment for those outside the classroom as useful to those inside, for whom ranking can only be a distraction.

Furthermore, the basic problems of the standardized testing *situation* still haunt even this improved form of external evaluation. Writing something in a single sitting and under stringent time constraints, with no personal motive and no authentic communication context, rules out many hard-won principles of learning to write that most schools are still struggling to establish—prewriting, the writing workshop, a “process approach,” and writing for real audiences. Some very important kinds of investigative writing, moreover, which schools need badly, will be ignored even more because the examination circumstances don’t permit the interviewing, site visits, and other researching of original material on which this writing depends. True, some sophisticated evaluators are trying to make

⁵ Ernest R. House, Wendell Rivers, and Daniel L. Stufflebeam, “An Assessment of the Michigan Accountability System,” *Phi Delta Kappan* 55 (June 1974): 668-669.

examination circumstances flexible enough to permit some prewriting and group work; but the more they succeed, the more these examination circumstances will approximate the classroom conditions in which writing samples should be created to begin with. So carry this reform effort to its logical conclusion.

In other words, why not forget the conventional standardized situation, which artificializes the samples and in which students have no reason to do well? Instead, draw writing samples from portfolios, which can supply a variety of kinds of writing at any time. If they can't, a vital assessment has already been made by that fact alone. Formalists may complain that this is too uncontrolled, but the special examination situation controls so much as to falsify results, whereas the whole point of sampling a writing program is to find out what is really going on in it and (rightly or wrongly) to influence it by feeding comparisons back to it. The timed sit-down exam also sets a bad model of how writing occurs and indeed has created thereby much of the difficulty encountered in getting across the new, realistic approach to learning to write.

If, then, schools insist on assessing the writing *program*, they should do so through the slice-of-life way, which will disrupt learning the least and will actually accomplish better the purpose of tapping off a realistic sample of a school or school system's writing flow.

■ ALTERNATIVES TO STANDARDIZED TESTING

Granted that continual observation assesses best, how can outsiders like parents and administrators avail themselves of this means? Don't they have to send standardized tests into the classroom as a kind of reporter on their behalf? A reporter who can detect only a few limited things and who eventually causes those he's observing to do only what he can see is no reporter at all. Parents and administrators can understand this if they match the real learning goals against the tests. Then those in and out of the classroom can consider alternatives together.

The needs of the community and the administration overlap but also differ. The parent is interested first in his or her child; the taxpayer, like the administrator, in the efficiency of the whole curriculum. What's my child getting, and how much does the system deliver for what it costs us? The parent can evaluate the child at home by both observation and examination of products. The administrator need not be interested in individuals as such but in their aggregate welfare—in how many children are faring well, not mainly in which ones (except as subgroups or types). He wants to know how well the teacher and the curriculum are functioning. Nothing can satisfy any of the parties more than a highly productive, thoroughgoing individualized program, because it creates the most information and evidence about each student and hence about the total student body.

SAMPLING STUDENT PRODUCTIONS

Except to the extent that parents and administrators can actually visit the classroom, they are indeed handicapped for live observation. You have to act as intermediary for them, but they can certainly examine the wealth of products, and machine recorders make it possible to let outsiders observe outside, since audiotapes and videotapes can be sampled at the convenience of the outsider. Random samplings can be periodically made of a class by principals, language arts coordi-

nators, department heads, other school officials, and by rotating parent committees. Parents and officials doing this sort of evaluation together might find the collaboration and contact useful to both.

The products examined should not be especially selected by the teacher but should be pulled out by the outside evaluators in the classroom, though the teacher can cooperate by helping them find samples that show this or that sort of activity. Reading student reportage, for example, will allow them to connect composition with assignments that entail gathering raw material by visiting and interviewing. Hearing a taped improvisation while looking at the students' own transcription of it will show perhaps not only how improvisation may teach thinking and theater but also spelling and punctuation. Unlike standardized tests, this kind of evaluation permits relating cause to effect, in many cases at least. The more materials you and your students produce, the less you need worry about how any one of them may strike outside evaluators, and the more confidently can you trust the total impact of it all. If evaluators have an embarrassment of riches to choose from, that's their problem, and the quantity itself will surely count in favor of you and the curriculum. Many parents and administrators may need guidance, however, to know what to look for in such a rich setting.

When students learn by doing and by getting feedback on what they've done, the curriculum and the teacher can be evaluated by examining processes as well as products. *Classroom* assessment should be partly based on how well the individual's *self*-assessment systems are working through small-group processes and your coaching and counseling, samples of which outsiders can witness in person or on the same tapes that you and the students make for your own purposes. Assessing these has to involve subjective judgments, but all evaluation—make no mistake about it, “objective” tests or whatever—always comes back down anyway to someone's subjective judgments, however hidden. The more consensus, however, the more impartiality. A curriculum or a classroom operation can be very effectively evaluated by combining judgments of different human raters.

These can be combined with test scores, but to the extent that you and the curriculum are to be judged by the latter, then make sure parents and administrators understand that (1) they will either gain data about only a fraction of what you are trying to do, or (2) they may force you, in order to cover yourself, to teach to the tests and hence to teach only a fraction of what you should. In return for broader evaluation, you must willingly open your classroom to inspection any time. You can do so with confidence if you set in motion the practices recommended herein.

TEACHER RESEARCH

Teachers are in an excellent position to find out about which kinds of children learn from which kinds of activities. Indeed, many teachers now find it worthwhile to do their own kind of research about this as part of running a successful learning environment. Sometimes such a project may require special support, but often it's generated by the daily business of monitoring how well individuals and groups are working. Suppose you want to know if youngsters of a certain age are capable of a certain activity or whether, if you changed the directions a certain way for an activity that is showing problems, the results would be better. You experiment a bit, watch what happens, and make some notes, perhaps with another teacher. Talk it over with students and ask them to help you work it out. It's

their business too. In other words, only a fine line separates classroom research from what the inhabitants have to do anyway in order to troubleshoot and think more fully about what they're doing.

This research amounts to an excellent way of evaluating curriculum and methods for everyone's purposes, since notes and results can be shared with other school or district staff and become, indeed, an important part of an in-service program.⁶

CASE STUDIES

Other professions such as law, medicine, and business have found that getting down to cases helps practitioners understand better how well an enterprise is functioning and how it might be improved. Some colleges and private schools have done case studies of certain students to learn how they fared as they went through the institution. This can be a most valuable way to evaluate how well a program is working, at least for that type of student. A type might be based on a certain background or personality. How do children of nonreading parents respond to certain literacy activities; from authoritarian cultures, to individualized learning; from privileged homes to collaborative learning? Or simply, what happens to each of these, and others, as they go through a program combining these approaches?

Standardized tests give only quantitative information. You can sometimes parlay this data a bit farther by correlating some with other data and learn that working-class or minority children score lower on some tests, but you still have no *qualitative* information that can prompt improvement. Rating and ranking may tell you something is wrong for some children but not *what* is wrong or what to do about it. Case histories give another sort of slice-of-life that conveys the particularities of why some learning does or doesn't occur, the qualities of experience itself.

They can do this by bringing together much information already accumulated by and about an individual for daily learning purposes. Teachers don't have the time to be writing case studies *in addition* to their other work. But like other classroom research, it can arise out of evaluation that has to take place anyway to make individualization work. You're coaching and counseling and observing a student whose products are known to you and who is himself perhaps keeping reading and writing journals as well as writing about himself part of the time, revealing himself every day in choices he makes about reading and other activities. Together you and he are charting his past and future. No biographer has better data or opportunity.

Experienced teachers walk around with case histories in their heads. It doesn't take much more effort to get some of this down on paper or tape where you and others can consider it. Perhaps some money budgeted for evaluation and for in-service programs could buy released teacher time and secretarial services to compile booklets of case studies (that don't reveal the identities of the students). Reading and discussing these will help teachers a great deal to see how to proceed

⁶ See Dixie Goswami and Peter Stillman, eds., *Reclaiming the Classroom: Teacher Research as an Agency of Change* (Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 1987). See also Amanda Branscombe, Dixie Goswami, and Jerry Schwartz, eds., *Students Teaching, Teachers Learning* (Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 1992).

in the future with other students.⁷

Schools and school systems will probably find case studies more valuable than test scores for monitoring the curriculum. After all, no one needs these scores to know if students are talking, reading, and writing well. That information for the outside can come from the internal evaluation going on all the time among teachers and students, who know anyway how everybody is doing. What external evaluation needs is precisely the qualitative description from the inside that teachers and students can supply together.

■ EVALUATION AS PART OF RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

The resources put into standardized testing, in other words, would pay off better if combined with in-service resources to fund a kind of ongoing language arts research and development for both curriculum and staff at once. The evaluation that people in the classroom do every day could then be crystallized with not very much research effort into a major alternative to standardized testing while serving other purposes as well. This fits with the multiple uses of portfolios and tapes for student productivity and self-assessment, teacher guidance of students, curriculum development, and staff development.

The same audio recordings or videotapes that students make to preserve a performance or to play to younger children or to play back a group talk about a text, a panel discussion, or a writing workshop can be discussed by teachers for staff development and shown to parents and administrators for external evaluation. Similarly, if written work is frequently printed and posted and performed to afford students authentic discourse circumstances, it also becomes handily available for in-service use and examination by outsiders (this in addition to culling material from portfolios). In this way, investment in desktop publishing facilities and other means of dissemination can be justified for in-service and evaluation as well as instruction. Most good things serve several purposes at once. The best evaluation for all parties will come about as part of a total research and development program for curriculum, staff, and students.

SUMMARY

Tolerate standardized tests if required, but don't count on them much for evaluation. Only daily slice-of-life observation carried on without distracting students from honest language tasks will really tell you what you need to know and avoid negative side effects. Students taught by this curriculum should score well on standardized tests and do much more besides. And, similarly, tolerate grades if required but depend on student products and parent conferences to convey progress and problems. Encourage all outsiders to evaluate as you do, by observing processes and examining products. Assess the curriculum mainly by how well it enables students to assess themselves, that is, to get useful feedback about their efforts to comprehend and compose.

⁷ See Glenda L. Bissex and Richard H. Bullock, eds., *Seeing for Ourselves: Case-Study Research By Teachers of Writing* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1987).

PART

KINDS OF DISCOURSE

III

The remaining chapters array the ten kinds of discourse that make up the learning repertory of talking, reading, and writing across the curriculum. On page 18 we cast them in the form of goals for the language arts, encompassing literary, utilitarian, and scientific discourse. You don't have to "teach" these kinds of discourse in the way we describe them here. They will teach themselves if you lay them out as a repertory of activities and materials, as a cornucopia to feast upon.

The first three chapters—*WORD PLAY, LABELS AND CAPTIONS*, and *DIRECTIONS*—treat types that figure prominently in the society but that traditional schooling has slighted or ignored as being too playful, too useful, or too fragmentary. *ACTUAL AND INVENTED DIALOGUE* and *INVENTED STORIES* include all of imaginative literature except some poetry, which falls across virtually the whole spectrum of discourse, as we explained on page 18. The last three chapters—*TRUE STORIES, INFORMATION*, and *IDEAS*—bridge from narrative to essay as knowledge-making proceeds from recollection and investigation into reflection and cogitation. Kinds of discourse correspond to ways of cognizing. A language curriculum is a thinking curriculum.

This tour of the universe of discourse misses both the more theoretical framework and the exemplification by sample texts. It forms part of a work too large for the present volume alone. *Teaching the Universe of Discourse* contains the original theory of much of this repertory. *Active Voice* details the writing program for the teacher by discussing the compositional issues of each type, often illustrated with analysis of student writing.

Active Voices I, II, III, and IV are anthologies of student writing from upper elementary, junior high, senior high, and college respectively. As writers' readers for other students, they consist entirely of samples and the prompts that might elicit them. They are organized by five categories—Notation (Taking Down), Recollection (Looking Back), Investigation (Looking Into), Imagination (Thinking Up), and Cogitation (Thinking Over).—These correspond to most of the repertory delineated here but approach it with a difference that should itself prove useful. The teachers' guides for these collections suggest how to make best use of the repertory for several sorts of writing/reading programs and for individualization. We urge teachers to collect their own samples as well and to replicate with local writing this illustrated repertory. It's essential that students see, from one source or another, samples of the kinds of talking, reading, and writing recommended in these chapters.

Of course published and professional writing exemplifies all the written discourse we array here, as we have indicated by citing titles for most sorts. *Points of View: An Anthology of Short Stories* illustrates with professional writing the spectrum of narrative techniques outlined in *INVENTED STORIES*, which refers to some of its selections. *Points of Departure: An Anthology of Nonfiction* illustrates with published selections the range from personal documents to exposition and argumentation dealt with in the last three chapters here and exemplified also in *Active Voices*. These collections aim at senior high and college students.

The extensive task of describing, explaining, and exemplifying the universe of discourse, especially for learning purposes, clearly has to be parceled out over a number of works though they constitute one enterprise. But only the texts and acts that you and your students find and create can complete it.

CHAPTER

WORD PLAY

ELEVEN

Word play is the category of discourse that includes tongue twisters, puns, word puzzles and games, pictographs and cryptograms, brain teasers, concrete and typographical poetry, lighthearted verse and songs. Poems that are more vehicles of thought or significant feeling than verbal contrivance will be considered in other chapters. The emphasis in word play is more on gaming than on communicating, although meaning is never lost, of course. Sound and rhythm are played up, thus bringing out the kinship with music and dance. Word play is sporting with the medium as medium. This focuses on rhyme, alliteration, assonance, meter, stanzaic form, and phrasing in the musical sense; it plays on sense and imagery to create the humor and nonsense of unusual connections.

For all these reasons, word play is a good medium for learning technical aspects of the language, such as sound, spelling, homonyms, and syllabic stress. As with other kinds of discourse presented in this last part of the book, however, student choice is essential. Far too many exercises and drills have been imposed on learners under the phony guise of games. Unless a person chooses to play a game, she's not really playing.

Because word play aims at language creativity, it encompasses the highest skills of poetry, which exploits the full resources of language—sense, musicality, and movement—to spring the mind and spirit. The poet is a profound player with language.

THE WORD AS THING

Words have sounds, rhythms, spellings, and visual shapes—all qualities that can be played with, turned around, responded to. Contrived repetitions are common in the oral culture of the young; they may owe their appeal to their origin in babbling and the pattern practice of crib monologues.

■ TONGUE TWISTERS

Tongue twisters exercise physical articulation and auditory and visual discrimination, stringing together words that are nearly alike. The game is to catch the *differences* between:

- Same sound, different spelling—“*which witch*,” “*tooted the flute*”
- Same spelling, different sound—“*placed plain plums on plaid plastic*”
- Same letter, different combinations—“*freshly fried flying fish*”
- Same ending, different beginning—“*the Smith youth’s tooth was underneath*”
- Same beginning, different ending—“*Tom threw Tim three thumbtacks*”
- Similar spelling, one consonant substitution—“*sheik’s sixth sheep’s sick*”

Books of tongue twisters provide alluring reading matter. Partners and small groups can read them aloud, first slowly and then faster and faster. Children can make recordings and compare them, do choral readings, hold contests, and make up new tongue twisters to share. They’re delightful verbal playthings.

■ CHANTS AND CHEERS

Clapping out the rhythm of words is fun for children, makes them aware of stressed and unstressed syllables, and relates to singing and dancing. Children can start by chanting and clapping the metrical patterns of their own names one at a time (JEN-ni-fer BROWN, for example). Once they have the meter of a name, they can just repeat it with and without the name. Several names can then be strung in such a way that the metrical pattern is pleasing. For example, CIN-dy, Pa-TRI-cia, CHRIS-to-pher, DON can be chanted several times just to experience the rhythm, then maybe they can think of other words to fit the same rhythm—WA-ter, po-TA-toes, VI-ne-gar, MILK. Any words can be put together in this way, of course.

Place names, tongue twisters, nursery rhymes, limericks, or jump-rope jingles, school cheers and chants, and rhythmical games all lend themselves to this. Clapping and chanting can accompany swaying in place, stepping, or other rhythmic movement. This physical experience will help children connect body with mind and resonate to textual rhythms.

■ PUNS AND CONUNDRUMS

The peculiarities of English spelling are a source of a great many of children’s favorite jokes. For many older students, Ogden Nash’s puns and zany slant rhymes provide a handy model for their own composition. Collections of riddles and puns not only provide popular texts but also call for close and careful reading to discriminate between similar spellings. Puns—like much of the greatest literature in our culture—are deliberately ambiguous. An appreciation of ambiguity is a sign of growth.

HOMOGRAPHS

Homographs and homophones provide a rich source for jokes. *Homographs* are words that are spelled alike but differ in origin and meaning. They may either be pronounced alike like *butter* (the food) and *butter* (one who butts), or be pronounced differently like *wind* (breeze) and *wind* (coil up). For example:

How can you make a slow boy fast?

Don't let him eat.

Do you know how to drive a baby buggy?

Tickle its feet.

HOMOPHONES

A great many of children's riddles are based on *homophones*—words that sound alike but differ in meaning, origin, and sometimes spelling, like *bear* and *bare*. Here are a couple of riddles based on homophones:

What is a cartoon?

Music to drive by.

How is an army officer like corn?

Both are colonels. (kernels)

Or a joke:

Two fishermen came to a lake and read the sign posted there: "DON'T FISH HERE." One of them said "Yes"; the other one said "No." Then they began to fish.

Or a poem:

I saw a pair of peers

Sitting on a pair of piers

Paring a pair of pears.

CONUNDRUMS

These are more elaborate verbal riddles that pun more than once in the answer. For example:

What's the difference between a cat and a sentence?

A cat has claws at the end of its paws, and a sentence has a pause at the end of its clause.

What's the difference between a person late for a train and a schoolteacher?

One misses trains and the other trains misses.

Here's one by a fourth grader who followed the pattern of these two:

What's the similarity between moisture in the air and a library book that has been sitting around in a classroom for three years?

They were both dew (due) a long time ago!¹

¹ Our thanks to Wanda Lincoln, Baker Demonstration School of National College of Education, now National-Louis University, Evanston, Illinois.

MADE-UP WORDS

Puns can be the basis for new words that play on the sound and meaning of combined words. In brainstorming sessions, students can think up new words our language needs, such as *zappy* for a feeling that is part surprise (*zap*) and part (*happy*).

■ SPELLING GAMES

A great many popular games for adults and children such as *Spill 'n Spell* are based on spelling, including commercial and computer software versions, and activity cards presenting directions for such games should be available as an option in the classroom. For other spelling games see pages 133–138 in *BECOMING LITERATE*.

I SENTENCE YOU

Partners or members of a small group take turns giving each other a word. The other person has to make a sentence using, in order, each of the letters in the word as the first letter of each word in her sentence. Thus, if a player says “cat,” the other player must quickly come up with a sentence like “Charles always teases.” Players can time each other. Teenagers will have longer words and a shorter time to answer than young children. When elementary school youngsters are just beginning, they may not need to time each other at all because they may give up after a short time anyway.

FORBIDDEN LETTER

Everyone in a group agrees on a letter of the alphabet that will be forbidden. Then a questioner is chosen who does not need to omit the forbidden letter. She may ask any question she likes, and the person answering it must be sure to use words that do not contain the forbidden letter. For example, if the forbidden letter is *k*, and the questioner asks, “What do you think of this weather?” a player cannot say “It’s O.K.” or “I like it,” but she can say “It’s all right.” If a player uses the forbidden letter, she’s out of the game. Each player in turn answers a question, always omitting the forbidden letter in her answer.

SPELLING RIDDLES

To make these up, youngsters decide which letters or combinations must either be avoided or must be always included. For example, if they decide that the letter *i* is to be shunned, then they can make up a riddle like this: “My aunt has eyes, but she cannot see everything. She can see a dollar, but she cannot see a nickel or a dime; a boy, but not a girl; men and women, but not children.”

If they decide that any word the fictitious person likes must have a double letter in it, then they have a riddle like this: “Mrs. Wiggles likes coffee but not tea, kettles but not pots, kittens but not cats, and puppies but not dogs.” The person who answers the riddle must figure out the spelling principle involved.

ANAGRAMS

This popular old game consists of making one or more new words out of the letters of a given word. Beginners can play with words like *tan* and get *ant* and find out that *nat* sounds right but *gnat* actually spells the word. A word of four letters

dealing with long vowels might be *meat* (*team, mate*). Such short words allow players to try out all possible letter combinations. While one player manipulates the letters, the other can look up words in a dictionary, if mature enough, and both can try to sound words.

Beginners can start with the familiar game of finding little “kangaroo” words in big ones, like *every, very*, and *day* in *everyday*. Later they can rearrange letters as well and thus find in a word like *valentine* such words as *lean, in, it, live, eat*.

More experienced players can rearrange words of more than four letters, such as:

plates—staple—pastel—petals—pleats
kitchen—thicken

or phrases such as:

breakfast—fast bake
constraint—cannot stir

Collections of these can be put onto wall charts or into riddle books.

PALINDROMES

A *palindrome* is a word that can be read forward or backward and still make sense, such as *tot*. Guessing games can be made up of definitions of palindromes, such as:

What is a baby’s garment? *bib*
What is a legal document? *deed*
What is midday? *noon*
What is a joke? *gag*
What is flat or even? *level*
What are arias? *solos*
What were Adam’s first words to Eve? *Madam I’m Adam*

Some words yield a new world when read backward, such as:

tea—eat
straw—warts
ten—net

These can be made into riddles, such as: “What word will reverse a *piece* to get a *snare*?” (*part—trap*)

BEHEADINGS

Some words when decapitated become other words. Thus *glove* becomes *love*. Many words can be beheaded more than once such as *braid* to yield *raid* and *aid*. Riddles can be devised giving definitions of these words in a series, for example:

dish—tardy—consumed (plate, late, ate)
cost—cereal—frozen water (price, rice, ice)
put—intertwine—topnotch (place, lace, ace)
stored—lugged—was indebted—married (stowed, towed, owed, wed)
defraud—warmth—devour—preposition (cheat, heat, eat, at)

CAPPINGS

This game is like “Beheadings” except that a letter is added to, rather than omitted from, the front of a word to form another one. The word gets a cap at the front. Thus, members of a small group think up as many riddles as they can that are like these:

Cap a word that is a garden tool with a *b* and get a device that stops cars and trains. (*rake—brake*) Cap a word that means “aged” with an *s* to get “exchanged for money.” (*old—sold*)

Here are others:

ox—box	able—table
hen—then	ought—sought
ounce—bounce	hop—shop

DIZZY WORDS

A popular puzzle that children can begin to make up as soon as they have mastered basic literacy is a square in which their partners can find and circle words written either forward, backward, or diagonally. Here’s what a “Dizzy Word” square looks like before and after the words are circled:

E	A	T	F	O	
L	A	U	G	H	
F	L	G	O	I	
L	L	O	T	T	

Beginners can start with words that can just be read forward; they can progress to backwards and diagonal readings.

More mature students might construct word squares that have words that can be read both from left to right and from top to bottom. Here are two such common squares:

T	E	A	R	E	A	D
E	A	T	E	L	S	E
A	T	E	A	S	I	A
			D	E	A	R

Puzzles can be devised that give only the definitions. Thus for the two squares above, the puzzles would be:

- Nine letters: *beverage, consume, consumed*
- Sixteen letters: *peruse, instead, a continent, darling*

CROSSWORD PUZZLES

This popular word play in which words are arranged in crisscross patterns, and definitional clues are given, should be a regular option for students. Correct spelling is crucial to success; errors are checked when new words are tried. Weak spellers can work together and pool their spelling capacity. Looking up the spelling of words in the dictionary becomes natural as an adjunct of the sport. New words are added to the player's working vocabulary as she guesses the words called for by the clue and tries to fit them into her blank puzzle. Crossword puzzles represent a fine combination of attractiveness and effectiveness.

Encourage students to look for crossword puzzles in magazines and newspapers and to bring them to class. Since many of these may be too hard, you may need to buy some consumable booklets of puzzles. Computer software, such as *Crossword Magic* (L and S Computerware, Division of HLS Duplication, Inc.,) takes student-generated lists of clues and words they target and forms them automatically into a crossword puzzle. Teachers and students can use such software to construct puzzles that deal with vocabulary of a certain difficulty or on a particular theme.

Beginners can construct and exchange simple crossword puzzles like this one:

B	E	O	A	N	A
T	M	F	T	T	D

The player fills in the blanks with a word (in this puzzle she is told that it's a man's name) that, when written across, completes six three-letter words reading from top to bottom. In this case the word is *Alfred*.

COMMERCIAL GAMES

Like the puzzles listed here, a great many commercial games such as Probe, Anagrams, Scrabble, and Upwords not only impose close attention to spelling but also provide a challenge to come up with new words. Using heavy cardboard, students can make their own playing pieces with letters of the alphabet painted on one side and design their own Scrabble-type boards.

■ VOCABULARY GAMES

As with spelling games, commercial dictionary games provide a fine opportunity for students to learn new words. The popular Password is one based on word definitions. The first two games listed below are old favorites that stimulate both vocabulary and spelling growth.

HANGMAN

This game (known by other names also) is the prototype of the spelling game that features guessing, letter by letter, a word one player has in mind. She draws a gal-

lows and below it puts an appropriate number of dashes, one for each letter of her secret word. Her partner asks, for example, “Does your word have an *e*?” If the first player’s secret word does have one, she puts an *e* above the dash where it would appear if the word were written on the dashes. If the word does not contain an *e*, a head is drawn in the noose. As the game continues, each correct guess is rewarded with a letter on a blank and each incorrect one punished by another part of the body added to the drawing. The goal is to hang one’s opponent before she guesses the word. Then it’s the other player’s turn to think of a word.

GHOST

In this game players try to keep adding letters to an ongoing spelling without being the one who ends the word. One player thinks of a word of more than three letters but doesn’t tell the other players what it is. She calls out the first letter. Each player, in turn, then adds another letter to the one(s) that has already been called—*trying not to form a word*. After three letters have been called, each time a player ends a word she becomes a fifth of a ghost—a *G* first, then a *GH*, and so on. When she loses five times she is a whole *GHOST* and is eliminated from the game. If a player is suspected of adding a letter without having a word in mind, another player may challenge her. If she can spell a legitimate word using the letters already called, the challenger is penalized one-fifth of a ghost and a new round is started. For example, a player who’s faced with these three letters, *m i n* might add a *u*. Another player could challenge her. If she doesn’t have a word like *minute* in mind, she becomes a fifth of a ghost. The last player to remain mortal wins.

STREAMLINED GHOST

Members of a small group take turns making up word pairs or compound words; the last word of the first pair must become the first word of the next pair. Thus a group might string along this sequence: *lunch box—box spring—springtime—time lock—lock up—upstairs* or this one: *red hot—hot dog—dog collar—collar button—button hook*. Anyone who gets stuck must start a new pair and take the first letter of the word *GHOST* against her. When she misses five times, she’s a streamlined ghost and nobody may talk to her.

I’M THINKING OF A WORD

This game and the next are rhyming games. This one is played by partners:

A: I’m thinking of a word that rhymes with *bear*.

B: Is it a fruit?

A: No, it’s not a *pear*.

B: Is it a female horse?

A: No, it’s not a *mare*.

B: Is it unusual?

A: No, it’s not *rare*.

B: Is it something you do with clothes?

A: Yes, it’s *wear*.

STINKY PINKY

The leader thinks of words that make a rhymed phrase, such as: *fat cat, soggy doggy, effective directive, or Afghanistan banana stand*. She tells the group how many syllables are in her words by saying that she is thinking of a STINK PINK, a STINKY PINKY, a STINKETY PINKETY, or a STINKETEROO PINKETEROO, but she doesn't tell them what the words are. Instead, she gives a definition. For the phrases above she would say: *obese feline, wet pup, productive command, or Middle Eastern fruit stall*. The partner or group members then try to guess the rhymed phrase. The computer software version of this game is Hinky Pinky.²

■ WORD PICTURES

When the word is looked at as an object, its shape and arrangement of letters can be played with to suggest visually what the word means.

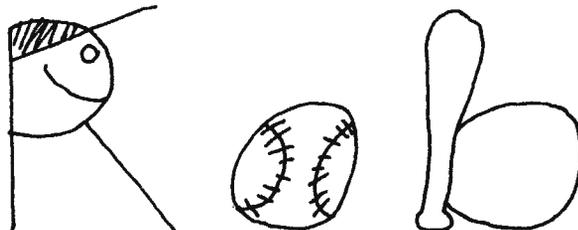
LETTERHEADS

Personal initials or names can be presented pictorially and used for personalized stationery or stylized signatures, symbolizing interests or values, as in Figure 11.1. Letterheads for famous real or imaginary persons can also be designed. Making up a monogram, a family crest, or an individual coat of arms is another way to visually depict interests and values and build positive attitudes towards oneself.

CONCRETE POETRY

Older students might try their hand at concrete poetry, which unlike traditional poetry, that appeals to both the eye and ear, appeals only to the eye. It is a graphic presentation; the meaning depends on the way the words are placed on the page. For example, in the poem in Figure 11.2, both the intertwining of the letters and the serpent connotation of the S say visually what a conventional printing of the word does not.

FIGURE 11.1 LETTERHEAD



² Available from DSR, Inc., 5848 Cromton Ct., Rockford, IL 61111.

FIGURE 11.2 CONCRETE POETRY



Source: Pedro Xisto, "She," in *Anthology of Concretism*, ed. Eugene Wildman, the Swallow Press, Inc., Chicago, Ill., 1969, p. 120.

TYPOGRAPHICAL POETRY

Like concrete poetry, typographical poetry depends for its meaning on the arrangement of the words and letters on the page. Unlike concrete poetry, it uses conventional capital and small letters rather than altered or distorted versions of the letters. Examples of the kind of typographical poems sixth graders can do are shown in Figure 11.3. Keyboarding students can use typewriters or computers to experiment with typographical poetry. In this example by e. e. cummings, complete words within other words are set apart and played on:³

tw
o o
ld
o
nce upo
n
a(
n
o mo
re
)time
me
n
sit(l
oo
k)dre
am

³ "tw" is reprinted from *Complete Poems 1913–1962*, by E. E. Cummings, by permission of Liveright Publishing Corporation. Copyright © 1923, 1925, 1931, 1935, 1938, 1939, 1940, 1944, 1945, 1946, 1947, 1948, 1949, 1950, 1951, 1952, 1953, 1954, 1955, 1956, 1957, 1958, 1959, 1960, 1961, 1962, by the Trustees for the E. E. Cummings Trust. Copyright © 1961, 1963, 1968 by Marion Morehouse Cummings.

■ REBUSES

A *rebus* is pictographs or letters arranged to suggest a word or syllable. The figures may simply be letters cited by alphabetical name rather than used to spell a sound. Thus this rebus:

YYURYYUBICURYY 4 me

reads:

Too wise you are; too wise you be;
I see you are too wise for me.

Position may also indicate meaning as in:

stand	take	2	takings
I	you	throw	my

which reads:

I understand you undertake to overthrow my undertakings.

Young writers can put messages or stories into rebuses, using such figures as a drawing of a bee for *be* or a picture of an eye. They intersperse their pictures with conventionally spelled words, and words that are to be pronounced as the sound of the letters of the alphabet, just as children who are using invented spelling do, creating such terms as, DK for *decay*, BUT for *beauty*, MT for *empty*, NE for *any*, B4 for *before*. Vanity license plates are often written in this form, using both letters and numbers to substitute for a syllable or word. A reluctant writer might enjoy putting together a rebus story for a younger child. Collections of rebuses can be part of the classroom library to provide beginning readers with easy-to-decode material and to make spelling fun (see Figure 11.4).

■ PICTOGRAPHS

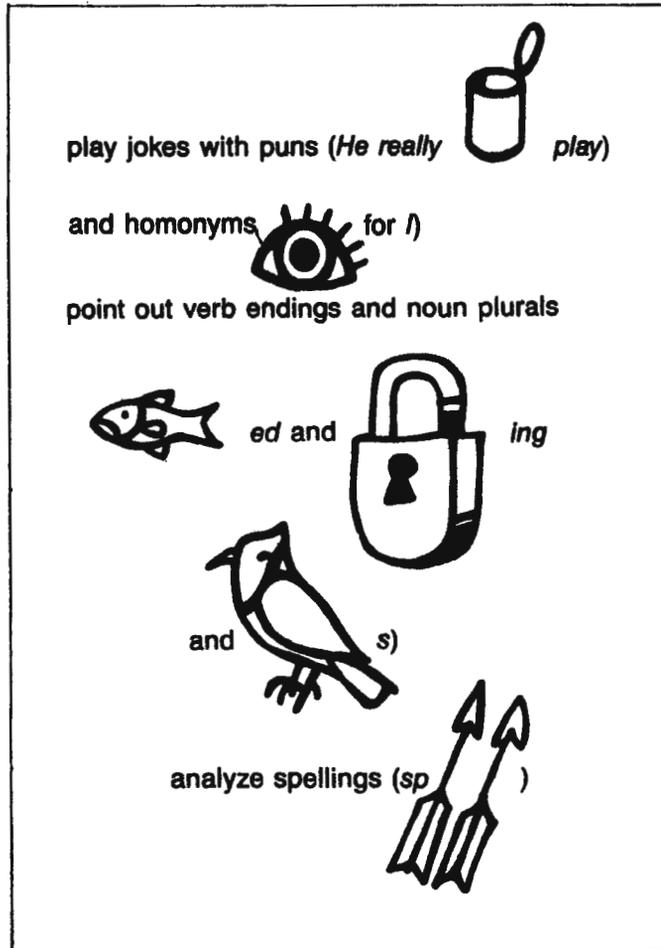
Telling stories in a series of pictures is a fairly simple process, but creating a *system* of pictures standing for ideas, or pictographs, as in Chinese, presents a much more challenging task and moves into the complexity of devising a code. Examples of stylized picture chronicles such as Indian winter counts can stimulate the development of actual pictographs, whereby certain pictures always represent certain categories of events or things. Graphic presentation is never outgrown; the maturity level of the students will determine the degree of sophistication of their representations.

■ CIPHERS AND CODES

Collections of ciphers and codes, which appeal to youngsters' love of secrecy and private language, stimulate very careful examination of a text and manipulation of symbols. Young children have had more recent experience than most adults at code-cracking, for as infants they heard spoken language as a foreign tongue, and as illiterates they found the written word a perfect cipher in which unfamiliar symbols encode familiar sounds.

Ciphers substitute secret symbols for individual letters or rearrange letters in a predetermined way. In order to use ciphers, one must substitute the secret sym-

FIGURE 11.4 REBUS MESSAGE



bols for individual letters, literally spelling out a message correctly letter by letter in the right order. Some ciphers such as *igpay atinLay* (pig Latin) may be spoken as well as written. A side benefit in working with ciphers is that one has to analyze the language, thereby learning, along with spelling patterns, such facts about English as the relative frequency of different letters.

Codes, on the other hand, are alternative languages with symbols for whole words or ideas, not individual letters. Codes, which include pictographs, cattle brands, and food-dating systems, give youngsters an alternative to regular language and hence a way of detaching themselves from the native tongue, so deeply embedded in our life from childhood as to be difficult to objectify otherwise. Like mathematical, foreign, and computer languages, codes enable us to objectify the native language, conceptualizing syntax and parts of speech in a new way. Students become aware of the arbitrariness of any language and the possibility of creating new languages that may serve them better for certain purposes. Students

reading ciphers and codes are introduced to a means of communication that has been in use since Biblical times.

One easy way for students to construct a cipher is to substitute numbers for letters or letters for numbers. For example, the letter *m* could be 1; *n*, 2; *o*, 3; and so on, with the numbers continuing at the beginning of the alphabet after *z* is designated 14: thus *a* is 15, *b* is 16, and so on. Another simple method is to substitute letters of the alphabet that are two or more letters ahead of each letter. For example, if the letter three steps ahead were substituted for each letter, the message, "Meet me at 10:00," would look like this:

Phhw ph dw 43:33.

Transposition or scrambling is another method of cipher-writing that a child can figure out and enjoy using. Here's a cryptogram or message written in a scrambled cipher:

TNTX HIHO ESEB KIML EYAI

To unscramble it you write each of the four-letter "words" in a vertical column like this:

T H E K E
N I S I Y
T H E M A
X O B L I

The first line is read left to right; the second, right to left; the third, left to right; and the last backward, so the message is: "The key is in the mailbox."

Scrambled ciphers may be made more complicated by rearranging the regular order of the vertical columns, putting them in some other predetermined order such as with the even vertical columns together first, and then the odd ones. Thus the square above is changed from:

1 2 3 4 5
T H E K E
N I S I Y
T H E M A
X O B L I

to:

2 4 1 3 5
H K T E E
I I N S Y
H M T E A
O L X B I

Dummy letters can be added at regular predetermined intervals to further throw the reader off. Let students experiment widely in developing their own codes. The possibilities are endless.

■ RIDDLES

Inasmuch as riddles disguise something, they act as a code that has to be puzzled out. Following the model of many of the poems of May Swenson,⁴ students can create riddle poems, which are simply elaborated descriptions of an object without actually naming it. Less verbal children can put together picture riddles by using just parts of familiar objects, the way Tana Hoban did in *Look Again!*⁵ See also page 218 in “Sensory Writing.”

Like tongue twisters and jokes, riddles thrive in the oral folk culture of children, who enjoy stumping one another. And because of the question-response format, riddles beg to be read aloud with partners. They can be collected from classmates or new ones made up and shared via tape, transparencies, booklets, and so on. Students need to figure out a way to keep the answer or punch line hidden until the reader has a chance to puzzle it out for herself. For example, if youngsters make riddle books, have them put each answer on a different page than the riddle.

THE SENTENCE AS THING

Just as a word can be a plaything, so can a sentence. It has qualities of order, repetition, cadence, or style. Experimenting with sentence manipulation is for some learners a fascinating exercise. Again, the tone must be playful and the choice the student's, not the teacher's.

■ SCRAMBLED SENTENCES

One student cuts up into words a sentence that she has found or written, scrambles the pieces, and gives them to a partner to reconstruct. To challenge each other more, partners come up with harder sentences (and may find that some can be put together in more than one way).

■ SENTENCE BUILDING

Again playing in pairs, one player makes up a sentence by writing words or placing word cards in a sequence; then her partner attempts to add to that sentence with other words; then the first tries to build further; and so on, the object being to make as long a sentence as they can. Thus:

Bobby plays ball.

After school Bobby plays ball.

Every day after school Bobby plays ball

Every day after school Bobby plays ball with his friends.

Every day after school Bobby plays football with his new friends.

⁴ See May Swenson, *New and Selected Things Taking Place* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1978).

⁵ Tana Hoban, *Look Again!* (New York: Macmillan, 1971). This is a book with holes in the page, and provides a model that is easy for children to imitate.

Every day after school Bobby plays football with his new friends until his mother calls him.

Every day after school Bobby plays football with his new friends until his mother calls him to come eat supper.⁶

■ MAD LIBS

This is a very popular game outside as well as inside school and goes under several names. One player reads a story which lacks certain parts of speech and asks listening players to supply these or other sentence elements, naming for them the part of speech or element needed:

“In [*a place*] on a particularly [*adjective*] evening, [*a noun*] was sitting [*adverb*] on the couch when there was a [*adjective*] knock on the door.”

Parts of speech are taught as part of the game directions by exemplifying them in sample sentences, where verbs can be circled, nouns boxed, adjectives underlined, and so on, or colors used.

When the story is read back, results are very amusing because of the nonsensical but grammatically correct mixture of the original story with the random elements supplied: “Wildly the striped man coughed into an embarrassed rose.” Children who play Mad Libs learn the parts of speech very quickly by the examples because their success in the game depends on it. The grammar can be made as sophisticated as desired by asking for a noun phrase instead of a noun, an adverbial phrase of time instead of an adverb.

■ FOUND POEMS

Word play is often merely novel juxtaposition. Students can cut out phrases or other excerpts from ads, magazines, or catalogues and glue them together in word collages, poems, or posters. Sometimes a complete statement becomes a poem just by being isolated or shifted to another context or broken into unusual sentence segments and set off in lines as a poem.

■ TELEGRAPHIC MESSAGES

Players make up a situation in which a message would need to be worded as economically as possible. This might be a message they would leave on a telephone answering machine to give crucial information during the minute before the final beep. Or a person in an emergency has to write a message of fifteen or fewer words on a paper no more than two inches square to be sent by carrier pigeon or inside a floating bottle. Or a nineteenth century explorer or pioneer needs to send a

⁶ See *Silly Syntax*, a computer game developed by Betty Jane Wagner to build an awareness of the logic of word order, the functions of various sentence elements, clause embedding, and terms for parts of speech and other grammatical elements.

message by telegraph but can afford to pay for only a few words. Or a TV program needs a short written message to flash onscreen to highlight a visual.

Students may want to stage contests to see who can get a particular message into the fewest words. This challenge is never outgrown, although the process can begin in the primary grades. At first children might write a message limited to fifteen, twenty, or twenty-five words, depending both on their ability and on the complexity of the story situation surrounding the short message. They might enjoy writing Terse Verse, poems that express some sort of action or idea in only two or three words that rhyme. Then add a title, which in most cases will be longer than the poem, as in:

WARNING TO FELLOW CIA AGENT

Fly,
Spy

Concise writing is really a sentence-reduction activity that shows which parts of speech and grammatical elements are most redundant and hence more dispensable. Do different people interpret these telegraphic sentences in the same way, or are they ambiguous? The requirement that a minimum of words should convey a maximum of meaning is a valuable pressure for any writer. This activity results in fragments rather than whole sentences, as in taking notes, where word economy is also a crucial issue.

As youngsters see which words are essential, they intuitively separate content words from function words that merely show relationships within sentences. If alternate versions of the same message are compared, the youngsters can see how their peers dealt with the problem of balancing information versus economy. They will learn the risks as well as the advantages of reducing sentences. See also discussion of "Single Statements" on page 401 and *LABELS AND CAPTIONS*, both of which put a premium on economy of language.

PLAYING FOR LAUGHS

A great many gags focus on misunderstandings of word usage, such as those in the familiar teacher-pupil dialogues.

TEACHER: Make up a sentence using the word 'notwithstanding'.

PUPIL: His trousers were worn thin at the seat, but not with standing.

Dialogue gags are good for partner reading and for preparation for taking part in script performing. Other gags arise from the ambiguity of misplaced modifiers, such as in the remark the mother made on Thanksgiving: "You know, we ate an awful lot, even the children." Students can watch for and collect "found gags," ambiguities in want ads or signs such as:

Boy wanted to deliver pizzas, about 16 yrs. old.

Buy your videotapes here. Do not go elsewhere to be cheated.

■ INSULTS

One of the ever-present trials of a teacher is taunting, teasing, and fighting among students. Any way that this urge to put one another down can be converted into

playful sparring is all to the good. The key is *playful*. To substitute wit for war is to move a long way toward maturity.

Many animals swell up, “display,” bark, or substitute other harmless behavior for fighting in potentially hostile confrontations. In a similar attempt to defuse or forestall conflict, people will shout, brandish fists and weapons, beat their chests, boast, jeer, “jaw” at one another, and insult, as facing armies do in Homeric and other epics. Such behavior becomes ritualized or stylized into a kind of game, as it has in the African-American tradition of “dozens,” or “signifying,” which is a contest to top each other in witty or outrageous insults. An art form frequently arises out of just such a serious function.

Once students have established insults as a game and art form that they can create within, this has the effect of objectifying name-calling so that the aim shifts. The insults regarded as best are not those that hurt, or that aim at a particular person, but those that entertain.

Connoisseurs can write down ones they have heard and post them or collect them into books. Like jump-rope jingles, game rhymes, limericks, jokes, riddles, tall tales, tongue twisters, and ghost stories, insults are a part of an oral culture waiting to become high-interest reading matter that is then exchanged and fed back into the oral culture. Thinking up good insults frequently produces comparisons, as does making up riddles and proverbs.

Epithets are popular among elementary children. These are words, phrases, sentences, or short verses that describe some quality or attribute that the speaker considers characteristic of a person. They are typically insulting in the “Roses are red, violets are blue. . . .” tradition of autograph books. Here’s an epithet:

Ho Hum Harry,
Lovesick and too young to marry.

If your class is not ready to sling insults about and still stay friendly, they can write verbal characterizations of famous people and see if the rest of the group can guess who is the subject of each epithet.

■ PARODIES

Parody is exaggerated imitation to make fun of someone or something. Improvised impersonations of TV advertisers, entertainers, teachers, and other figures are part of the oral culture of schoolchildren. *MAD Magazine* runs rife with parodies that kids love and that can inspire them to write their own. Good written parody of style is a sophisticated art, because it calls for isolating the *manner* of writing from the *content* and deliberately making fun of it. See page 298 for satiric cartoons.

Mature students can make up new nursery rhymes based on the rhythmical patterns of traditional verses, using rhyming dictionaries or thesauruses. Some will be satirical; most will be humorous. Writers can retell traditional rhymes in deliberately untraditional language—scholarly, elevated, slang, and so on—to create humorous parodies. For example,

Diminutive Miss Muffett
Positioned herself on a hassock
Consuming her clabber.
Forthwith ventured an arachnid
And established himself adjacent to her
And petrified Miss Muffett into evanescence.

Rhyme scheme, stanzaic pattern, and even some phrasing, can be playfully imitated, as in this parody of a well-known poem:

THE EAGLE

He clasps the crag with crooked hands
Close to the sun in lonely lands,
Ringed with the azure world, he stands.

The wrinkled sea beneath him crawls;
He watches from his mountain walls,
And like a thunderbolt he falls.

by Alfred, Lord Tennyson

FROM "THE EAGLE"

She clasps the Tide with piles of clothes.
High in the hamper the soiled laundry rose.
It's Monday, a day in the basement, she knows.

The wrinkled wear inside now whirls.
She watches the water that grays and swirls
And wonders why she had boys, not girls.

by Jane Hunt⁷

Other short poems that work especially well for imitation are Judith Viorst's "If I Were in Charge of the World," and for older students, William Carlos Williams's "This Is Just to Say."

FORMULAIC VERSE

Even the most cerebral or lyrical of poetry has its playful elements, its deliberate contrivance to make us wonder at its form. Because words have sounds, shapes, rhythms, and ambiguous meanings, they can be juxtaposed in ways that not only tease thought but also create something new—to be looked at, toyed with, and responded to on its own terms.⁸ Formulaic verses may be less poetic, in the sense of striking deep at feelings or putting experience into lasting and noteworthy artistic form, but they are nonetheless entertaining word play.

■ ACROSTICS

One of the easiest beginnings for children is the acrostic. Simply write a word down the side of a page, with one letter on each line. Then fill in a word on each line that begins with the letter on that line.

⁷ A teacher at the Baker Demonstration School of National College of Education, now National-Louis University.

⁸ See the computer software Compupoem, developed by Stephen Marcus and available from the South Coast Writing Project, University of California, Santa Barbara, 93106 for a program that stimulates students to play around with the ordering of the lines of a poem.

■ LIMERICKS

Limericks are highly regular, strongly rhythmical, rhymed verses, popular with many students. Some limericks are nursery rhymes, like “Hickory Dickory Dock,” some are tongue twisters, and others play on puns. The absurdities created by trying to make the matter fit the rhyme are part of the humor of limericks. As youngsters become saturated with this form, they will want to perform and compose their own verses.

The form need not be described or analyzed. As students become familiar through reading and listening to limericks with the rigorous constraints of their rhyme, meter, and number of lines, they will begin to use their wit to invent imaginative proper names, wild action, and hilarious images to fit the model. Limericks can be sung to a tune such as the example in Figure 11.5. In fact, trying to sing one’s limerick to this tune tests out its form and meter and may lead to revision.

Limericks are actually a kind of joke; they or other forms of light verse might become a kind of classroom fad that will be of great value in developing word choice, sentence structure, fanciful invention, stylistics, and verse techniques.

Limericks have a two-part thought form, subtler than their meter and rhyme patterns but related to them. In this respect they are like haiku (see page 396). Students might work in pairs, one composing the first two lines of a limerick and

FIGURE 11.5 LIMERICK TUNE

There Was an Old Man with a Beard

Edward Lear

There was an old man with a beard, _____ Who

said, "It is just as I feared. _____ Two

owls and a hen, four larks and a wren Have

all built their nests in my beard." _____

the other finishing it. As students work with limericks, they sooner or later discover this thought form. This teaches some the use of the semicolon as nothing else ever would. It also gives students a legitimate one- or two-sentence discourse within which to work closely on word choice and sentence structure.

■ CHAIN VERSE

Like terza rima, where stanzas of three lines each rhyme aba, bcb, cdc, and ded, any repetition of a rhyme, word, phrase, line, or group of lines to link a section of a poem with the succeeding section constitutes chain verse. Students can take turns making up four lines of rhyming verse in an abab pattern. The last line of the first person's ditty has to become the first line of the next person's.

■ PANTOUMS

Like chain verse, this Malayan form is written in stanzas that interlock through repetition; the second and fourth lines of each four-line stanza become the first and third of the succeeding stanza. In the last stanza, the second and fourth lines are the third and first of the first stanza, so the opening and closing lines of the pantoum are identical. Here's part of one written by Brander Matthews:

EN ROUTE

Here we are riding the rail,
Gliding from out of the station;
Man though I am, I am pale,
Certain of heat and vexation.

Gliding from out of the station,
Out from the city we thrust;
Certain of heat and vexation,
Sure to be covered with dust.

.

Ears are on edge at the rattle,
Man though I am, I am pale,
Sounds like the noise of a battle,
Here we are riding the rail.⁹

■ COUPLET COMPLETION

Another way to play with verse linkage is to take the first line of a famous poem or couplet and write a second line that's in the same meter, that rhymes, and that continues or deliberately contrasts with the thought of the first line. The result will be a couplet with potential for humor. For example, if you start with Robert Frost's line, here's what you might get:

⁹ Clement Wood, ed., *The Complete Rhyming Dictionary and Poet's Craft Book* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1984).

Whose woods these are I think I know,¹⁰
His putter's in the bag below.

■ TRIOLETS

Lighthearted rhyming in some of the French forms with their stipulated rhyme, meter, and repetition patterns might appeal to advanced players with words.

The *triolet* is an eight-line poem that uses two rhymes, abaaabab. Lines one, four, and seven are identical, as are lines two and eight. It's almost impossible to repeat so much in such a short poem without seeming playful; for example:

A TRIOLET

A triolet fits on a postal card.
The triolet's for me.
Ballades spin on for many a yard
(A triolet fits on a postal card.!)
To France With Love From Indolent Bard—
Hail, Gallic brevity!
A triolet fits on a postal card.
The triolet's for me.¹¹

■ RONDELS

A *rondel* usually has fourteen lines and two rhymes; the first two lines are exactly repeated as lines seven and eight and again as lines thirteen and fourteen. Here's one by Austin Dobson:

Too hard it is to sing
In these untuneful times,
When only coin can ring,
And no one cares for rhymes.
Alas for him who climbs
to Aganippe's Spring:
Too hard it is to sing
In these untuneful times.

His kindred clip his wing,
His feet the critic limes;
If fame her laurel bring,
Old age his forehead rimes:
Too hard it is to sing
In these untuneful times.¹²

¹⁰ From *The Poetry of Robert Frost*, edited by Edward Connery Lathem. Copyright 1923, © 1969 by Holt, Rinehart and Winston. Copyright 1951 by Robert Frost. Reprinted by permission of Henry Holt and Company, Inc.

¹¹ Howard Cushman wrote this to a friend traveling in France; it is from an unpublished manuscript: Howard Cushman, "Poems for All Occasions," July 1973, p. 6. Used by permission of Peggy Ledbetter.

¹² Austin Dobson, *The Complete Poetical Works of Austin Dobson* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1923).

■ RONDEAUS

A *rondeau* is typically fifteen lines with only two rhymes. The first word or opening phrase of the first line is repeated as a refrain as the ninth and fifteenth lines. Here's one with a play on words at the end:

RUSS TO KATE

"Love—Russ to Kate" the legend ran;
 And that is how the thing began.
 Not half a dozen words, but four,
 That morning in the flower store . . .
 Or was it with the book or fan?
 And who will say it was your plan
 To terminate the long, sweet span
 Of bachelorhood, that time you swore
 Love, Russ, to Kate?

But such the frailty of man,
 Fate sends him sprawling if it can . . .
 The denouement? Ah, that's a bore!
 You'll write—or try a teaching chore—
 To eat—and let from Feb. to Jan.
 Love rusticate.¹³

■ VILLANELLES

Like the rondel and rondeau, the villanelle has only two rhymes and typically nineteen lines, but some villanelles are longer or shorter. The first line is repeated as the ninth and fifteenth, and both the first and third lines are in the final four lines. Villanelles are always divided into tercets, or three-line stanzas of interlocking rhyme: aba, aba, aba, aba, aba, abab. The final four lines are a quatrain. One of the best known poems in this form is Dylan Thomas's "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night," which, unlike most villanelles, has a serious subject.

■ BALLADES

A ballade consists of three eight-line stanzas rhyming ababbcbc, and a four-line envoi, which is a conclusion or dedicatory stanza. The last line of the first stanza is used as the last line of the other two stanzas and of the envoi. For example:

BALLADE OF WINTER TEDIUM

This time each year I get out of sorts
 With the joys of my fellow man at play,
 Pursuing their so-called winter sports
 In a spiritless, sweaty sort of way.

¹³ Howard Cushman. Originally published in a house organ of the Buffalo Athletic Club, 1926. Used by permission of Peggy Ledbetter.

“Are hockey and basketball here to stay?”
 I wail in a manner bereft of reason.
 “How long must we wait a happier day?
 “How many weeks to the baseball season?”

I’ve put up with football at far resorts:
 Rose Bowl, Cotton Bowl; Blue and Gray.
 For soccer players in frozen shorts
 I’ve shouted a feeble hip-hooray.
 But one thing now I’m impelled to say,
 Though voicing it be akin to treason.
 We’ve suffered enough! Let us be gay!
 How many weeks to the baseball season?

Let squash and racquets on snooty courts
 In properly social strife hold sway.
 Bowling or billiards? Excuse these snorts!
 Who could consider such stuff au fait?
 “Ah well,” say I, “and lackaday.
 Enough of these games when the weather’s
 freezin’!
 “I sing of Spring with a too-ra-lay!
 “How many weeks to the baseball season?”

Envoi

Coach, watch that runner on third, he may
 Try stealing home if they’ve got the squeeze on!
 This is the crucial year, Ole!
 How many weeks to the baseball season?¹⁴

Cyrano delivers a classic ballade as he duels in the first act of *Cyrano De Bergerac* by Edmond Rostand.

A simpler form for the envoi is a solo line followed by a single response or refrain, such as “With a hey down, down, derry down,” repeated after each solo line, as in the old folk ballads, (see “Ballad” on page 342).

For another sort of formulaic verse see the cinquain on page 417.

Granted, formulaic verse is not for everyone, but compulsive puzzlers gravitate toward this sort of thing. They can do more to interest the rest of the class in verse forms than all the best books on prosody. Students who construct verses as word play become interested in the technicalities of poetry. Try to make available rhyming dictionaries and other books that spell out various stanzaic and rhyme-scheme options. Versifiers need to know how many feet are in each line and what the regular beat of a poem is. To scan poetry before they have enough experience with it to be curious about its form has turned many students away from a mode of expression that is more to be played with than studied. Such play will lead easily into appreciation of the many serious uses and variations of the sonnet form.

Encourage students to versify as an appropriate way to mark a significant event. Students who write what has been termed *occasional verse*, composed for a specific event in a social group—birthday, holiday, special achievement, and so on—are following a venerable tradition that dates back many centuries.

¹⁴ Howard Cushman, p. 14. Used by permission of Peggy Ledbetter and the Philadelphia Bulletin.

COMPARISONS

At the heart of poetry-making is metaphor. Making up one's own comparisons builds poetry appreciation and rebuilds the world.

■ METAPHOR GAME

One person goes out of the room, and the class decides on a famous person whom "It" is to be, a person known to everyone in the group. Then "It" returns and asks questions, each question calling for a metaphorical answer. For example, the questioning might go like this:

It: If I were an animal, what would I be?

CLASS MEMBER: Giraffe

It: If I were a brand name, what would I be?

C.M.: Honor (a harmonica brand name)

It: If I were a shoe, what would I be?

C.M.: A hush puppy

It: If I were a food, what would I be?

C.M.: Coconut

It: If I were a place, where would I be?

C.M.: The Grand Hotel

It: If I were a historical figure, who would I be?

C.M.: Helen Keller

The game continues until "It" either guesses who she is or gives up. In this case, the famous person is Harpo Marx.

See also the activity in "Making It Strange" on page 396.

■ COMPARISON POEMS

Collections of short poems that feature comparison provide evocative reading matter and a stimulus for composition. This likeness may be expressed as simile: "The binocular owl, fastened to a limb *like* a lantern all night long";¹⁵ or as metaphor: "Morning is a new sheet of paper for you to write on."¹⁶ A single original *like* like these picks out something and compares it so it can be experienced in a fresh way.

The best way for students to appreciate comparisons and feel comfortable using them is to become steeped in the figures of poetry. Instead of belaboring the difference between similes and metaphors, you would do better to present many poems based on a central comparison and let the class try writing similar poems. In "The Country Bedroom," for example, Frances Cornford begins, "My room's a square and candle-lighted boat," and continues the comparison for the rest of the poem's

¹⁵ Quotation from "The Woods at Night" by May Swenson. © 1963 by May Swenson and renewed © 1991. Used with the permission of the literary estate of May Swenson.

¹⁶ From "Metaphor" in *It Doesn't Always Have to Rhyme* by Eve Merriam. Copyright © 1964 by Eve Merriam. Reprinted by permission of Marian Reiner for the author.

eight lines.¹⁷ When a student sets up a single comparison as the frame of her poem, she *magnifies* the analogizing process that underlies both the conventional figures of speech embedded in language and the novel metaphors of creative thought.

So-called literal-mindedness does exist, but we believe it is due either to unfamiliarity with the figurative use of language or to an emotional defense against ambiguity.¹⁸ In any case, teaching comparison as a *concept*, explaining it, serves nothing except to make analogy seem falsely esoteric. Actually, nothing is more common and automatic than making analogies, since all of concept formation and generalizing depends on perceiving likeness in discriminably different things. One learns metaphor out of the need to make the unknown known or to make the familiar strange, as in “The Country Bedroom.”

Mature students with much experience with comparison may be ready to experiment with metaphysical conceits—a form of word play in which one not only extends a metaphor but makes an unusual, even far-fetched comparison. Through profundity and absurdity, results bend the mind and are often funny, as John Donne well knew back in the seventeenth century.

SONGS

Poems and songs are closely allied, for to sing is to internalize metrical patterns as well as tunes, (see “Music” on page 212). Pauses, staccatos, the steep intervals between notes, lengths of phrasing—all suggest feelings, images and ideas of actions, and the words to express them. A small group can make up new words for a familiar tune and write them on a transparency, which can then be projected while the group reads or sings it and others follow the written words. Then the whole class sings the new lyrics.

Making up new words for a tune provides a lure to parody. If students deliberately choose words that do not fit the mood of the tune, they have a satire in song like the lively-tuned disaster ditties that Tom Lehrer sings.

Songs can be occasional verse composed to mark important events and holidays. The performance of this original material then is part of the celebration.

Song lyrics printed either in booklets or on the covers of record albums provide high-interest reading matter in any classroom. Recordings can be used for learning the tunes, for sing-along sessions, and as models for composition and performance. Some song lyrics like “A Modern Major General” of Gilbert and Sullivan are verbal patter. Others like “Van Lingle Mungo,” a catalogue of names of real baseball players, are also a kind of word play students would enjoy imitating with their own material.

The African-American rapping is another musical or rhythmic form that students can invent in and that’s definitely meant to be chanted or sung. Usually it consists of rhymed couplets like this sample:

¹⁷ Frances Cornford, “The Country Bedroom,” in *Cavalcade of Poems*, ed. George Bennett and Paul Molloy (New York: Scholastic Book Services, 1968). From *Collected Poems* by Frances Cornford, permission granted by Barrie & Jenkins Limited.

¹⁸ Peggy Parish’s tale, *Amelia Bedelia* (New York: Harper & Row Junior Books, 1963, 1983) shows a housemaid who interprets everything literally; it is a good introduction to figures of speech. See also Fred Gwynne, *A Chocolate Moose for Dinner* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1976, 1988).

SCHOOL RAP

*Don't think that you're too cool
To listen to the beat of the rap about school.
Well, I'm talking to you people who go to school
Trying to learn the golden rule
About science, mathematics, and history
Working towards a G.E.D.
But you hate it when your teacher, she goes berzerk
She gives you hundred rounds of that homework.
Three thousand pages you'll have to read.
It puts a strain to your brain that makes your eyes bleed.
The math is kind of silly working down to your nose,
You bring a calculator, use your fingers and your toes.¹⁹*

From (1) writing new words to an old tune, (2) setting a poem to music of their own, and (3) plugging their own material into a borrowed form, some students can go on to making up both tunes and lyrics—to writing original songs. It's an excellent way to write and appreciate both light verse and serious poetry as well. Many American youngsters live in a musically sophisticated subculture and this can be tapped for language development.

Word play is fun, but we include it as a significant part of this curriculum because at its best it is also a creative response to experience. When words are the playthings, language power cannot help but increase.

¹⁹ Thanks to Dee Oglesby who teaches at the Detention School of the Cook County Court in Chicago.

CHAPTER

LABELS AND CAPTIONS

TWELVE

If word play treats words *as* things, then labels and captions join words *with* things. Whereas word play sports with meaning, labels and captions convey meaning, like other texts—but not alone. They have to be read in conjunction with some nonverbal context—a place in which they are located, an object to which they are attached, or an object near which they are placed.

Environmental writing often occurs in units smaller than a sentence or in only one sentence or so. It can successfully communicate in fragments because an object, place, or picture provides the context that completes the message. A label on a can says in effect: “This can contains _____,” so that the label need be only a word or phrase that identifies the contents. Likewise, a caption under a newspaper photograph or beside a museum object identifies, defines, or explains things in a way that assumes the reader is viewing the things (or representations of them) along with the text. The double-medium of things-with-words is an important kind of communication at any age. When children engage in show-and-tell or adults in a talk-demonstration they’re doing an oral equivalent of labels and captions.

Education often neglects these texts because they occur so much outside of books and seem fragmentary. Yet they comprise a great deal of what we read and write—from packaging and marquee signs and warning signs to TV ads, computer graphics, and maps. This dual kind of communication, linking verbal to nonverbal, is at times very sophisticated. But it’s also some of the first reading matter that beginners can and want to read. Virtually all of the activities sketched in this chapter are appropriate for small children but are done also by adults as part of some occupation or another.

Environmental texts are easy in one sense and difficult in another. They’re easy in that the environment itself gives concrete clues to their meaning. However, they can pose a difficulty in relating the conciseness of the label or caption to the fuller experience of what it accompanies. And they’re not always used to elaborate what one sees or to direct one around in the environment. They may deliberately distort or satirize as in joke signs that mislabel or in the popular books of baby or animal faces with captions that are purposely absurd or inappropriately sophisticated. Much of cartoon art is dependent on just this kind of ironic interplay between verbal text and nonverbal context.

When this kind of discourse says what cannot be seen, it informs. When it says what can be seen, it interprets. In very different ways, both supplement things,

as they are also supplemented by them. Making these connections between words and accompanying things can run the whole gamut of primitive to sophisticated.

SIGNS

Some signs function as labels and some as captions. Making signs brings out these functions more clearly and can appeal to students of all ages. When youngsters are still mastering literacy, they will have a good reason to make tagboard labels for objects in the environment—their own coat hook or cubbyhole, shelves for specific items, containers for supplies, the clock, a class mailbox, objects in a play store or doctor's office, pieces of pretend money, plants, playground equipment, or whatever. A classroom plastered with labels is an environment to be “read,” a place to practice sight-reading, like the urban world outside.

Other signs inform, direct, warn, and comment as well as identify. These have the function of captions and may require fairly elaborated texts. Students can post some of these in environments beyond the classroom or school. Help students think of where signs may really be needed for safety or utility or be enjoyed for humor.

A very entertaining activity consists of making books of actual signs by photographing, rubbing, or drawing them. Some can make great primers for beginning readers, since many signs bear only one or two easily recognizable words. Other such books can make amusing or thoughtful books for mature readers. Think of signs in windows and businesses, parks and projects. How do signs from a particular building, neighborhood, or enterprise characterize that environment, as tombstones do a certain period or place? For youngsters who can read but don't, books of signs can act as a bridge from street to print.

EXHIBITS

Displays of three-dimensional objects can be assembled on a table or shelves as a kind of classroom museum and clarified with cards or tagboard that label and caption. Encourage students to bring in unusually old or interesting curiosities from home. They can affix written information about their history, origin, use, and so on. Or groups can bring together and display materials for science and social studies or other projects.

Of course, not all “objects” need actually be present. In fact, most labeling and captioning probably occurs within some *representation* of objects, either three-dimensional models like globes and replicas of boats or buildings, or two-dimensional depictions like pictures, maps, charts, and graphs.

Making and studying models of things helps people learn what the things do, how they work, and how they're made. Many things that students construct can be displayed both to show the finished product and to teach others about their parts, which labels can identify, and about their functions, which captions can explain. Displaying labeled and captioned models is a fine way to join physical activity and language, especially as in this case both are representational.

Like models, many pictures need no labels or captions until they are taken out of some other context and put into a display. Suppose students have found or taken some photos that they want to exhibit on bulletin boards or walls and parti-

tions. A good way for a group to go about captioning them is to write and compare captions for the same photo then discuss the fitness of each caption. Are they displaying these photos miscellaneously or thematically? As groups discuss the aptness of variant captions in order to select the best for the display, they may need to back up their choice of caption by pointing to visual evidence. Their captions may differ, however, because some aim more for style or wit and others more for description or information.

Students of all ages will often want to exhibit their art work and their writing, separately or together. Besides identifying artists/authors and the genre, they may want to surround the texts and pictures with some explanations about technique, theme, occasion, or other circumstances. Labeling and captioning can also just be part of artistically presenting *any* exhibit.

What might also be subject matter are the kinds of already labeled and captioned work described below, some of which might go into either a display or a booklet.

MAPS

Globes, terrain replicas, and dioramas constitute a kind of transition from objects themselves to flat maps, charts, and other two-dimensional graphics. Try to have on hand some of all these, especially many kinds of atlases and maps. They're an important medium and a worthy kind of reading matter. Students need to become experienced with both reading and making maps as an alternative or supplementary way of saying something. They need to discover what can best be said by maps and what can best be said in prose.

Maps feature not only proper names and labels and captions but also coding as well. Thus they'll have some of the same appeal as rebuses and codes, described in the previous chapter. We have found that maps hold an inherent fascination for youngsters, who should be allowed to play out their love affair with them. Maps need not be "taught" so much as pored over and puzzled at until they yield their meaning, without fearful anticipation of tests or required reports afterwards. Because there is no order, the reader has to move around and back and forth until the pieces come together and until he becomes curious enough about the symbols to find the key. Learners like the code-and-puzzle aspect, but to avoid frustration they can ask questions or get a partner. And in emulating professional maps to make their own, they will focus on technical aspects of maps such as keys and projections.

For beginners, obtain literary maps from well-known storybooks such as Winnie-the-Pooh's woods or The Hobbits' Middle Earth. Later, students need not only road and street maps and maps of states and countries but also maps showing distribution of rainfall, resources, wildlife, and so on; older maps showing some changes both in mapping and in knowledge of the world; stellar maps of outer space; maps made by high-altitude, thermal, and electronic photography; and computer-simulation maps.

Mapping can be a way of symbolizing all sorts of physical and psychological material. Children can begin by making simple floor plans of their room, home, or school, or maps of their neighborhood, labeling the streets, buildings, and other features. They can make treasure maps for others to follow. Older students can map inner feelings, thoughts, or interests as well as outer reality, labeling different areas of the head, for example. Once interested in maps, even less mature students will see the many interesting possibilities of the medium for both fun and fact.

CHARTS

Charting or diagraming is a kind of mapping and a good way for small children or less verbal older students to move from pictures to schemas with words, because all it takes at first is inserting words into their drawings. They display what they know about a subject in drawings, diagrams, or photographs that break the subject down into its parts and functions by means of labels and captions, as in a diagram of an airplane. Since charts almost never stand alone but need words to explain them, they provide excellent experience in coordinating words with graphics. Older students discover the value of labeled or captioned visuals as a way to get across a lot of information in a little space and few words. They can use charts to depict the relation of parts to the whole, or to array items similar in some respects and different in others, as in a comparative set of pictures of reptiles. All this corresponds to certain kinds of computer graphics.

Chronology can be shown on a chart as a time line on which are labeled the important events at the appropriate spots on the line. A youngster's first time line might be one of his own lifetime or of the most recent year of his life. Drawings depicting important events and placed on a time line make good starters for memory writing (see pages 359–365). Later he can take a longer sweep of history. Genealogy can be shown on a chart like a family tree bearing people's names and the names of their relationships.

Playing with rummy-type picture card decks in which categories of objects are pictured and labeled may prove a good way to become familiar with the elements of a chart. Children can make their own card decks as suggested on page 137 in *BECOMING LITERATE*, with cut-out pictures or their drawings on one side and names of the depicted objects on the other. These cards themselves are one form of labeling and could be made into the pages of an alphabetized or miscellaneous booklet. If the cards name and depict interrelated things like sea creatures in a hierarchy, they can be made into a chart. Such cards are like an array chart cut into modules, one item per card. They can be considered separately and combined with each other, often in more than one way. Children can make a chart by arraying the cards according to how the items interrelate, as classes containing subclasses, for example.

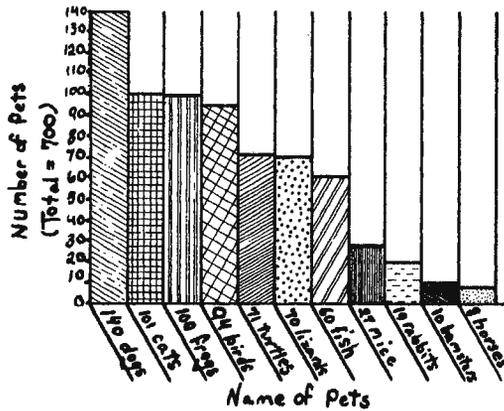
GRAPHS

A graph is more abstract than a chart; it is a visual conceptualization of information, a matrix type of data presentation using coordinates. Generally graphs represent quantities laid against some measurement grid. Like charts, they need labels to identify items within the visual and captions above or below to explain how the graph presents its data. Making their own graphs helps students develop more efficiently the capacity to read and utilize graphs.

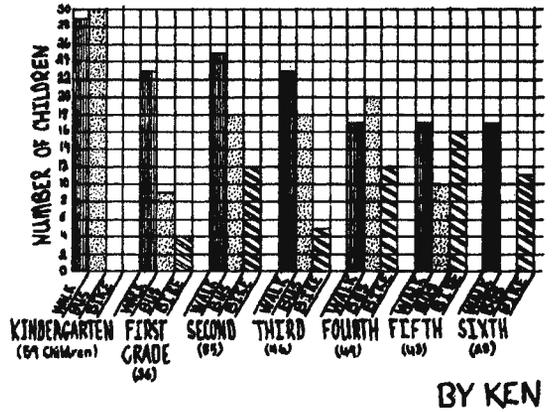
Elementary school youngsters can begin by graphing simple things like daily temperature or attendance tallies in the form of a bar or line graph. Graphing can, of course, complement regular math work by translating arithmetical figures into drawings and these drawings, in turn, into words. Children thereby make mathematical statements or sentences in an alternative form that in some respects is more familiar (see Figure 12.1). Graphs stand somewhere between mathematical and ordinary language and so afford an important way to translate between the two.

FIGURE 12.1 SAMPLE STUDENT GRAPHS

THE NUMBER OF DIFFERENT PETS OWNED BY CHILDREN IN JUDY'S SCHOOL



HOW SOME CHILDREN GET TO SCHOOL



BY KEN

Source: Irving Wasserman, Novato (CA.) Unified School District

Every classroom needs to have collections of different types of charts and graphs that students can read and use as models for their own charting and graphing. Some of these can be by former students. Let them compare and define them among themselves and explore what different things may be done with them. Charts and graphs are easy in the sense that they're pictorial and nonverbal, but they're also difficult, because the relations they depict—between quantities, or parts and wholes, or members of a class—are logical relations that are in themselves rather abstract. Thus charts and graphs are a concrete way of depicting abstractions, with words playing a mediating role.

STUDENT ART

Recapitulating history, which moved from pictographs to the alphabet, children convert drawing to writing. Both symbolize meaning. Children's pictures usually encapsulate a story or situation and so lend themselves well to captioning, which gives them a chance to join their nonverbal symbols with their verbal. Writing captions can be facilitated by having available a stock of homemade (or perhaps pre-gummed) blank caption strips of the right size to be taped to the bottom of the art paper.

In small groups students take turns showing their pictures. As each picture is held up, the caption may be folded back and the rest of the group may make up captions for it. They discuss these, the artist reads his caption, and they discuss his in relation to theirs. See page 204 for the same activity with titles in a writing workshop. Many artists' captions will need further explaining because not every-

thing is in the picture and because things the caption refers to may not be evident to the other children.

This discussion prompts children to elaborate orally what the caption summarizes in writing and thus to generate further material. As children develop their writing, they will be able to add text, at the end of a discussion, to their original caption. After the discussion they may decide to write a story based on their picture, telling what action precedes and what follows the picture and answering in a narrative some of the questions their classmates asked. This story, with the picture attached, can be read to others or displayed.

Captions for drawings can be exchanged, and students can draw new pictures for each other's captions. Then these pictures can be compared with the drawings done by the first artists. A variation is to have each person caption his own drawing on a separate paper and then exchange drawings but not the captions. Then each student captions the others' pictures, and these are all compared with the ones the artists did. One of the values of comparing different people's captions is to discover how differently individuals perceive the same words or things.

Captions of particularly evocative pictures may run to several sentences and hence may be a way for some students to begin to write longer pieces without being daunted by blank paper. Gradually youngsters move from individual pictures with captions to a series of pictures that tells a story, comic-strip fashion, to stories in which the words do most of the telling. Finally, the word-picture ratio is reversed until the text is primary and the drawing, secondary. See "Comic Strips" and "Photographs" in *ACTUAL AND INVENTED DIALOGUE* for more suggestions on how to move from captioned pictures to invented dialogues and stories.

COLLAGES

Thematic statements may be expressed in collages of pictures and words pasted onto poster stock. Students can mix found pictures with their own snapshots and drawings. If students choose a subject they feel strongly about, and if they experiment with the compositional possibilities of this medium—juxtaposition, spacing, arrangement, overlapping, or cropping of pictures—the result can be an effective statement in picture and word. If the creators cut out and glue words, phrases, or sentences into a collage, the result may be a kind of found or concrete poem. In addition to making collages with things that interest them, students might collect pictures or words that they feel center on a theme such as who they would like to be in five or twenty years, their real self versus their ideal self, a pressing social issue, or a mood created by a piece of literature, music, or art.

BOOKLETS

A bulletin-board display or book of pictures of class members with their names underneath can help beginners learn to read each other's names. A fuller class book can be assembled, devoting a page or two to each member of the class with his photograph or sketches of him in various characteristic acts or poses, each appropriately captioned, of course. Drawings, paintings, photographs brought from home or taken by the youngsters—these can be captioned in books each focusing on a single subject, such as local or unusual places, sports events, animals, or special events at the school. These provide high-interest classroom reading matter.

■ DICTIONARIES AND ENCYCLOPEDIAS

Animal books with a picture and name of a different animal on each page can be put together by very young children. Alphabetized, this becomes an animal dictionary. Other books can illustrate and label other concrete kinds of things of high interest. Like adults, children like to show what they know in the form of dictionaries and encyclopedias, which for concrete items can consist of labeled and captioned illustrations. Their mini-dictionaries usually specialize in a favorite subject, with a page for each item students want to name, depict, and define. Elaborating dictionaries by expanding the information in the captions leads to mini-encyclopedias. These can in turn eventuate in collections of illustrated informative articles. The difference, after all, between captions and articles concerns the ratio of pictures to text, of visual illustration to verbal illustration.

■ SCRAPBOOKS

Cut-out photographs, art, cartoons, advertisements (many of which are little more than illustrations with captions), and so on can be captioned and assembled into scrapbooks. Youngsters often express themselves through these creations, especially since their captions act as personal commentary, almost like a reading journal. For this same reason other students enjoy looking and reading through them and are stimulated to talk about them. Reading captioned pictures appeals to weak readers because the words are few, and many of the words are made clear through the pictures.

NEWSPAPER HEADLINES AND MAGAZINE HEADINGS

A newspaper headline or title for an article is a special type of caption meant to attract attention to a text as well as to summarize it. Writing headlines and titles is often done in editorial offices by someone other than the author and is good experience for students of any age, because you have to capture the gist of the text to follow and to get someone to want to read it. Often an evocative photograph with its own caption serves as a way of arresting attention and leading into the main text.

WIT

More mature students find in captioning an opportunity for wit, puns, irony, alliteration, and jokes. Captions have an epigrammatic quality inherent in its root idea of *capturing* the essence of something. They also force the writer to think about what the words could say that the picture has not already said. This leads into matters of verbal style that no picture is capable of and also into more abstract sorts of past background or general circumstances that cannot be visually conveyed.

Editorial cartoons are usually drawings with captions. Depending on wit or incongruity for their humor, they may teach, satirize, or insult. Caricature and other exaggeration in the drawing are juxtaposed with a caption that uses it to make a commentary. Some students will like the challenge of drawing and captioning their own cartoon, but others can just turn a news photo into a cartoon by captioning it satirically and mounting it for posting. Generally, many pictures of

all sorts can inspire wit, and captioning for humor can become an ongoing game for which a posting corner is reserved.

For insults and epithets as witty forms of labels, see page 281, and see “Single Statements” on page 401 for short, independent texts that captioning can lead into—epitaphs, proverbs, aphorisms, definitions, and epigrams.

Labels and captions not only constitute a form of discourse significant in its own right from childhood to adulthood but give less developed literacy learners of any age an easy kind of text to create and interpret as they build toward longer and more disembedded kinds of discourse.

CHAPTER

DIRECTIONS

THIRTEEN

The capacity to give clear directions and to understand those of others is one of our culture's most widely valued language competencies. The fact that this chapter is short does not imply that directions are less important than other kinds of discourse. It's rather that they're a part of almost every other kind of discourse and of each of the basic processes of this curriculum and thus cannot easily be separated out.

Directions tell us how to do and make things. The mode is typically imperative, of course. Directions are usually utilitarian and most often occur as operating instructions affixed to or accompanying objects, as procedure manuals or memoranda, or how-to-do-it books and articles. Recipes are a notable form. Many directions are oral, such as instructions on how to get to a certain place or coaching during sports or music lessons. To establish a sequence of actions, directions are often put in chronological order like the events in a narrative, but the practical needs of the operation that's being directed may well require overlaying another ordering onto time sequence.

Senders and receivers of directions can find out more readily than with most other discourse whether they're getting across or receiving the message. They quickly discover problems of communication, many of which originate in egocentricity. Directions serve as a mirror for the sender because they're translated into actions and provide immediate feedback to her about the effectiveness of her communication. Receiving directions develops the ability to convert language into actions. The ability to follow written directions is perhaps the most direct index of reading comprehension (see page 243). There's less chance for misreading to remain unnoticed than in other kinds of discourse.

STAGE DIRECTIONS

A good example of direction-giving being a part of other kinds of discourse are the stage directions in a script. As a blueprint for producing a particular play, a script contains not just dialogue but directions to the actors for how to move and gesture and directions to production people about how to make the costumes and the set. A film script must contain camera directions (see page 335). Sometimes script directions may be cast somewhat indirectly, in the form of description, which turns out to be closely related to direction-writing.

GAMES

Oral directions to move bodily such as those in *INFORMAL CLASSROOM DRAMA* are a good way, like other game directions, to translate word to act. Following is an activity that makes directions themselves a game. It is good for the years of middle school.

■ BACK TO BACK

Each of two players takes the same number of paper shapes. Or each one takes identical sets of solid-color triangles, squares, and circles (from math or attribute materials). The game goes like this:

- Sit back to back with your materials on a flat surface in front of you. One of you is the sender; the other, the receiver. A few others can watch, but they're not to talk or otherwise help.
- If you're the sender, assemble your pieces into a certain pattern, telling the person behind you what you're doing.
- If you're the receiver, listen to the other person and assemble your pieces into the same pattern. You can't look around or ask questions.
- Compare what you've done and ask the observers how it went and what you might have done to make the directions clearer.

The point of not letting the two players see each other is to enforce a total reliance on words. For the first time or two, the communication is restricted to one-way talk. The players may decide to role-play a boss giving a worker directions over a one-way intercom. Then the "worker" is finally allowed to ask questions. Withholding conversation for a while demonstrates its great advantage, which is the receiver's feedback in the form of questions of clarification and requests for omitted information.

The onlookers of the groups may need to be reminded that kibitzing spoils the game and that they should watch silently so that they can observe the causes of miscommunication and try to avoid these mistakes when their turns come to give directions. Depending on the difficulty of the puzzle, a number of students may have to act as sender before the receiver can assemble it successfully. Sets of puzzles are exchanged and players rotate roles.

Using common geometrical shapes gives students an opportunity to put into play the vocabulary of geometry. However, if odd shapes rather than conventional ones are cut out and used, players have to stretch their imaginations for ways of describing. A graded difficulty in puzzles can be achieved by gradually increasing the number of pieces (starting with three) and by making the component shapes harder to describe and to position.

It's good to have the completed puzzle sometimes form a familiar figure in order that the sender, if she thinks of doing so, may state at the outset, "We're going to put the pieces together so that they look like a house." This way, if she omits this general framework, she can create the same kind of communication problems that can be created in a piece of written exposition, since in either case the receiver lacks a framework for relating particulars to each other.

VARIATIONS

After students have become aware of at least some of the factors that make for success and failure in the game, variations are introduced. The goal is still to match senders' and receivers' materials by means of verbal directions, but, to vary and generalize the communication issues, puzzles are replaced by other things. Here are some possibilities:

- Someone who has learned how to do some origami creations (paper-folding) talks a partner, or perhaps her group, through the procedure, still back-to-back or with a barrier between. Compare success giving directions from memory with giving directions while folding at the same time.
- The sender looks at an abstract picture composed especially for this purpose and tells the receiver how to draw it.
- The sender draws a simple picture or cuts out a shape with scissors as she tells the receiver how to do it.

■ DRAW IT LIKE IT IS

Older youngsters might respond well to a game for two teams of five or so members. Each team chooses a “describer” who looks at a pattern, puzzle shape, picture, or whatever and tells about it to the rest of her team, each member of which will draw the design as best she can from the description. Drawers cannot look at the model that the two describers can look at. Finished drawings are shown to a team member appointed to act as judge. She chooses the diagram most like the one described, which everyone can now look at, and gives it to you or a student to judge against her opponent's. The team with the most accurate drawing wins.

■ BUILDING BLITZ

- The game leader builds a simple model out of construction material such as Tinker Toys or Lego and doesn't show it to the other players. She puts it into another classroom or a closet. Then she puts out on two separate tables exactly the same number and type of building pieces that she used to build the model.
- Each team divides itself into three groups—observers, runners, and builders. The leader tells each team that they will have a certain amount of time to build a model out of the materials set out on each table. Only builders may touch the materials. The runners run from the building table to a spot where they can meet the observers but not see the model. The observers must run to meet the runners at that spot, but they can't see the tables where the builders are working. The observers are the only ones who can see the model built by the game leader. They describe it to the runners, who relay the message to the builders. Any observer who goes beyond her designated spot and sees the builders, or any runner who sees the model or touches the building materials is out of the game.
- The two groups of builders may copy each other, but they don't know if the other builders are doing the right thing, of course.
- When the leader calls, “Time,” the team which has built a model most like the original one wins.

■ FOLLOWING WRITTEN DIRECTIONS

Other direction-giving games can be *written*:

- Each child writes out on a tagboard strip, approximately three inches by twelve inches, three directions, such as:

1. Walk to the door.
2. Open and close it twice, leaving it open.
3. Hop back to your chair.

Or:

1. Walk backward to the blackboard.
2. Turn and write on it “ $4 \times 4 = 16$.”
3. Erase what you have written and clap your hands four times.

- Divide into two teams.
- The first player of team one gives the first player of team two a card. That player reads the directions aloud and then puts the card down. She must follow the directions exactly; if she cannot do so, she’s out of the game. If she does follow correctly, her team has a point.
- Then the player who has just had a turn calls on any player on the other team and asks her to tell her exactly what her directions said. If that player can do so, her team gets a point.
- Then it’s the first player of team one’s turn to do what the directions of the first member of team two say to do. The game is played as before.
- The team with the most points after all directions have been followed wins.

■ READING DIRECTIONS

In the activities above, direction-giving is itself the game. Most other games are run *by* directions or rules. These may be orally transmitted from old to new players or conveyed in print on the game materials or in game booklets if no special materials are required. Children who know how to play certain games as part of their oral culture can teach these to others. Questions that newcomers ask push the leader to revise misleading directions. Some game directions are in the form of jump-rope jingles and songs, like the “calling” for square dances. Try to have such collections around.

Most board, card, and computer games call for reading directions at the start and for consulting them occasionally later to settle uncertainties or disputes. Some games, like “Monopoly” and “Talk and Take” (described in the footnote on page 243), require not only reading initial rules but also reading and listening to individual instructions as they crop up throughout the game on cards or other materials.

■ WRITING GAME DIRECTIONS

Youngsters can take turns inventing a board or card game for their small group to play and then watch them play it. They can make the materials for the game and put onto a tape or write out the goal, procedure, and rules, specifying the number of players, any penalties, how a person wins, and directions for scoring. An interesting feature of this activity is the likelihood that unforeseen situations will arise

that the directions don't allow for. This fact builds in a frequent need for revision of the directions. Revised, these instructions can be affixed to the game, and the games exchanged and taken home, added to the classroom game collection, or exchanged with youngsters in another class or school. Generally, it's important that a direction writer either get back written comments or have a chance to talk with whoever played her game; sometimes both would be in order.

HOW TO DO AND MAKE

Students who have learned how to do something can pass this know-how on by giving directions for it to others. Even if they can *show* how, they usually have to verbalize directions as they demonstrate. Directions may be how to construct some object, how to operate some kind of apparatus, or how to perform a procedure like the Heimlich maneuver.

■ SHOW-AND-TELL

An excellent way to focus on directions is to specialize show-and-tell (page 77) by stipulating that the item brought to one's group should be something one made or knows how to operate. In this case show-and-tell takes on the specific purpose of explaining to others how to proceed. As group members ask questions, the speaker can revise and refine her directions. Afterward, she can tape or write these directions and include them in a how-to booklet.

■ EXCHANGING SKILLS

Older elementary school and junior high youngsters can engage in this process in a variety of ways. They might set up an "I'll Tell You How" service whereby they share skills. They can advertise on a poster or on a dittoed handout, telling what they know how to do and are willing to teach—for example, how to make a God's-eye, to type, to play chess, to write a computer program, to work a camera, to do square roots, to baby-sit. They can set up a "teaching center" where they demonstrate to anyone interested how they do what they are skilled in doing. After some classmates have followed her oral instructions, the "teacher" can write up these as directions, taking account of the questions the "learners" had, perhaps adding diagrams or drawings, and placing them wherever appropriate for use.

Group partners can each think of something they know how to make from common materials, write the directions as clearly as they can, and exchange them. They all try to follow out the directions and bring back what they have made. Any problems or uncertainties about the directions are noted down on the paper, which is returned to the author. The performer and author can then discuss where the directions might need to be changed. Revised directions might be compiled into a class "Things to Do and Make" booklet with a table of contents, or made into illustrated activity cards and placed into a special file or box.

Elementary school children can read and follow directions for making a wide range of art products—specialized card decks with pictures, mobiles, models and dioramas, dollhouse furniture, sculptures including those of papier-mâché, puppets, paper foldings, toothpick constructions, rubbings, soap carvings, collages,

stitching, greeting cards, kites, and so on. Some of these directions can be for making math props—clocks, graphs, and play money.

Some students might enjoy imagining that they're writing an explanation to someone on another planet or in a very different culture who has never been here to see how we do things. They can write out in detail the steps involved in tying a shoe for someone who has never seen a shoe, for example, or how we use a knife and fork, put on a coat, use a pen to write, and so on. Then they exchange papers and follow the set of directions exactly as written, pretending to know no more about the process described than what's on the paper.

ACTIVITY CARDS

Consider that every activity card of any sort in the classroom poses a useful direction-receiving task. So the more you decentralize directions for individualization, the more practice you afford students in reading and following directions. They'll also become so accustomed to this mode of operating that making and contributing activity cards to the communal repertory will seem very natural.

COMPUTER MENUS

For activities to be carried out on computers, directions can be written in the familiar menu format for filing on disk according to whatever categories of activities students develop. Some students, for example, are instructing each other how to use certain software programs better or how to modify them. Other directions might concern how to go about searching and collating data for investigative projects or how to correspond through electronic mailing. In any case, the menu format may both facilitate and influence the creating of activity cards for students used to computers.

MANUALS

To accommodate extended directions, as for long projects or long-range maintenance, groups or individuals might write craft or hobby manuals, illustrated perhaps with captioned photos or diagrams. Manuals are booklets of directions specialized for a certain activity or apparatus—care of pets or plants, maintenance of machines, customizing automobiles, part-time ways of making money, applying to colleges for admission or companies for a job, and so on. Veterans of a certain school often write manuals to incoming students about how to make their way. These can allay a lot of anxiety, especially for youngsters first shifting from the self-contained classroom to multiple classes. Students who have contributed shorter sets of directions to activity cards or how-to booklets or magazine departments might try their hand at a manual on something they know a lot about. In writing extended directions they'll probably find themselves feeding into them considerable factual information about the animal or machine or activity necessary for understanding the directions. Writing a manual can give students excellent practice in expository writing.

READING

Manuals can join a special section of the classroom library devoted to books that tell how to do and make things, some published by professionals. Our society is so flooded with how-to books and magazines that examples and reading fodder

should be no problem. Even many general publications include how-to columns or departments from chess to cooking. Add to this the manuals, labels, plates, and other forms of operating instructions accompanying equipment and the environmental signs telling us what to do. This body of reading matter, often difficult and important, exceeds manyfold the attention schools have been inclined to give to it.

■ RECIPES

Recipes constitute a special case of directions for how to make something. Booklets of recipes that contain lists of ingredients in prescribed quantities and directions for cooking generally appeal to children. You don't have to sponsor this cooking in school, but youngsters can either take the books home or copy recipes they like to use at home with a parent or each other. It's a widespread form of directions found easily in newspapers, magazines, and books. Students can make collections of recipes they like in scrapbooks or files to exchange, read, and take home to use. This way they have another opportunity to read action sequences and at the same time learn vocabulary for food, utensils, and units of measure. They also need to do arithmetical calculations, especially if they make plans to do some cooking for a group. Relating cooking to health food, ethnic traditions, and consumer shopping gives it a depth that will no doubt increase interest. Discourage sex-role stereotypes about cooking.

Youngsters can write their own recipes, illustrating each step in the process with a drawing, and post them on a recipe board or make them into a booklet. They can transcribe dictated recipes from other people or try out and write down an original of their own.

An activity for fun is to make up "recipes for life," usually humorous and aimed at particular things, such as "a recipe for getting along with girls."

■ TRAVELING DIRECTIONS

This is a kind of direction-giving most people use frequently to guide a person to a place she has never been before. Because this discourse demands allowing for the receiver in an especially perceptive way, making up directions for getting from one place to another is an excellent project.

As a game very young children can make a plan for a walk around the classroom that calls for touching, say, five different places. This plan can either be presented in a drawing or written in words and given to a friend. The friend follows the directions, and if she doesn't do as the writer had planned, the directions may be revised. Then the two reverse roles.

Older children can write more detailed step-by-step directions, such as:

1. Start at . . .
2. Go right along the . . . ten steps.
3. Go left three squares on the floor tile to . . .
4. Turn right and take two steps . . . and so on.

The children can direct each other to destinations outside the classroom, inside the school, and, later, out in the community. By this time, they can eliminate maps

or diagrams by pretending that the directions are coming over the telephone. In small towns, perhaps, where distances are short and children not bused to school, they might exchange directions and go to each other's houses.

Directing each other to specific places on the playground or to places within the school block might be a next best possibility. The final destination should not be stated but rather discovered by the person who's following the directions. A "treasure" might be buried at that spot, or a small piece of masking tape with a message for the finder might be pasted under a ledge or in a hidden area. If the traveler doesn't get to where the writer intended, the two can go over the route together and find out whether the problem is in the way the directions were written or the way they were followed. Older youngsters might give identical directions to two people instead of one, and the two race to see who reaches the destination first.

Some directions should be projected and discussed. One of us sat in once on a lively and interesting fifth-grade discussion of directions to one another's homes. In every paper there were some directions the class felt sure it could not follow. For example, "then turn up Linden Street" indicated only a turn, not the direction of the turn, since *up* expressed nothing but the writer's subjective mental picture of aiming herself where she wanted to go. (This kind of egocentricity is equivalent to the puzzle-director's saying, "Now pick up the next piece," or "Put the funny-looking piece against it.")

Since the children frequently didn't know the names of streets, locations were often identified by ambiguous descriptions that more accurate word choice or better vocabulary would have cleared up. "Store," for example, could have been one of several retail places, but there was only one supermarket on the street. Since improving directions often requires replacing some words by others, this is another important place to work on vocabulary. Then, later in the discussion, a paper referred to the "Western Building," at which point it occurred to some of the children that only someone familiar with the town would know that landmark. Whom were these directions written for anyway? Suppose a stranger had to follow them? So they themselves brought up the issue of adapting directions to different receivers—which suggests another activity.

For another occasion a story situation based on the problem could be imagined: an out-of-town visitor is staying overnight at such and such hotel, and the next day she is coming out to the school to talk with the students. What directions should the principal give when she telephones her that evening? Will the visitor be walking or driving? These directions are read and discussed in a small group. Ask them to look at their papers, check for directions that a stranger would not understand, and change them so that she would.

Working with directions pays off secondarily in rich personal benefits, because when schools give students plenty of opportunity to pass around skills, everybody learns how to do more things. Young people encourage and inspire each other by showing what they can do. If you make your classroom a central how-to exchange, you'll be gratified to find your students teaching each other a lot of practical skills at the same time they are learning to master an important kind of discourse.

CHAPTER

ACTUAL AND INVENTED DIALOGUE

FOURTEEN

In this chapter we're combining two of the kinds of discourse—actual dialogue and invented dialogue. By *dialogue* we mean all kinds of conversation and discussion. If the interlocutors are spontaneously interacting as their own selves, this is an actual dialogue. When this talk is written down, it is a transcript. If, on the other hand, the speakers are role-playing, they are improvising or performing an invented dialogue. When this imagined conversation is written, it is a script (or direct quotation in fiction and comic strips).

Since the language of scripts and transcripts resembles that of informal talk, a less-developed language student may feel more at home with such texts than with most other types of discourse. At the same time, if the scripting is artful and the characters articulate, or if the transcript records inspired discussion, either can provide an example of expressive and eloquent discourse to contrast with the looseness, imprecision, and dullness of much common conversation.

More than any other types of discourse, actual and invented dialogues emphasize the interrogative mode and interaction. They provide models for alert and involved give-and-take, epitomized in the question-and-answer dialogue so familiar in comedy duo routines and characteristic of interviews. Dialogues involve all the language arts since they can be spoken spontaneously, improvised, witnessed, written, read, and performed.

ACTUAL DIALOGUE

Actual dialogue is such a common, natural, and pleasurable experience that we often discount its value, especially as a classroom activity. But conversing, in fact, provides the most pervasive and significant of all processes in the development of language. Actual dialogue includes all oral exchange, such as ordinary socializing, task talk, brainstorming, topic or panel discussion, monologues, interviews, trials, hearings, and debates. Actual dialogue is a broad, fundamental kind of discourse that embraces the whole oral base of language and, when transcribed, entails spelling, punctuating, and paragraphing as well. Since *TALKING AND LISTENING* treats the oral processes of actual dialogue, here we shall consider only actual dialogue that has been written down—transcripts.

■ TRANSCRIBING SPEECH

Creating and reading transcripts are very important activities. They provide one of the easiest transitions from the familiar world of oral interchange to writing. One way to produce a transcript is to tape a conversation and write it down while replaying the tape. Another way is to take notes as you listen and then write up these notes as close to verbatim as possible or desirable. Either way, students develop transcribing and editing skills (see “Transcribing,” on page 237).

Classroom talk, telephone chats, overheard dialogues in public places, interviews, TV talk shows, or public events such as court trials or the deliberations of legislative bodies can be taped and transcribed. This transcript can in turn be used as a script for a performance, to recreate the fullness of the original event, or as evidence to quote in documenting research or making a statement.

■ READING AND PERFORMING TRANSCRIPTS

There are as many types of transcripts to read and interpret as there are kinds of dialogue, ranging from snatches of random conversation to tightly planned lectures. Collections of transcripts that include such task-oriented dialogue as the exchanges between the astronauts and ground control, or such public events as trials, hearings, interviews, debates of public officials, and deliberations of legislative bodies are invaluable in acquainting students with the range of this type of text—not to mention the workings of their society!

Transcripts are among the most important sources of documents in this century for the creation of more abstracted materials such as reportage, biography, and history. Tape-recording made feasible the whole new genre of “oral history” (see page 373). Reading and performing transcripts of public processes may teach far more than anything else in school might about how our government and civic bodies function. Information and social issues are presented in a way that students may at first find more familiar and compelling than essays. See page 186 for the process of making Readers Theater scripts, for which transcripts may furnish excellent material, as in Peter Weiss’ *The Investigation*. See other parts of *PERFORMING TEXTS* for enacting scripts.

■ CORRESPONDENCE

When parties in conversation are separated or find themselves in a situation where they’re not expected to talk, they may take their dialogue to paper. Notes passed in class have a long tradition as a ploy to transcend limits set on conversation. Separated in space, people can talk by radio or telephone, even as a group by means of conference calls, and machines can record these conversations. Though not the same as vocal dialogue, the dialogue-at-a-distance we call correspondence represents the next step beyond it and may as logically be taken up here as anywhere in our tour of discourse. Dialoguing by computers with modems, and faxing, may indeed make this step shorter and give correspondence a new life, if not a new meaning.

Like conversation, correspondence between familiar parties tends to be spontaneous and informal. Personal letters are much like talk also in ranging across other kinds of discourse from true stories to directions and generalizations. Like

public task or topic talk, business or intellectual correspondence may be more formal and focused than personal letters. Memoranda are like business letters within an organization. Often the same people who write these or postal letters to each other also talk together at times in person or by phone, showing clearly how space-time circumstances determine whether interlocutors talk or write and how closely conversation and correspondence may alternate regarding even the same subjects. Most working adults, especially white-collar, mix oral and written dialogue this way constantly on the job. Interestingly, this mixture probably characterizes most adults' personal communication as well: they are alternately talking and writing to relatives and friends, depending on who is where when.

Rapidly developing telecommunications will no doubt influence considerably the relations between conversation and correspondence in both professional and personal lives, as more people, for example, work and study at home and as communication generally replaces transportation.

So considering oral and written dialogue together may have great learning importance. How much, for example, do the language and structure of conversation and correspondence differ when people alternate them in pursuing the same subjects with the same interlocutors? Will chatting and keyboarding become more alike in the future? Or raise consciousness of differences? Delays in response certainly lengthen the monologues within exchanges. The more that one has to go it alone before getting feedback, the harder it is to find out if one is getting across. Body language has to be replaced by purely verbal equivalents. Expression has to be more precise and organization more logical, which means *foreseeing* the receiver's needs.

Increasingly, today's communicants will have to adapt rapidly back and forth between face-to-face or vocal dialogue and dialogue-at-a-distance via various media. *Rapidly*, because they may one moment converse over television telephones ("face-to-face"), another moment over cellular radiophone (vocal only), then dialogue in the same time over modems (permitting immediate response), then correspond over fax (less rapid turnaround) or transportive services (slow exchange). Whereas, in other words, interlocutors used to either converse or correspond, now spoken and written dialogue have spread into a spectrum blurring old distinctions.

What does this mean for teachers? Interlocutors have to be able to shift awarely from one means of communication to another according to the degree of remoteness in time and space, that is, according to the speed and fullness of the feedback. The more dim and delayed, the more one has to speak like a writer. Practice under these rapidly shifting conditions will best teach how to constantly adjust language, organization, and rhetoric from one circumstance to another. The learning environment must contain these various means of modulating between conversation and correspondence—everything from phones and mailboxes to faxes and computer networks. The idea of pen pals is still alive and well at *My Weekly Reader*,¹ which arranges for classes to exchange names and addresses, and thrives also via electronic mail among schools, which enables students to exchange not only news and thoughts but samples of writing as well.

¹ Field Publications, 245 Long Hill Rd., Middleton, CT, 06457.

A child's first letters are typically gifts to the recipient, artifacts often lovingly crafted and delivered with pride. They're a way of sharing feelings and stories with someone cherished or at least familiar, often someone to whom the child could perfectly well speak. Maturing students find reasons to address increasingly remote people in reaching out for new personal relationships and in engaging with the business world. As they shift correspondents, they learn to adapt their discourse to accommodate people who don't otherwise share their lives.

PARALLEL READING

Because electronic media are being used for dialogue, much of it vanishes like conversation itself, but it can be printed out, if desired. Texts can result and be shared with others not party to the dialogue.

Written letters have always been regarded as potentially important reading matter because of the thoughts and feelings of the correspondents, their part in events, or their relationship. Precisely as an extension of conversation, letters can be a comfortable access to books for reluctant readers. Many students will enjoy browsing through books of correspondence for personages, periods, or topics that interest them. Newspaper and magazine columns often take the form of letters querying an expert for advice or information about personal relations, health, sports, etc., and these too attract youngsters. See page 408 about writing advice letters and page 354 about letters as part of true stories (see "Fictional Letters" on page 351).

INVENTED DIALOGUE

Under this heading we shall consider primarily the reading and writing of dialogue in the form of scripts. Dialogue within narrative will be covered in the next chapter. See *INFORMAL CLASSROOM DRAMA* for orally invented dialogue. Dialogue of ideas comes up in the last chapter as being more akin to essay than drama.

■ MEDIA ALTERNATIVES

Any invented dialogue can be presented in a number of ways, each of which has a different potential and set of limitations. If the fictive conversation is a script that depends largely on voice and verbal interaction rather than visual image and scene, it lends itself well to Readers Theater or a radio show. If part of the drama of the script is in an unusual appearance of a character or setting, a TV or puppet show or play or videotape might be more appropriate (see "Puppets" on page 96 and "Filming" on page 335). For a lighthearted or humorous script or one with fantastic characters, an animated film might be best. If the script calls for several very different settings or fast-paced action, a film might serve well. Help students be aware of their options and select a medium that best suits their intentions. For this purpose, have on hand for students to look at and imitate some collections of scripts for various media.

■ POINTS OF DEPARTURE

Aside from general story prompters treated in the next chapter, here are some oral and visual stimuli for writing dialogue.

IMPROVISING

Taping and transcribing improvisations produces a script that can be edited and filled in with stage directions. Improvisers need not set out to create a script, but if they're taping anyway for self-critiquing as they work up a best version, they can transcribe this version as well as, or in lieu of, placing the tape in the library. Collections of professional scripts in the classroom serve as models for the format and punctuating of scripts, thereby eliminating the need to "teach" script-writing. Capturing subtleties of vocal expression on paper is a fine art well practiced as players transcribe their own dialogue together. How much voicing can you get across through punctuation and how much must be conveyed in stage directions? Consider, for example "Good evening," "Good evening ...," and (sadly) "Good evening" (see "Transcribing" on pages 237 and 236).

Or a group might set out to write a script by improvising it first, with or without taping it. This allows them to rough out action and dialogue and leave the perfecting to the writing, which one member might do alone or all might do separately or collectively. A single writer's script can be discussed and revised in a writing workshop, often by trying out the script as discussed later. Separate versions can be merged in a collective session or two. Finished scripts of improvisations can be rehearsed and performed or exchanged with other groups to be performed by them.

Just as improvisations can take off from minimal situations (see page 106), so can written scripts. Inasmuch as writing a script is making up dialogue as you go, an author is improvising from a basic idea of some human interaction. Help students move easily from floor to text by thinking of script-writing as just shifting the form of the improvising. The big difference of course is that, in writing, a single actor is playing all the roles and doing so on paper instead of with voice. Experienced oral improvisers will make this transition easily, aided by transcribing some improvisations, and will write much better scripts for this experience. Indeed, the best way to start writing scripts is to improvise. This heads off many problems raised later in this chapter.

COMIC STRIPS

One of the best ways to ease youngsters into writing invented dialogue is to have them use the comic-strip medium. They might begin by remaking comic strips—whiting out or cutting out the original dialogue and filling in their own. Or you may find on the market some consumable booklets of comics with blank balloons for doing just this. Looking for cues for dialogue, the writers read the faces, gestures, and circumstances that they see in the drawings. Filling in comics makes students aware of dialogue by isolating it.

If copies are made of strips with empty dialogue balloons, writers can compare their different dialogues for the same strips. This raises interesting issues of interpretation and aptness. Some may decide to contrast spoken words with gestures or facial expressions by, say, having a character who looks scared try to sound courageous. But maybe others think the character looks surprised instead and therefore invent very different dialogue.

Next, students might create their own stories and characters as well as dialogue. Since this involves inventing, drawing, and writing, partners may be especially welcome. They can be directed on an activity card to go on to make their

own comic books by drawing panels as well as writing the dialogue, thinking up new situations for borrowed characters, or making up their own characters. They may find it easy to start by converting into comic-strip format a story they already know. Comics and cartoons are good for rendering riddles or jokes that take a question-and-answer form. Students can display their comics or read them to younger children or other people, allowing the listeners to see the pictures as they read aloud.

Seeing how narrative can be carried by dialogue is good preparation for writing regular scripts. Like films, comics put prose narrative into pictures. The dialogue balloons act as the sound track in films, the quotation marks in prose, and the script format in plays.

PHOTOGRAPHS

Pictures of people or animals can stimulate dialogue-writing. A group spreads out some photographs or other pictures of two or three people who might be talking and then write collectively or separately a script of what they are saying to each other. First, they should take time to examine the picture, noting the age, clothing, posture, gesture, facial expression, setting, and activity of the people. Individuals may do this alone, of course, but may benefit from doing it first in a group. If members all write on the same picture, they can compare and discuss the differences among their dialogues, which will probably be considerable. Then they can display the scripts around the photo that inspired them. If they write from different pictures, they can learn a lot from seeing what each created from his choice.

Applying this same process, students may:

- give voice to animals or things if pictures of these suggest that they might be conversing.
- invent dialogues from photos showing *more* than two speakers.
- imagine a monologue uttered by one of the parties in the photo to another, as may be suggested by the relative stances of the figures. What circumstances explain his holding forth while the other or others let him?
- choose a picture of someone who looks like he might be talking to himself about something going on around him, imagine his interior monologue, and write it down as a script for a soliloquy (voiced for the audience but not heard by others in the scene).

If results of any of these are posted, a game can be to try to guess which dialogues or monologues go with which pictures. Scripts can be performed by the authors or others or made into booklets for either silent reading or performance.

Another alternative is to write dialogue for a “silent film,” a video showing action but lacking sound.

TAKING OFF FROM LITERATURE

Fables, folk tales, myths, legends, Bible stories, and other synoptic narratives can be fleshed out into scripts as described for oral dramatization in “Situations from Reading” on page 107.

In one ninth grade, drama and script-writing were used in a study of myths. The students took the characterizations and plot summaries from Edith Hamil-

ton's *Mythology* and expanded them into group-written scripts, which they then rehearsed and performed. They used the texts only as sources, which meant that individuals read them in whatever way they thought best (including scanning) to glean what they needed to know for their drama. What actually happened was that in order to make up the dialogue and compose the scenes, the groups had to straighten out the action and interpret the characters by discussing them and by referring to the text for evidence. This class got very involved in the dramatizations. Another class in the same school read and studied the myths as texts. After reading a number of the myths, this class began to groan and lose interest. At the end of the year, the two classes took the same factual test on the myths. The class that had enacted them remembered them as well as the other that had studied them with the teacher. Students, moreover, who had been known to read with poor comprehension seemed definitely to understand and remember the material they had dramatized much better than they usually remembered texts they studied.²

Students can draw a minimal situation from a scene in a story, play, or novel they've read. This would be an off-stage scene referred to by the characters or the narrator but not directly presented. For example, we're told that one character informed another of something important. How did he say it, and how did the other react when he heard the news? Or what do you suppose Cinderella's sisters said to themselves as they went home from the ball?

■ A SCRIPT-WRITING SEQUENCE

Inexperienced writers would do well to keep to one continuous scene unrolling in one place. Since drama by definition is creating events at life rate, the playing time of the script would be approximately the same as the time the action would take in real life, allowing for some artistic stretching or compressing. Putting the matter this way helps keep the scene truly dramatic, in the moment, and emphasizes the fact that a script is a blueprint for enactment, not merely a text to be read like any other.

As a blueprint for moment-to-moment action, most scripts represent a far greater detailing of story than any narrative, which is always some narrator's summary of such things as dialogue and movement. In other words, as a direct simulation of action, plays represent the least abstracted, most detailed rendering of a story possible. Students who have had experience scripting tend, when writing regular narrative, to have a better sense of how much detail is required and when to include or exclude it. If students practice telling stories as both dramas and narratives, they will learn to do both better from understanding the relationship between them.

Because they're so used to narrative, inexperienced script writers tend to write a play as though it were still told by a storyteller free to jump a great deal in time and space. The result is a flurry of many very brief snatches of scenes

² Then head of the English department at Weeks Junior High School in Newton, Massachusetts, Joseph Hanson initiated this research for his own purposes long before the teacher-researcher movement got under way, but it exemplifies the practical sort of research that the movement today encourages teacher to conduct in their classrooms, as mentioned under "Teacher Research" on page 260.

threaded along “stage directions” that are really a sort of narration, even to telltale lapses into the past tense. Stage directions should contain only what can be seen and heard, except for an occasional indication about how to stage and act the scene. Explanation of background circumstances, recounting of offstage action, and descriptions of thoughts and feelings indicate that the author is still thinking of narrative, not drama, which is a no-host show. The test for all this is how well a crew could stage the script, or film it, as the case may be.

Much depends on how experienced a student is in both improvising and performing, because such experience heads off many scripting difficulties. For one thing, veteran improvisers are not nearly so likely to confuse dramatic writing with narrative. Instead of trying to warn students about pitfalls, just suggest a rough sequence that will build experience in script writing so as to avoid some of its problems. One way is to improvise dialogues orally, because these are staged from the outset. The other is to go from simple to complex as we’ll now describe.

Begin with short duologues, scripts having only two characters and one scene. Edward Albee began his career with a duologue of exactly this sort, “The Zoo Story.” Orchestrating voices beyond a pair complicates interaction by more than just simple addition because of all the possible combinations of interlocutors. After beginners have written some complete duologue scenes, they may move either downward in number to dramatic and interior monologues, or upward to plays with larger casts. We will outline a sequence suggesting possibilities in both directions.

If students do improvisations of each of the following kinds of plays before writing scripts for each, the scripts will be far more playable and require less revision. Make initial playwriting a direct extension of improvisation, and state the directions in performance terms. For a duologue, for example: “Write a single, uninterrupted scene playable in around five minutes, with minimal stage directions that read like a sensory recording, and containing no more than two characters.” This last stipulation keeps the dynamics manageable and makes dramatic focusing easier.

SHORT DUOLOGUE

To write a duologue is to invent a two-person conversation by writing down what each person says in turn. One thinks of two definite people located somewhere and doing something. Who are they? Why are they there together? Why are they talking to each other? What is each trying to do through the dialogue? How different do they sound? How much can an onlooker tell about the people from the way they talk? Members of a workshop deal with these questions as they try out the script, some reading it, some watching.

TOP THAT
Randall Peterson

A: Hi . . . I'm John.

B: I'm Frank. Glad to meet you.

A: Man, I hate these flights!

B: Headed for Phoenix?

A: Yep. Going to visit an old army buddy.

B: Really? I was in the army once . . . worst experience of my life. I don't know where they got those cooks, but was that food ever bad. I was always going hungry. I remember this time when a guy put a plastic vomit on his tray at the cafeteria. They charged him a quarter for it, too!

A: *That sounds pretty bad. Our food was really quite good. You could have as much as ya wanted. Did they ever know how to whip up a feast!*

B: *Boy, did I ever get stuck at the wrong base. It was a desert down there. One day it was well over a hundred and they made us go on a hike with full gear. We had guys dropping like flies. But I suppose you had it lucky.*

A: *I sure did. It was practically tropical compared to my farm. The winters were so mild that we would sneak out at night and go swimming in the creek. You could get a great tan in the summer, too. The hikes we went on were only about as far as to my mailbox and back at home.*

B: *Our barracks were terrible. I was less cramped in my bathroom at home. We had eight guys in one room once. What a pain! There were smelly socks and T-shirts strewn everywhere. It sure makes work in the stock market seem easy.*

A: *My base was great. Our commanders were a riot. One day we were camping way up in the hills. In the middle of the night our commanders woke all of us up except one guy. We packed everything up and left him there. He could have died when he woke up. We had a great time with those commanders.*

B: *My commander was terrible. You couldn't get away with anything. He made us do calisthenics until we dropped. My base had no recreation at all. My college fraternity had parties all the time. When I got into the army, I couldn't believe it. There was nothing to do.*

A: *One thing I can say for my base is that they sure know how to entertain ya. They had a pool, bowling, movies every Friday, and a dance once a month. Yep ... times in Yuma were really great.*

B: *Yuma? You're kidding . . . That's where I was.³*

Student duologues will vary from (a) tight interaction of personalities to (b) dual reminiscence to (c) exchange of ideas and attitudes. In other words, they may go in the direction of (a) drama, (b) narrative, or (c) essay. Take a moment to think of where the sample above stands in this respect. Actually, this flexibility is all right, because in responding to such differences, workshops can help authors understand better what they've created and what they might do with a script next. Maybe the reminiscence *should* become a narrative, the intellectual exchange an essay or Socratic dialogue. Can a script fulfill itself better by becoming a prose piece or by remaining a script, perhaps of another kind? Writing duologue off nonstop for fifteen to thirty minutes often elicits a lot of valuable material that might not come to the author any other way, because of the interplaying viewpoints. In revising, he might well cast the dialogue into another form.

After hearing others read and discuss his script, an author might also continue it into a new stage or even add a third character. Or he might discover that because one speaker dominates the other extremely, he has in effect written an exterior monologue ("dramatic monologue"). What does this mean? Or perhaps one speaker goes inward so far as to be talking to himself. Is he really soliloquizing? What does *this* mean? Don't worry that duologue writing often goes into something else. It's a way to externalize problem-solving. We often think in just this dialectic of "on the one hand" and "on the other hand." See the discussion of alter egos farther on. Some of the more interesting matters that workshops can

³ Taken from pp. 204-5 of *Active Voices II*, ed. James Moffett and Phyllis Tashlik (Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 1987), an anthology of writing by students in grades 7-9, which includes examples of other scripts treated in this chapter.

take up are just these transformations of one sort of voicing into another. This is in the nature of the dynamics between people and within a person. The main thing is to help students explore and exploit these shifts. Consider that it's all good if understood and utilized. Furthermore, following out the implications of these shifts away from pure duologue will create natural pathways into monologues or scripts with larger casts, which are basically just such shifts in dynamics.

Mixing duologues with monologues and dialogues when doing readings, revision, and performances will help students understand the relations among these and to see how they might be combined in a single script, as happens all the time with longer plays. They are the building blocks of drama, and much of the art of writing plays consists of juxtaposing them for various effects.

Experienced with duologues, the young playwright can try his hand with scripts for three characters, then increase the number of both characters and scenes. Or he can try monologues. Either direction requires more skill. Since plays with multiple characters are more familiar, we'll take them up next.

A PLAY OF MORE THAN ONE SCENE

Experienced students might try one-act plays containing two to four short scenes that distinctly develop a dramatic idea. The activity directions need not stipulate multiple scenes; they merely need call for a complete play performable in, say, twenty or thirty minutes. The number of scenes and characters is left to the author. The advantage of having done duologues and monologues before is that these are key elements in larger, more varied plays, so that our playwright stands a better chance of successfully employing all dramatic resources—dueling, “speeches,” soliloquies, as well as group interplay.

Here's a sample play by a ninth-grade girl that illustrates how some high school students might begin to advance from duologue to more characters while parceling out the action over several scenes.⁴ Her introduction and her abstract designation of the characters show the representative value she intended the characters and action to have. Like professionals, amateurs usually make statements through their dramas.

BUT MOM . . .

Author's introduction

Names have been omitted except where necessary (as in the dialogue) because I feel the scenes are too typical to pin down to one family.

Scene I

(It is a typical study. The walls are dark wood. There is an overhead lamp lighting up the room. A middle-aged lady, dressed in a black sweater and pants, is sitting at the desk. She has a cigarette in her hand. She is tapping absentmindedly on the ashtray. A young girl of about fifteen can be heard reading a paper she is holding. As she finishes, she looks up.)

⁴This student was in the class of Joseph Hanson, head of the English department at Weeks Junior High School, Newton, Massachusetts.

DAUGHTER: *Well? Any comments?*

MOTHER: *Very good for a first draft.*

DAUGHTER: *Mother, I read you the first draft two days ago.*

MOTHER: *Oh, (absently) did you?*

DAUGHTER: *Yes, and you told me to rewrite the part about the type of love between parents and children. Do you have any final corrections?* (There is a pause. The mother doesn't seem to be concentrating on what is being said to her. The daughter is waiting for a reply.)

DAUGHTER: *Well—?* (She puts the paper on the table.)

MOTHER: *I'm thinking.* (Then she seems to be talking aloud to herself.) *I better call and change my hair appointment to nine o'clock.*

DAUGHTER: *Mother!*

MOTHER: *Hmmm?*

DAUGHTER: *You're not listening.*

MOTHER: *What?* (Pause) *I'm sorry, dear, I wasn't listening.*

Scene II

(The table in the kitchen is small and has been crowded into a small nook. The area has been painted another color. The purpose behind this was to make it look like a separate breakfast room.

The daughter is sitting at the table reading. The mother summons her while entering the room.)

MOTHER: *Why can't you once have the table set before your father gets home?*

DAUGHTER: *But Mom, we're going out for dinner.*

MOTHER: *Never mind the excuses. Why don't you go upstairs and start getting ready, dear. The Shermans will be by for us at seven and we don't want to keep them waiting.*

DAUGHTER: *But Mom, it's three-thirty.*

MOTHER: *I know, but sometimes it takes you a long time to get ready. Besides, I want you to look nice for them. You want to make a good impression on them, don't you?*

DAUGHTER: *Mother. I am not concerned with looking nice for them—I am not out to impress people. I want to look nice for myself.*

MOTHER: *O.K. How about for your father and me? We like to see you look nice.*

DAUGHTER: *Hmmm.*

MOTHER: *If not for us, do it for your brother. He's dating their daughter. You don't want them to think he comes from a family of slobs.*

DAUGHTER: *How come he doesn't have to go tonight?*

MOTHER: *You're making it sound like a chore to go out with us. You know, if you want to stay home tonight you can. We aren't twisting your arm. It costs a lot of money to take you out and there are plenty of other things we could be doing with it instead.*

DAUGHTER: *You still didn't say why Alan got out of it.*

MOTHER: *Alan "got out of it" because he had already made a date for tonight and it wouldn't be polite to break it.*

DAUGHTER: *But Mom, he's going out with René Sherman!*

MOTHER: (What her daughter has said finally dawns on her) *You know, you have a point there.*

FATHER: (As he enters he pats his daughter on the head) *Yes, I always said she was a sharp kid.*

DAUGHTER: *Oh, Dad.*

FATHER: *How about playing a little tennis?*

MOTHER: *Mel, I thought she should be getting ready to go out.*

FATHER: *But Ruth, it's three-thirty!*

Scene III

(Father and daughter enter the house with their tennis rackets. The clock on the wall shows that it is close to six-thirty.)

- MOTHER: *Did you have a good game?*
 DAUGHTER: *Yes, and boy am I exhausted.*
 MOTHER: *Mel, you shouldn't have let her work herself up like that. She just got over being sick.*
 FATHER: *But Ruth, she was better two weeks ago.*
 MOTHER: *I heard her blow her nose yesterday.*
 FATHER: *I'm sure tired. We had to stop at the gas station on the way home because the tire was flat and I didn't have a spare.*
 DAUGHTER: *Come on—let's get ready. The Shermans will be here in less than a half-hour* (Daughter and father start up the stairs together, but Mother suddenly calls out to them.)
 MOTHER: *Wait a minute dear. Could you stay down here a minute and help me roll a ball of yarn?*
 DAUGHTER: *Now?*
- MOTHER: *Well, I want it for tonight.*
 DAUGHTER: *But Mom, we're going out to dance. You can't knit at the table.*
 FATHER: *Maybe she wants to tell some interesting yarns.*
 MOTHER: *All right* (she continues in a rejected tone) *go upstairs and get ready. It's OK. I'll do it myself and if I don't finish then I won't finish. So I won't knit tonight.* (She is obviously waiting for a response, but she gets none; she goes on to add:)
 MOTHER: *If it was a sweater for you, I'm sure you'd be able to find the time.*
 FATHER: *Why don't we get dressed first, and if we have any time, then roll the yarn.*
 MOTHER: *You know there won't be time after we get dressed. You've got to do it now.*
 FATHER: *But Ruth, it really isn't shorter if you roll yarn first and then get dressed, or . . . Oh, never mind. It's no use.*

Scene IV

(The door bell rings. The mother, dressed in a simple black cocktail dress, can be seen in the hall running towards the stairs. She sees her reflection with the pink wall paper in the mirror and stops.)

- MOTHER: *Somebody else get it please—I'm a mess. It must be the Shermans.* (She starts back to her room.)
 DAUGHTER: *Joyous raptures.*
 MOTHER: (from her room) *Make sure you know who it is before you open the door!* (The daughter takes one last glance in the mirror, straightens her hair and gallops down the stairs. She pulls the curtain to the side to see who is outside. Forcing a big smile, she sighs and opens the door. Suddenly without warning she is bombarded by six-year-old twin boys dressed in suits. One has a cowlick and both have devilish grins. Then in walks a little girl, obviously a little older than them and feeling more dignified.)
- DAUGHTER: *Won't you come in? Mom and Dad will be right down.* (The Shermans enter. You can tell by their faces all the fun they had getting the children ready and over there.)
 GUEST: *I hope we're not too early.*
 MOTHER: (Coming down the stairs putting her last few hairs into place mumbles to herself.) *Three and a half minutes.*
 GUEST: *What's that?*
 MOTHER: (Blushing slightly.) *I said Mel will be down in a half a minute. Let me take your coats and we'll go inside for a drink.* (The telephone rings. The daughter runs into the study and answers it.)
 DAUGHTER: *Hello?* (pause) *John?* (Pause—sarcastically.) *No, you don't*

have the wrong number, you just have the wrong person. (She hangs up.) (The guest's voice can be heard as they approach the study.)

GUEST: *Oh, Tommy brought his crayons with him. (They are now in the room.) Is it all right if he draws on that paper until we're ready to leave? (He is pointing to the paper that the daughter had read to her mother that afternoon.)*

MOTHER: *Of course, it's only a first draft of Amy's and she doesn't mind. Do you, dear?*

DAUGHTER: *But Mom . . .*

LEARNING ABOUT TECHNIQUE. For one thing, this play raises the important technical issue of scene-breaking: how many scenes, and which ones, are required to dramatize successfully a given piece of material? Does "But Mom ..." need four scenes, and what is the effect of each?

Somewhere in the learning cycle through which such a play passes, this issue of technique should be raised. The sooner in the cycle the better, perhaps, but not necessarily always. The whole cycle can include a drama workshop reading and discussion of the first draft, or silent reading of the first draft in a writing workshop followed by written commentary and discussion; a rehearsed reading or performance before the class; and preparation for publication by a group of editors who consult with the author and incorporate the reactions of audience and actors.

Over-fragmenting a play into small scenes may represent a lingering confusion of narrative with drama, an immoderate eagerness to score an ideological point through plot manipulation, or simply an unskillful, uneconomical constructing of the material. Scene shifts mean time pauses and perhaps new locales. Are these justified? They also introduce problems about how to indicate in the dialogue facts that cannot be seen—the new time and place, their significance, and what has occurred in the interim. Putting such information in the mouths of the characters can come off as well-motivated and integral action or as obvious "exposition" for the audience's benefit. Pacing is also involved in scene shifts. Is each scene as long or as short as it ought to be for what it tries to do? The speed of both the individual scene and the succession of scenes has to be considered here—the rate at which an audience assimilates certain actions and the cumulative effect of short and long scenes.

These dramaturgical matters, which are exactly those that the professional faces, can be raised by students in their own ways at various points in the cycle, but if necessary you may raise them. Do this while sitting in on a writing group or acting group, sometimes at the end of a class reading, if a certain problem seems to be widespread but unrecognized. Often one thoughtful question is enough: "What would happen if we dropped this scene?" (To let the students test whether it is justified or not.) "What if Charles dramatized a meeting in the shop instead of having the girl just refer to it?" (To open up other compositional possibilities.) Pace can be focused on by your personal reaction: "I felt that scene might be slowed down [or speeded up]. Did anyone else feel that?" Most of all, try to spot the technical implications buried in student commentary and to make them emerge so that students will then spot them for each other.

LEARNING TO DESCRIBE. If one glances back through "But Mom . . .," looking only at the stage directions, one will become aware of how much description the play contains. A virtue of playwriting is the opportunity it affords to practice the accurate and significant rendering of appearances—the look of a room, the look on

someone's face. Far from being an exercise, play description is purposeful and functional—an indication of what the set and prop people should do and how the performers should look and behave. The writer has to think about real spatial relations, on the one hand, and about significant selection of details, on the other. Production of a play will often put description to the test of clarity. Moreover, since stage directions also include an account of the action, the playwright must, like other storytellers, coordinate description with narration but in ways peculiar to scripts.

DRAMATIC OR EXTERIOR MONOLOGUE

In literature a “dramatic monologue” refers to a character holding forth solo to one or more other characters in particular circumstances. It is a synonym for “exterior monologue,” which may be a clearer term for students, especially in contrast to “interior monologue.” Most monologues, at least in real life, occur in the midst of dialogue; only in literature are they sometimes excerpted as self-sufficient speeches. So students can begin monologuing as part of improvising a duologue in which one character dominates and the other is reduced to incidental reacting: a parent gives a lecture during an argument with a child; one character tries to “bring around” another who's sulking; or a salesman gives his pitch. Next, players think of situations in which, for the entire scene, one of the two people does all of the talking and the other reacts silently or merely mumbles an occasional reply or is cut off whenever he opens his mouth. This often occurs when an individual is addressing a group, as a coach giving a pep talk at halftime, a treasurer explaining to the board why an organization is short of money, a young person giving an excuse to an adult, or a boss giving directions to his workers. Several other students silently play the listeners, and students take turns being the monologist.

The first time or two that students write dramatic monologues, activity directions should probably set up the monologue in script form and stipulate a playing time of two to five minutes. Later students can try stripping the writing down to voice only, foregoing stage directions; the accompanying action, the time and place, and the identity of the listeners all have to be reflected or implied in what the speaker says. The monologue is written as a straight piece of prose, without opening and closing quotation marks. It may recount an incident and thus constitute a kind of short story told by a participant.

LULLABY
Anne Getis

Come on, Allen, your parents have left, it's time for you and me to have some great fun! (Sitter goes over to child, takes the child's hand, which the child suddenly jerks away.) *What's bothering you? Didn't you kiss your Mommy goodnight?* (Stoops down to child.) *Well, it's all right, you'll see her tomorrow when you wake up. Now, Allen, what would you like to do?* (Allen begins to cry again.) *What's wrong, Allen? Why are you crying again? Oh, please, Allen, stop crying. Don't you want to have fun tonight?* (Sitter goes over to bookshelf.) *Look Allen, here's a Big Bird and look, oh wow, here's your favorite. Cooky Monster!* (Sitter goes back over to Allen.) *Allen, couldn't you stop that silly crying? If you don't I'll go and watch T.V. and leave you here.* (Sitter pretends to leave but then changes mood.) *Allen, if you stop crying you can have your dinner and watch T.V. You'd like that, wouldn't you? Why don't you tell me what the matter is?* (To audience and kind of nervous.) *What will your parents say if you don't eat your supper? Why does this always happen to me? What will your parents think of me when they discover you've cried all night?*

They probably won't pay that much. ... (Looks back at Allen.) Won't you at least say something, Allen? Oh, please, please stop crying! Most good kids don't cry all night and give their babysitter a rotten time. Don't you want to be a good kid? Well, I guess you don't care, huh? (Goes over to Allen, who is now huddled on the bed.) Now, please, dear sweet Allen, don't worry about Mommy and Daddy. They went out just for tonight. Don't worry. They'll be back very soon. In fact, as soon as you open those blue eyes of yours and those tears disappear, they will be back. (Sitter stands up and looks at Allen's body on the bed.) Did you hear me? Well, (to audience) believe it or not the kid is asleep! Now, only 6 more hours until your parents arrive. (Covers Allen up.) Sleep well, Allen.⁵

Self-exposure of the speaker is one of the things best accomplished by this form, sometimes resulting in unconscious self-satirization. Much of the art of plays and fiction consists of making the characters reveal themselves without author commentary. Students who have tried this art recognize it when they see it and read literature with better comprehension. Consider, for another example of literary technique, the matter of understatement. At the same time that dramatic monologue overplays the speaker, it underplays the listener. As much as anything, what accounts for the success of the famous opening scene in *Pride and Prejudice* is that Jane Austen quotes Mrs. Bennett directly and throws the brief replies of Mr. Bennett into indirect discourse, thereby putting the grossness of the one on display and investing the other with a sly and winning irony. It frequently happens that the reader of a dramatic monologue identifies with the listener, not with the speaker.

Understatement and the speaker's self-betrayal are artful creations by the writer. Instead of setting out to teach these literary techniques as concepts—and spoiling good literature by presenting it as examples of the concepts—the teacher does better to let the students *practice* the techniques. Then they will see what an author is doing *while* they're reading instead of needing to have it pointed out to them afterward.

While still emphasizing personality and behavior, as in dramatic dialogue, monologue begins moving writers toward ideas and essays. An isolated and sustained individual voice takes the fundamental posture of the writer, who is a monologist.

DRAMATIC MONOLOGUE AS A POEM. Mature students may be encouraged to write the dramatic monologue as a poem. To do so involves them in the important matter, so often encountered in both lyric and dramatic poetry, of harmonizing the natural diction and rhythm of speech with the artifices of poetic language—the greater richness of diction, inversions of word order, metrical and rhythmic patterns, and breaking of lines. Why would a writer depart from daily speech? What does he gain? Why do so many dramatists not concern themselves about realistic language? If they write dramatic speech in poetry, students will know. Furthermore, associating dramatic monologue with poetry will accustom students to listening for a character voice when they read any poetry, for even if he's not creating a character as such, the writer of a poem selects a tone, stance, and style that is not always the same for every poem; he creates a speaking personality out of some part of himself.

⁵Taken from p. 205 of *Active Voices III*, ed. James Moffett, Patricia Wixon, Vincent Wixon, Sheridan Blau, and John Phreaner (Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 1987), an anthology of writing by students in grades 10–12, which includes examples of other scripts treated in this chapter.

INTERIOR MONOLOGUE

An interior monologue is what a character situated in a given time and circumstance is perceiving and thinking, verbalized as the character might do so were he to utter these thoughts and feeling. Although it's merely a simulation of trains of thought or streams of consciousness that go on in us all the time, as a school writing project interior monologue can look very different from anything the students are familiar with. The most effective point of departure for interior monologue is a minimal situation for improvising in which one character speaks his thoughts aloud as he engages in some action. There may or may not be other people in the scene; if there are, they pantomime. Students who have created dialogues and dramatic monologues will find shifting the monologue inward to be a fairly simple and very understandable variation.

An activity card might feature a photograph and ask students to imagine what a person pictured there is thinking. Or students may be told: "Make up a character whose way of thinking and speaking you feel confident you can imitate; imagine him somewhere doing something; then write down in his own words what he is thinking and feeling during this situation." With concurrent drama work, and with a previous program such as we have been recommending, students should have little difficulty with this.

At first, interior monologue can be written as a script with stage directions, and then, on subsequent occasions, as a direct presentation of voice alone. The former corresponds to soliloquy in the theater, and the latter to a kind of fiction or poetry. The script form may be an easier way to make the transition from improvisation to paper. To the extent, however, that the character's thoughts are reflecting what is going on around him, stage directions may be unnecessarily repetitious. On the other hand, a contrast may be intended between the thoughts and the surrounding action. The direct presentation of the inner voice alone takes more art, since no other source of information supplements the voice, and the resulting indirection is often more enjoyable for the reader, who must infer circumstances more on his own. The difference between writing an acting script and writing a version to be read is itself valuable to learn about. Theatrical soliloquy and the fictional technique of interior monologue can also be related in this way, which would be a considerable help in reading literature.

One virtue of this kind of writing, as the example below demonstrates, is that the movement of language is fitted to the movement of mind, a virtue that goes far beyond dramatic writing. It's what makes even an abstract essay seem to live and breathe, to put us in the writer's mind. There's a special kind of self-expressive value too: under the pretense of putting words in the mouth of an invented character, a student can write many real personal thoughts that he might be embarrassed to offer frankly as his own. Consider also the detailing of thought and feeling in the paper below compared to the less effective, generalized statement of feeling a student would produce in a paper the same length written in response to "My Most ——— Moment." Because drama is a moment-to-moment thing, activities based on it will inevitably produce detail.

As a chronicling of thoughts, an interior monologue is a kind of story, but the content of the thoughts may range over many things that do not belong to the moment. The monologue may utter not only present sensations but also memories of the past, speculations about the future, and general reflections of all sorts. Thus it may contain bits of narrative and personal essay. The chronology of the present

provides an easy and meaningful way to talk about and relate many things that teachers often try to get at by more topically organized writing. Often interior monologues reflect two or more different inner selves in dialogue with each other. (see "Alter Egos" on page 326). The title by the able ninth-grade girl writing below expresses some of what we've been trying to say.

MINUTES OF MEDITATION

The class is always ready to go at the end of the period, no questions are raised. I just sit here, like a fool, always wanting to inquire about something, but never daring to do so. Well, today I must force myself, or I'll flunk tomorrow's test. Only five minutes of the class left. Let's see, how should I phrase the question? This is really silly, I have been in school seven years, and every year it is the same thing. I don't dare ask the teacher a thing. Luckily in the past someone else has asked my question, but there were times when someone didn't, and I forfeited. Let's face it, one shouldn't be afraid of a teacher anymore, he has superiority but not so much that he would punish you for asking a simple question.

Four minutes, ohh my stomach is jumping with butterflies, it's as if I was going to perform on stage, which I wouldn't do in a million years. I guess I'm just one of those people who can't face another person. I must stand up for my opinions and what I want. It may take me a few minutes (like now) of meditation, before I will do something. I'm sure all people have gone through what I'm going through, they just cover up for it. I certainly admire these people. I remember a time last year when someone told me "Gee, I'm scared!" and I answered "Why should you be scared? just try to relax, and forget the people in the audience" (she was in a play). There I was giving her advice, and I sit here a year later trying to convince myself to relax.

Three minutes, the time passes so quickly, I wish the minutes would be hours. These kids around me, always jutting their hands into the air. So brave, no that's ridiculous, they are just not timid like me. I'm sure I'll learn how to speak up. I better or else I don't know what I will do. In high school I probably will have to contribute (as I should now) in order to get the full benefit of what's being learned, and I better start right now, marks close soon. I remember on my last report card, the teacher's comment was "Should contribute more," the same comments for years. My marks are good, but they would improve if I contribute more. I have all these ideas in my head which are just right, or answers I could have kicked myself for not saying.

Two minutes, ohh my hand is getting shaky, my stomach suddenly hurts, maybe I'm hungry, which is highly possible being fourth period, but it is really nervousness. I better look interested in the class (I'm trying) I don't want my teacher to think I'm idle. (Boy, would he be surprised to hear what goes on in my head, he'd probably think a whole dictionary is pouring out its words, like salt.) Now I'm beginning to bite my nails, a stupid habit. I should start eating carrots, maybe that will stop the biting, I have read it does. I'll ask my mother to buy a package today, and I'll eat them at home whenever my hands become idle—for instance, when I watch television. When my hands are idle, or when I'm nervous, they seem to creep up to my mouth.

One minute, I should begin to rehearse what I'm going to say. "Ah, Mr.—, I would like to ask you a question." No! That's much too formal. There must be a better approach, "Ah, excuse me, about the—, is it blah, blah, blah, etc.?" That's better, but I bet I won't use any planned approach, I'll just say what comes natural. That's actually the simplest way. The kids are beginning to pack up, a signal for teachers to give out the homework assignment, sure enough. Oh what a bother, all the books away, and one must drag out a notebook, usually at the bottom

of the pile. Let's see, now I'm getting tense, this isn't as if I was going to be executed, it's a normal everyday thing (to me it isn't though!) Oh what should I say, my stomach is doing somersaults.

There's the dismissal bell, everyone jumps up. Luckily lunch is next, so maybe no one will be around when my turn comes, and yet I'd feel better if there was at least one of my friends with me. No, I have to go through it by myself. I'll just take a deep breath and ask the "deadly" (but important) question. Well... here goes!⁶

As the paragraphing indicates, this monologue is basically ordered by time, and yet a personal organization of ideas is laid over against mere chronology. There is a coherent subject—the girl's timorous indecision—and it is developed. This subject, incidentally, is essentially that of T. S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," also a kind of interior monologue. When this girl reads Eliot's poem later she will enter into it with much greater ease than she would have without this experience.

INVENTING SOLILOQUIES FOR LITERARY CHARACTERS

Students don't always present themselves in thin disguise. Often they try to become another person, to extend themselves by imagination into an invented state of mind. Making up the thoughts of a character in literature is one way of entering into and fully comprehending both the character and the work in which he appears. One ninth-grade teacher asked her class to imagine an interior monologue for Achilles as he is sulking in his tent listening to the sounds of battle.⁷ One boy wrote this straight off during fifteen minutes in class:

My friends and enemies alike die out there on the battle field in honor while I, swift-footed Achilles, sit here and sulk by the quick-sailing ships. My strong principles or the battle field. I can find no honor now.

If I go into battle my principle will be broken. I will do a great injustice to myself. Yet if the gods keep me here, the Greeks, fellow warriors, will call me a traitor or a coward. There is no honor in that.

I must go out to the battle field. How can a man be so cruel as to leave his companions to fight until death! My friends Odysseus and Ajax out there fighting Trojans while I sit here and have pity on my self.

Pity. Why should I have pity? Has not Agamemnon wronged me? Did he not take Briseis, my fair prize? Did he not shame me in front of my men, and was it not because of his greed that I am sitting here? Yes! Let the Greeks say where is the coward Achilles. And they will open their eyes and see their own greedy King Agamemnon drove Achilles away, taking his prize, insulting him, and relieving him of all honor.

I Achilles am doing right to sit here. And I will do it until I am given back my honor and my prizes.

In order to be Achilles for fifteen minutes one must draw on what one has read and put it together meaningfully. The dramatic approach causes the student

⁶ Weeks Junior High School, Newton, Massachusetts.

⁷ The teacher was Lucy Woodward at Weeks Junior High School, Newton, Massachusetts.

to actively work over and complete in his mind what an author has presented to him. Such papers can both show and increase reading comprehension.

ALTER EGOS. Another kind of improvisation brings together both dramatic and interior monologue by means of a double cast, two for each character. Immediately after one character speaks, his alter ego, or other self, soliloquizes his *unspoken* thoughts. Then another character responds aloud to what the first said (not to what he thought), and then *his* alter ego too utters his thoughts.

Playing two equal selves is an extension of this alter-ego technique. One person imagines that there are two selves within him—like Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde—and with a partner he improvises a conversation between these two selves. For example, a student might improvise or write a discussion between his hopeful and his cynical self. Staying close to real feelings and attitudes is what vitalizes this kind of writing. We all carry on interior dialogues, sometimes quite unconsciously, in order to sort out and make decisions about things. Improvising multiple interior monologues is a good way to focus on inner conflicts and problems. As these inner dialogues are discussed with peers, the nature of the different selves and of their relationship can be explored.

A vast literature exists of alter egos, from Castor and Pollux and the twins that Shakespeare borrowed from antiquity to Poe (“William Wilson”), Dostoyevsky (“The Double”), Conrad (“The Secret Sharer”), E.L. Konigburg’s (*George*), and many of today’s popular novels, teleplays, and comic strips (*Superman* and *Batman*). For some examples and discussion of it see Karl Miller’s *Doubles*. Because of the critical connection between doubling and the rest of literature we urge teachers to help students relate alter-ego improvisation to drama, fiction, and much poetry. See also in *PERFORMING TEXTS* how the apportioning of various lines or parts of lines in a script to various actors may be used to distinguish shifts within a person.

A character can have more than one alter ego. In accordance with the well-established concept of multiple personalities dwelling within a single person, performers can interplay any number of aspects of one character. Indeed, the cast of characters of most novels and plays constitutes a sort of deploying of human being into its various facets or potentialities. Double stories merely heighten, in other words, what happens in virtually all literature: together the personages sum up to a whole characterization of Everyman.

■ TESTING SCRIPTS BY PERFORMANCE

See *PERFORMING TEXTS*, for a full treatment of this process. Any student script can be given a trial reading in a small group, enacted either as a play or puppet show, and duplicated or put into little anthologies that can be read along with professional one-act plays. In small groups students read each other’s scripts aloud, taking parts and assigning a reader to the stage directions; they discuss the playability of the script for potential enactment and edit it for duplicating. Some scripts are memorized, rehearsed, and performed.

The most compelling motive for creating a script is to have it performed. So it’s very important that time and space be arranged for viewing live performances and tapes. Performance usually entails further revision during trial readings and rehearsals.

The matching of language to character is one of the more valuable issues that come up whenever students prepare to perform one another's scripts. For example, if they're going over interior monologues together, they might ask: Does the style sound "thought" or does it sound "spoken" aloud to someone else? As they juxtapose dramatic and interior monologues, they're helped to discriminate between inner and outer voices. Does the style seem appropriate to the character and to the situation and state he's in? (Is he agitated or reflective, for example?) Does the language flow with the movement of thought and feeling, or does it seem to be organized by some logic external to the character? This distinction helps to define "formal" writing.

■ READING

For the most part, solo silent reading of plays might be deferred until after creative dramatics and enactment have made it possible for students to bring a play script to life in their minds without missing or misunderstanding what is going on. Comprehension questions after reading cannot offset the failure to understand *as one reads*. And silent play-reading is difficult: plays are by nature incomplete texts and require more inference and imagination than narrated stories. We recommend that until fairly advanced in dramatic understanding, students read plays silently only as part of group preparation for rehearsed reading or memorized enactment.

Collections of short plays can be used for reference when children want to know how to set up and punctuate their own scripts, and they can be used along with student-produced plays as material for performing. Student scripts provide a much-needed type of classroom literature, for there are far too few good plays for children. Older elementary youngsters might find plays to perform in such collections as: Aurand Harris and Coleman Jennings's *Plays Children Love: A Treasury of Classic Plays for Children* (Doubleday, 1981) and volume II (St. Martin's Press, 1988); Rowena Bennett's *Creative Plays and Programs for Holidays* (Plays, Inc., Boston, 1966); Sylvia E. Komeran's *Plays of Black Americans* (Plays, Inc., Boston, 1987); or *Plays, The Drama Magazine for Young People*, edited by Sylvia K. Burack.

By junior high, many short scripts from adult literature, including teleplays, work well for small-group oral reading and performance. Lorraine Hansberry's *Raisin in the Sun* and William Gibson's *The Miracle Worker* are popular.

As a teenager recognizes in published plays the kinds of vocalization and interaction he is familiar with from his own and other student playwriting, he finds it easier to relate to the goings-on in Shakespeare or Ibsen. Consider *Macbeth* or *Julius Caesar* as composed of duologues, dramatic monologues, and interior monologues and the drama achieved by interweaving these with trios, quartets, and crowd scenes. While reading or performing professional plays together, students can work out with arrows or other graphic symbols a representation of the character interactions.

There's something structural about both human emotions and human interactions. That is, you can replace the content of a feeling or the content of an exchange with another and something will still remain the same—something like the pitch, vibration, or intensity of the feeling (whether it is love or hate, fear or elation) and, in interaction, something like the pattern of energy, the lines of force.

We ride the momentum of a particular dynamic until another dynamic cuts across it. Once one is tuned into varieties of pitch and pace and lines of force, one is on to drama, because it is the intensities and vectors of energy that carry a play.

DIALOGUE POEMS AND STORIES

Not just play scripts but any pieces of literature that have this dramatic energy and one character voice or more can be read and performed as if they were scripts. Dialogue poems and stories provide a model for student writing. Treating this material dramatically also helps students pick out speaker, voice, and circumstances of utterance and discriminate between invented personas and real-life authors.

Collections of dialogues and monologues that cut across conventional lines of reading-matter classification to bring together disparate pieces of literature—be they scripts, stories, or poems—that have in common only the performance potential of created voices, can help students realize how performable much literature is and how many forms dramatic voicing can take. This is especially true if they can hear some of these performed as readings.

For many students the juxtaposition of scripts with poetry or with certain types of short stories told by subjective narrators makes the latter accessible for the first time. The voicing of a poem may be clearly a dialogue as shown by speaker indications, stanzaic assignments, or the breaking of lines or stanzas. On the other hand, voicing need not necessarily be according to different characters. It might be according to different voices of the same character or according to different moods or attitudes of the poet, as in a monologue.

Students need to see both prose and poetry as options in writing dialogues; this way they can become aware of the way characterization, tone, and other effects are sometimes more vividly rendered in poetry. They can also see that it's possible to tell an entire short story in little more than dialogue. Some short stories that are virtually all dialogue are "Petrified Man" by Eudora Welty, "Zone of Quiet" by Ring Lardner, and "How Do You Like It Here?" by John O'Hara. Stories containing no thoughts or commentary, only description and narration, come close to being scenarios. When students discuss one of these, for a rehearsed reading, they need to discuss whether there will be a loss in transfer, and, if they think so, to appoint one person as narrator. He can read only those parts of the narrator's lines that are not really the equivalent of stage directions (see also "Chamber Theater" on page 190).

Students can begin their reading of dialogue poems and stories with duologues such as old ballads like "Get Up and Bar the Door," ballad-like poems such as Kipling's "Danny Deever," light exchanges like William Butler Yeats's "For Anne Gregory," Dorothy Parker's short story "Telephone Conversation," the *Romeo and Juliet* duologue sonnet, or Dudley Randall's satiric "Booker T. and W.E.B.," Since dialogue poems and stories usually contain little physical action and have no stage directions, the encumbrance of the script is not a great handicap, and they lend themselves conveniently to a rehearsed reading or enactment (see page 410 under "Dialogue of Ideas" for other duologue poems).

VALUE OF DISCUSSION PRECEDING PERFORMANCE. Small-group discussion to determine how to perform a duologue or dialogue is an opportunity for significant learning. For example, some of the best discussions of poetry students can

have may concern whether Henry Reed's poem "Naming of Parts" is uttered by one or two characters. Our understanding of it is that the first two-thirds of each stanza is spoken aloud by the army instructor to his trainees, and that the last one-third of each is the inner voice of a trainee ironically echoing the instructor while at the same time drifting away to more appealing things than rifle parts. In one class, some students made a good case for both voices issuing from the instructor—one being official and the other private. The alternating of interior and dramatic monologue by the same character is indeed sometimes used, as in Dorothy Parker's short story "The Waltz," to convey just such a discrepancy between what one really feels and how one has to behave outwardly. The story could be acted in alter-ego fashion, with three people—a woman dancing with a man while her other self curses his clumsiness.

When one person utters himself in two different voices, two roles are called for, so that both interpretations of the Reed poem produce essentially the same dramatic result. All the students agreed that the stanzas split into two voices, even though the voices are unmarked in any way by typography, because tone, language, and attitude all shift. But the last stanza breaks the pattern and causes disagreement about whether it is all interior monologue or a fusion of both voices. Discussion of the stanza is required in order to decide which actor will read it.

It happens that both Henry Reed and Dylan Thomas have recorded the poem, in very different ways. After dramatizing the poem themselves, students listened very intently to hear how these poets indicated the shifts of voice they had discussed (and also to find support for their interpretation). A companion poem by Reed, "Judging Distances," consists also of two alternating voices, but in this case both are clearly uttered aloud by different people—instructor and trainee again—though still un signaled by quotation marks or spacing.

DRAMATIC MONOLOGUE

As with dialogue, students read poems, short stories, and plays cast in this form as they write them. Recordings of dramatic monologues are particularly helpful. Some stand-up comedians' monologues qualify as dramatic when not just a series of jokes but an imitation of some character talking in particular circumstances.

PLAYS. Most plays have at least one good monologue, and certainly the theater can provide the literary equivalent for what students are writing. In fact, from Greek drama on, the developed solo speech has been a standard feature of drama. It's used to relate the past, reveal the thought and feeling of a character, build and sustain an argument, and so on. It's an elemental dramatic unit that, along with soliloquy, duologue, and dialogue, makes up the playwright's compositional repertory. August Strindberg's whole playlet "The Stronger" is a sustained dramatic monologue.

Whatever the source to which you turn for literary dramatic monologues, don't confuse students with other kinds of monologues; the solo speech must occur in a definite time and place and be heard by another character or so. Particular, external circumstances constitute what is meant by *dramatic*. Once the concept of dramatic or external monologue has been thoroughly established, however, it can serve as a base for other monologues having a character speaker but an unspecified setting and audience.

Dramatic monologues should be performed, and for a while any silent reading that is done would best be in preparation for orally interpreting it. Because different students will be presenting different selections for the class, everyone will become acquainted with a number of monologues. Performances of the *same* monologue by different players can be compared in discussion.

Dramatic monologue provides a fine occasion for learning to react. Stress the fact that the silent partner, in responding, stays with every line as much as if he were speaking. Partners reverse roles so that they play both sides of the duo. The other pair in their group watches them, comments, and takes its turn both ways. In this manner, both the understanding and expression of the lines gradually evolve. In passing, the teacher can ask and answer questions that will help this development.

POEMS. Poetry is rich in dramatic and interior monologue. Both of these shade off into other kinds of poems having a disembodied, unsituated speaker who is more the author himself than an invented persona. Students who have role-played the speaker in dramatic poems can more readily pick up the tone, style, attitude, and posture of a poet speaking distinctly in his own voice. Much of the reason for acting out poems with characters is to become attuned to “voice” in a text. When you read with an ear to performance, you try to conjure the tone, style, attitude, and posture of this voice in the text. Pre- and post-performance discussions further sensitize a student’s ear for this voice so that when reading undramatic texts silently alone he can still register the style and tone of even unsituated authorial voices.

Langston Hughes’ “Mother to Son” is a dramatic monologue written as a poem—one that invites performance, like Robert Browning’s “My Last Duchess.” Even mature high school students have seldom understood this classic when simply read and discussed in class. An actor should deliver the lines of the duke, drawing aside the alcove curtain, gesturing to the portrait, and so on, while another plays the emissary, reacting in revulsion to what he hears until finally he starts prematurely down the stairs, an action that prompts the duke to utter a line that few students seem to understand outside a dramatic context, “Nay, we’ll go together down, sir” (*together* being stressed, of course). Students well grounded in such experience might then read silently with much pleasure and understanding some of Browning’s longer dramatic monologues, such as “Andrea del Sarto” and “Fra Lippo Lippi,” especially if the text glosses the unfamiliar words and allusions.

Working up dramatic monologue poems for performance will inspire some students to learn other sorts of poems by heart. Memorizing poetry is an old-fashioned practice that has now fallen into disrepute because it was so often unmotivated and arbitrary. The only justification (besides being able to pass a test on the lines) was that the lines were famous, and every well-bred person should know them. In the worst light, the purpose was only a kind of name-dropping, but the fact is that memorizing has another, very profound value. As poet Richard Wilbur put the matter in a poetry course in which he required memorization, one takes the poem to heart, makes it a part of oneself, absorbs the sounds and rhythms and images, warms to the language, becomes enthralled by the incantation. Every professional actor has had the experience, in learning a well written role, of discovering more and more beauty and meaning in his lines and of eventually falling in love with them. A couple of such experiences can permanently influence a young person’s feeling about poetry and language power. When students select the poems, and when they memorize in order to perform, they don’t simply rattle off

lines in rote fashion but interpret and render them. Connections between words and actions, furthermore, create cues that make memorizing easier.

SHORT STORIES. “Haircut” and “Zone of Quiet” by Ring Lardner, “The Apostate” by George Milburn, “Straight Pool” and “Salute a Thoroughbred” by John O’Hara, “The Lady’s Maid” by Katherine Mansfield, and “Travel Is So Broadening” by Sinclair Lewis are short stories written as pure dramatic monologue, that is, having a specific audience and setting and often containing ongoing action. Such stories shade into others like “Why I Live at the P.O.” by Eudora Welty, in which a less clearly situated character addresses the world at large in an amateurish way, giving a naive, unreliable, or prejudiced version of the events.

KINDS OF LITERARY MONOLOGUISTS. Some character monologues are uttered by types—John Suckling’s “A Ballad upon a Wedding” (country bumpkin), Thomas Hardy’s “The Man He Killed” (Wessex commoner), Lerone Bennett Jr.’s “The Idiot” (a powerless African American), and Rudyard Kipling’s “Sestina of the Troop Royal” (professional soldier). All four of these are in dialect. If a poem does not indicate the exact setting or the particular listener, students should imagine a fitting place and audience—and also the motive for the monologue. Thomas Wolfe’s short story, “Only the Dead Know Brooklyn,” would go well with these poems. Other monologuists are well-known personages from history and mythology. Christ utters “The Carpenter’s Son” by A. E. Housman; Simon of Zelotes, “The Ballad of the Goodly Fere” by Ezra Pound; and one of the three wise men, “The Journey of the Magi” by T. S. Eliot. Because they are centered on Christ, these three poems are interesting to take up together. Alfred Tennyson’s “Ulysses” is especially interesting because a student can make a good case for its being either exterior or interior monologue. Is Ulysses addressing his retinue in actuality or in his mind?

Like many a monologue poem in which the poet addresses his mistress, John Donne’s “The Flea” is a love argument but an especially dramatic one because each stanza is a reaction to something the beloved does while he’s talking. “Why So Pale and Wan” by John Suckling is also a monologue prompted by ongoing action. Many love poems spoken by the lover to his beloved do not indicate ongoing action and have only a vague setting but nevertheless are spoken now to a particular audience of one. John Donne’s “Break of Day” and “The Good Morrow” have this sense of immediacy, and Matthew Arnold’s “Dover Beach” has, for all the lover’s meditation, a strong setting and feeling for the present (“The sea is calm tonight...,” “Let us be true to one another...”). Consider also Andrew Marvell’s “To His Coy Mistress.”

INTERIOR MONOLOGUE

Although interior monologue may seem at first glance to be a minor literary form, not worthy of much time, it would be a great mistake to think so. It cuts across genres, being found in plays, fiction, and poems—found in two senses.

First, some whole plays, short stories, poems, and even a few novels are cast as sustained interior monologues. Second, like dialogue and dramatic monologue, interior monologue is commonly embedded in poetry and fiction, as well as in plays, making up, in fact, a goodly portion of many short stories and novels. Some songs, like “If I Were a Rich Man” in *Fiddler on the Roof*, are modern

equivalents of the old soliloquy. An excellent commercial dramatization of *Alice in Wonderland*⁸ put all of Alice's thoughts as written by Lewis Carroll into the first person, prerecorded them, and played them through a speaker system at appropriate moments when the actress was not speaking. This ingenious separation of inner from outer speech makes one realize how much of the original book consists of Alice's thoughts. Keeping track of and interpreting different speakers may not be so difficult on stage, but in a novel speakers change with a minimum of signaling.

Interior monologue poems include Amy Lowell's "Patterns" and Robert Browning's "The Laboratory," both with women speakers, and, with a man, Browning's "Soliloquy of a Spanish Cloister." Short stories such as "Late at Night" by Katherine Mansfield and "But the One on the Right" by Dorothy Parker also have female speakers. "The Laboratory" and the Parker story require non-speaking males for the drama. Either sex, of course, could perform most of the more meditative interior monologues such as John Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale." The writing and reading of reflections (see page 411) can coincide with interior monologues, which can shade off into philosophical poetry by disembodied authors. After an opening duologue, Eugene O'Neill's *The Emperor Jones* becomes soliloquy, addressed to dumb phantoms that actually appear to the audience. If done by a workshop group as a rehearsed reading, the role of Emperor Jones could be rotated while other students pantomime the figures from his past, the "little formless fears," and so on. T. S. Eliot's "Gerontion" and "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" are possible poems for very mature students.

MONOLOGUES AND THE UNDERSTANDING OF LITERATURE

Many plays contain both exterior and interior monologues, which are often set pieces like the sergeant's report at the beginning of *Macbeth*, or the disguised Orestes' account of his own death, or the great soliloquies from both Elizabethan and Greek tragedy. Many of the latter are reflective poems situated in a drama.

Since class reading and performing of long plays requires assigning different portions to different groups or individuals, such plays may as well be divided into duologues, dramatic monologues, soliloquies, and group colloquies when doing so does not break dramatic momentum. In older theater it's the entering and leaving of characters, in fact, that defines most of the scenes anyway. Greek tragedy, for example, lends itself very well to this division: the succession of episodes and interludes usually consists of rather clearly separated duologue confrontations, dramatic monologues, soliloquies, choral odes, and group dialogues. The acting groups deal with these excerpts in the manner described for complete short scripts—poems, one-scene plays, and short stories.

A surprisingly large number of poems may be successfully treated as some kind of monologue or dialogue and hence can benefit from dramatization. Reflective poems sometimes take the form of duologue as well as interior monologue (see page 417). The fact that dramatizing poems takes longer than reading them silently can be offset by letting different groups perform different poems before

⁸ By the Children's Theater of the Charles Street Playhouse, Boston, Massachusetts.

each other. In this way, everyone becomes acquainted with a large number of poems. Actors can explain to the audience any unfamiliar words, allusions, or background they have looked up. Presenting classmates a script they don't know adds more purpose to performance.

Most fiction contains characters' accounts of events inserted into the author's narrative. Whole chapters of *The Brothers Karamazov*, for example, are narrated by one character to another. And authors constantly quote directly as well as paraphrase the thoughts of characters. A lot of work with dialogues and monologues not only helps students stay alert to shifts of voice but also helps them size up what is said in the light of who is saying it.

Dramatic experience ties words to speakers and situations, and thereby grounds style, thought, rhetoric, and language to the realities that produce them. When reinforced by students' own writing, this experience will transfer itself to those remoter speakers who author books and to the anonymous voices of advertising and propaganda.

CHAPTER

INVENTED STORIES

FIFTEEN

This chapter comprises all imaginary narratives in either prose or poetry. Invented stories comprise many types of writing and most of the world's great literature—folk tales, fables, parables, myths, legends, epics, ballads, modern story poems, short stories, novels, science fiction, detective and mystery fiction, and so on. It is important both for experiencing the various kinds of literature others have created and for exercising one's own creative imagination. Since *oral* activities for invented stories are covered in Chapters 5 and 8, we'll deal here only with the writing and reading of them.

All good writing is imaginative, even when the point of departure is as factual as sensations and memories. In confining our discussion here to made-up stories, we don't mean that only fiction is imaginative or that fiction is not rooted in the real world. There's no such thing as "pure imagination"; even the most farfetched of fantasy inventions are indirect recombinings of experiences. If we call the source of inventions *imagination*, that is only to say that their derivation from reality is too indirect and unconscious to know. Nor must "lying like the truth," to use Daniel Defoe's phrase, be deemed frivolous because of this indirection. For understanding and emotion, fiction is functional!

We believe "creative writing" is a staple of learning, not Friday afternoon fun or the luxury of lucky "gifted" children who are mastering the "basics" on schedule. The testimony is ample from many hardworking teachers in the inner city that their students can learn basics only after they have become persuaded that the world of letters has something in it for them. The basics for children are feelings and motives. A ghetto child needs more so-called creative writing, not less of it. Once persuaded of the personal value for her of writing, she will attack its technical aspects.

MEDIA ALTERNATIVES

An increasing proportion of entertainment in our culture comes to us through non-print media, and this fact has to be faced by any teacher of literature. Films and TV shows particularly have preempted the role of casual fiction in the lives of most Americans. In inviting students to invent stories, we should tie the process to at least as many options in media as they have experienced already so they can produce a story in sound and/or in pictures—drawn, filmed, acted live, printed, and so on.

Even before children can write, they can tell or draw a story. Their audio-taped story can be played while their drawings are shown or transcribed by an aide and attached to the drawings. Transparencies or slides can capture the visuals more durably and allow for projection as authors tell their stories (for more on this see page 182). Desktop publishing can put text and pictures together as booklets (see “Duplicating” on page 199).

■ FILMING

Although youngsters can go out and simply shoot a film if they have access to a camcorder, revising and reshooting as they go, they may sometimes get a better product if they write a film script first or at least a “treatment outline.” In a film, they need to think of camera sequences: for example, four people playing cards; a *close-up* of a wink across the table; a *long shot* of all the players at the table; a *slow panning* of all their faces; a *zoom-in* to a close-up of a card passed under the table, and so on. Get some professional shooting scripts for students to look at to see how not only camera shots but sound effects and voice-over are indicated. See page 165 for filming animation; drawing story boards or writing some notes can serve as a script or treatment outline.

POINTS OF DEPARTURE

The kernels of stories are lying about everywhere, and once students are licensed, say, to convert a sensory description to a short story by imagining an action in that setting, or to start making up something from the random meanings of rhyme words, or to imagine a story behind a news report, or to transpose a “minimal situation” into a narrative, they will solve for themselves the problem of getting an idea. Many good ideas for stories will accumulate in the writer’s notebook that we suggested on page 211—incidents, scraps of conversation, hearsay, dreams, memories, etc. Sometimes stories spin off from other activities like involved discussion or reading about a certain subject, or immersion in a particularly literary form, or workshop improvisations.

Often students won’t need any external stimuli. The following possibilities are for the times when writers want a prompt. Also, children imitate a great deal the characters and stories they find on screen and in books. Although a certain amount of borrowing is natural and useful, so pervasive are ads, cartoons, sitcoms, and vogue movies that some less conventional, more creative prompts are needed to ensure some variety and originality.

■ PHOTOGRAPHS

Collections of photographs students cut from magazines and newspapers can spark invented stories in the same way they do invented dialogue. Especially handy are some sets of ten to twelve photos each, in which the same people, places, and objects recur. Students or aides may have to make these. A student arranges a sequence of events by physically ordering the set of photos a certain way. She might write captions for each photograph (see pages 293 and 296). A photograph or series of pictures can be studied by a small group, and then each person can go off and write a story telling exactly what is going on in the pic-

ture(s), what happened before, what could happen next, and what each of the characters is like. Then the group can come together to compare their stories.

More experienced students can take a single photograph and write a series of short accounts of what is happening, each from a different point of view. For example, if the photograph is of an emotion-charged human interaction, they could write it up from the viewpoint of a participant, a reactive spectator, or an objective professional reporter.¹

■ STORY PROMPTERS

A popular way of priming the story pump is to borrow only a starting sentence or phrase from another person or an activity card and improvise the rest. The fragment might set a locale such as a doctor's office, a thick forest, an old bridge, a fishing shack, or an alley at night. Now, imagine somebody in that place. Is it a man, woman, child, animal? What is he, she, or it doing?

Beginning writers might respond well to such simple starters as:

- There were two little kittens who ...
- Over the hill came a big ...
- Mary heard a loud noise.

Some older students might want a bit more mood or action:

- The castle, which had stood solidly beside the sea for a thousand years, was the only mark on the horizon. I was paddling my small boat toward it when ...
- Mom announced firmly, "From now on things are going to be different around here."
- Until that Saturday no one would have ever said Jerry was particularly clever, or even very helpful, for that matter.
- She hadn't ever really wanted to go along with the idea; but here she was.
- I woke up to the sound of men shouting. At first I'd forgotten where I was.

Students can supply story starters like these for each other on demand, or keep some on hand. Comparing stories written from the same starter is fun and enlightening.

A fifth-grade boy started with "All of a sudden there it was, a big red ...".

All of a sudden there it was, a big red sign that said Ghost Realty. Just then a man walked in. He said that he was looking for a haunted house. The man in the chair said that there was one house on an island about a half mile from Long Island. The owner died about a week ago, and the man (buyer) said, "I will take it."

"Wait. In order that you may buy the house you will have to spend the night in the house."

"Ok, I will spend the night in the house."

"Ok, than it is settled."

"Fine, then you will take me out in a rowboat tonight."

¹ For other ideas, see Hart Day Leavitt and David A. Sohn, *Look, Think, and Write* (Lincolnwood, IL: National Textbook Co., 1985).

"Good."

*Out in a rowboat that night he rowed him up to the island, and when the man let him off, he rowed back as fast as he could. He looked back and then went up the stairs and went inside. He looked all around, then he saw a staircase. He went up it then he heard a voice. It said, "If the log rolls over we will all be drowned," and then he ran in a room as fast as he could, and there sitting in a washbowl sat three ants on a match stick saying, "If the log rolls over we will all be drowned."*²

Sometimes just a suggestive word will suffice, like *mysterious* or *lonely*. Avoid prompters that do more than set the imagination going.

■ OBJECTS AND SOUNDS

Just as an object can be a stimulus for show-and-tell or improvisation (see pages 77 and 95), so it can be a start for a story. Youngsters can put together into paper bags objects that might be used together in a story—a feather, a toy drum, and an old pulley—or that are supposed to belong to one person. Then they exchange bags with each other, and each person tells or writes a story using all of the objects in her bag. The story either can be about characters who have used those objects in some way or other, or can explain how all of the objects were used or came to be together.

Looking over notes of sounds and sights made on locale by others or oneself is another way to start an invented narrative. A tape recording of suggestive sounds—a door opening or closing, people running, dogs barking, a person laughing or groaning—may prompt a good story and might be used later as sound effects while reading it.

TYPES OF FICTION

Perhaps the best story prompts of all are the examples passed on in the culture. If youngsters are steeped long and fully in good literature of all sorts, their stories will take on the forms of adult stories just as their play-acting takes on the roles they see around them. Through this imitation, they identify with storytellers and do what they do. Thus each of the types of literature we shall distinguish below is not only a model but also a writing stimulus.

We do not mean to imply, however, that this categorization is to be taught directly. Instead, we advocate arraying all these kinds of literature in the classroom and letting students discover the differences as they circulate among the various types. To approach literature definitionally is to short-circuit youngsters' own thought. As they read examples of a form and share them with others, they come to their own understandings of the form, which are far more solid than any verbal overlay that describes something they have yet to experience and internalize. The types we're presenting here, then, are "for you to know and the students to find out," in their own way and in their own time.

One of the most fruitful discussions students can have about literature involves their efforts to distinguish for themselves between, for instance, legends

² Our thanks to Rose Arnone, Cochituate Elementary School, Wayland, Massachusetts.

and myths or fables and parables. Any authority that attempts to do this for them deprives students of an important part of their learning. Defining forms should be a long-range experience involving reading, writing, and discussing, without undue outside intervention to force premature closure of issues. If a student asks what a parable is, for example, refer her to examples of it.

Invented narratives can for practical purposes be broken down several ways. One is by major genre—poetry, prose, or drama—that is, narrative poems, short stories and novels, and plays. But folk literature cuts across these, since fables and parables, legends and myths, may be in either prose, poetry, or drama (which may itself be in either prose or poetry). Folk literature forces us to distinguish between these specific traditional forms and the broader genres that they intersect with. It also forces a distinction between the anonymous, collective authorship of the oral tradition in which these forms originated and the modern, personal authorship that developed after the advent of literacy.

Interplaying with these breakdowns are the topical categories such as mystery, sports, humor, adventure, fantasy, and science fiction.

■ FOLK NARRATIVE

Folk literature is old, oral, and international. It has been preserved and transformed by generations of storytellers from those times when voice and memory alone were what bound together one generation's experience to the next. Folk literature was not originally authored by individuals, but professional writers have usually relayed it to us from the oral tradition, and modern authors sometimes choose to write in these old forms. Folk and fairy tales, myths and legends, fables and parables, ballads and romances, epics—all are folk narrative. They are the expressions of the culture out of which they swelled, now long gone. Students can imitate the old forms and perhaps invent their own new ones.

FOLK TALES

Tales like "Rapunzel" and others from the Andrew Lang books were not created especially for children but speak, rather, to the child in everyone. They symbolize deep feeling and serious thought in fantastic figures and events, so children may find in them a fusion of the imagination and intellect that they can understand. Just as the form itself is found all over the world, many of the items and situations figuring in the stories, like rings or caves, journeys or physical transformations, seem to represent psychological archetypes.

The basic distinction between tales, which originated for telling, and stories, which originated for reading, blurs considerably when tales have been literally retold by skillful authors, as most folk literature has, often in fine-quality picture-book format, or imitated by such masters of form as Hans Christian Andersen—in both cases retaining the original oral quality. Tales are usually harder for silent reading than "children's literature" written for children to read themselves. Thus tales should be heard before they are read. As children hear, tell, vary, and re-create tales, they are perpetuating the grand tradition of folk literature. As they get to know and love a tale they've heard, they try reading it by themselves. Oral familiarity makes word recognition much easier, especially as the tales are characteristically full of refrains and other repetition.

Learning to tell tales, varying them according to individual emphasis, is a valuable experience. Tellings can be recorded to add to the cassette collection in the classroom. Many folklorists are quite interested in acquiring variants of oral tales and would welcome recordings and transcriptions of children's tales, jump-rope jingles, street rhymes, and other oral literature. (Folklorists like Harold Courlander and Maria Leach are also the best source for collections from different cultures of the following forms.) A good collection for the elementary classroom is David Lindsay's *The Wonderful Chirronera and Other Tales from Mexican Folklore*.

FABLE AND PARABLE

Both fables and parables are highly pointed narratives in prose or poetry. They're short and direct, stripped down to nothing but what brings out the implicit statement or moral, and they don't linger over description or narrative detail or characterization or any other aspect of stories often enjoyed for its own sake. They provide a model of lean concentration, of how to tell a story economically with a strong focus and subordinated detail in order to make a point, a model that contrasts with the longer rhythms of other forms of literature. Some folk tales have a parable aspect, but unlike parables and fables, they revel in exotic plots and detail for their own storytelling sake.

A fable always ends with an explicitly stated moral, whereas a parable characteristically stops just short of stating its point explicitly. In addition, a fable often has animal characters and inanimate objects that act like human beings, whereas a parable typically has human characters.

By treating both fable and parable as specialized kinds of stories, you can make clear that not *all* stories are to be read for their moral or to interpret some symbol, an incorrect idea that many students now have. One reads different kinds of tales differently, according to whether they invite one to savor events for their own sake or to distill conclusions from them. Fables and parables encourage readers to infer a generality—either a truth or an imperative—and to interpret symbolically, but this way of reading is an appropriate response to the purpose of the writing as signaled by its form, not as an indiscriminate reaction to *all* stories. Being pushed to find “hidden meanings” in every piece of literature, or to state the underlying idea, turns students off from reading and subverts the main point of most stories, which is to entertain the senses and the imagination so that the mind is more inclined to entertain the ideas *embodied* in the story.

FABLE. Fables are short enough to make simple reading and writing. These popular and readily available tales, part of a rich literature stemming from Aesop through La Fontaine and including the Bidpai fables and Jataka tales, are especially suitable for discussion, acting out, or imitation. See also *Black Folktales* by Julius Lester, *Fables in Slang* by George Ade, and *Fables for Our Time* by James Thurber. The fable is a form we especially recommend.

Whereas many elementary school children may be incapable of, or uninterested in, sustaining generalizations throughout a whole discourse, as in essay, all are able and motivated to make single generalities and to insert these into their stories and descriptions. A fable encapsulates what much other writing consists of, two kinds of idea presentation—examples and generalities. Thus a fable acts

as a natural bridge between narrative statement and idea statement. The moral itself is an explicit assertion in the present tense, like any other generalization. (see “Aphorisms and Maxims” on page 404). It states what the narrative embodies.

The fable leads into other kinds of narrative, both fictional and true, that continue this gradual transformation of *what happened* into *what happens*, of *when* into *whenever*. What differentiates fable and parable from other narrative is just this cognitive shift from pure story (once-upon-a-time) toward the illustrative story (typical of many times)—the subject of much of the next chapter.

Here are some of the activities that might be spurred by fables:

- Write a new fable.
- Write a new version or modernization, perhaps in a very different style, of a traditional fable.
- Read a fable without the moral, then write a moral for it and compare it with the original moral. (For use in discussion see page 80.)
- Take a moral from a fable and write a new fable to precede it.
- Take a proverb or other generalization and write a fable to illustrate it. Test each fable by having a classmate read it and write a moral for it. If it's close to the author's generalization, the fable makes its point.
- Turn a parable into a fable by thinking of a moral that seems to fit it.
- Convert a fable into a poem.
- Rewrite an item from a newspaper or magazine as a fable and write a moral for it.
- Collect fables into a class book, using both student-written and published fables.
- With a few other students, write several different fables for the same moral and post or print these together.
- Test a fable by taking off the moral and asking other people what moral they would give it.
- Discuss the truth of a moral.

Fables may be woven into many other activities where children choose to focus on animals.

One of the successful ways Herbert Kohl helped Harlem children start writing was through reading and making fables. Here's what one eleven-year-old girl wrote for him:

Once upon a time there was a pig and a cat. The cat kept saying, "Old dirty pig, who want to eat you?" And the pig replied, "When I die I'll be made use of, but when you die you'll just rot." The cat always thought he was better than the pig. When the pig died he was used as food for the people to eat. When the cat died he was buried in old dirt.

Moral: Live dirty die clean.³

³From *Thirty-six Children* by Herbert Kohl. Copyright 1967, 1988, by Herbert Kohl. Reprinted by arrangement with The New American Library, Inc., New York, N.Y.

Both the tale and the moral show real native wit. “Live dirty die clean” illustrates how writing morals can help children practice the pithiness of epigrammatic statement.

PARABLE. The parable provides a good transition from fable to more complex and symbolic literature. Imagery, action, and imagination are there in all their allure, while at the same time the parable is clearly a vehicle for thinking and making statements about people’s experience. Some science fiction also shows this exuberant combination of rich, pleasurable fantasy and serious intellectual work.

A parable is like an example used to support a statement, but the statement itself is not quite made. The point has to be inferred. Stating the main idea or moral for themselves is a good activity for students who have read a parable together. They can compare morals they write for it individually, or they might write other short stories that show the same thing they think the parable shows. Some of the activities listed above for fables apply to parables as well.

Reading parables may help students to recognize themes in fiction. Jesus’ parables in the Gospels are the best known in Christian culture, but modern authors such as Leo Tolstoy and Robert Louis Stevenson have also written parables. Paul Reps has included Zen parables in *Zen Flesh, Zen Bones*. Sufi parables can be found in the books of Idries Shah. Folklore collections include them for other cultures.

MYTH AND LEGEND

Because the experience distilled in myth and legend is communal, the anonymous narrator is merely speaking for all. This fits well the child’s unself-consciousness and undeveloped sense of separation.

MYTH. Myth is the literature that declares a culture’s core beliefs and values. This literature is an important key to understanding how a people explains itself and the world. It is because of this particular explanatory power that myth has a fascination for youngsters who are also in the process of explaining many forces, phenomena, and relationships in their experience. In this regard, myth shares some of the viewpoint and subject of much science fiction.

The creative intelligence that flowered forth in myth resembles remarkably well what goes on in children’s heads during their years of relatively concrete thinking. Like earlier people, they too put together from their experience with the natural world, their observations, and their imagination—without science or abstract thinking—a vision of the world that makes sense. Myths are full of wonder in a double sense—full of imagined marvels and full of questions about why the world is as it is.

Beginners might follow the model of Kipling’s *Just So Stories* by explaining whimsically how some animal got its spots, stripes, hump, etc. Then students might try making up a myth to account for why people are all different from one another and behave in unique ways, or to make sense of such puzzling phenomena as electricity, radio signals, cancer cells—or love. Creation myths explaining how the world began are popular. A group project could be to make up a whole mythology—a series of related myths, in which the same characters, setting, and objects recur, as in Greek, Norse, Native American, African, or Hindu mythology. These can be pulled together as a booklet or performance.

Bullfinch's *Mythology* and Edith Hamilton's *Mythology* are traditional synoptic source books, but many cultures aren't represented there, and many stories in them have been elaborated and embellished in more artful versions, as in ancient and modern plays. So look for myths relating to students' ethnic backgrounds and for modernizations and transpositions of myth into various literary forms. For student dramatization of myths see page 108.

Another tack is to explore the myths of our own contemporary culture—the stories we keep telling ourselves and live by that express our conventions and values. What unquestioned assumptions do we operate on? How are these reflected in our advertising? In teleplays? In what department stores sell? What do Americans do to impress each other, and what does this tell us about our beliefs? Is there a worldview that encompasses all of this? Is it the same for all Americans, or do we splinter off into different cultures with different myths? What books or other works embody our myths?

LEGEND. Legends are tales of power. Whereas myth is primal religion and science, legend is idealized biography and history. Both are literature. Legend speaks to the need for heroes and heroines—superhuman people who can do things we wish we could do, who show us our potentialities. The first legends that were called such recounted the exemplary lives of saints. Other historical personages like the Old Testament prophets and King Arthur, Joan of Arc, and William Tell became enshrined in story to inspire listeners. The stories of other figures representing their culture shade off from legend into the even grander form, the epic—*Beowulf*, *Gilgamesh*, *Odysseus*, *The Song of Roland*, and so on—which distill into one figure's story the experience and aspirations of a whole race or nation.

These stories embody a wish to overcome the limitations of smallness and inexperience and to feel omnipotent. Seeking heroes is part of a search for positive models to imitate and prompts readers to choose true stories of sports and adventure, biography, and realistic fiction featuring such models. However, the fantastic elements of many legends make them kin also to fantasy and to folk tales. Legend is balanced between possible role models on the one hand and wish fulfillment on the other, corresponding exactly to its mixed origins in historical truth and popular romance. Younger children may read legends more for the folk heroes and teenagers more for plausible models to identify with. Students of minority cultures need ample folk literature in their own tradition. Jamake Highwater's *Anpao: An American Indian Odyssey* is an excellent example of American Indian legend.

As in updating fables, creating legends in modern dress is a way to internalize legend-making. Students can take a traditional story and set the whole thing in the present, retelling it in modern language and style. Another way to start is to brainstorm first about what kind of hero or heroine our culture needs. Then students can create such a personage, deciding whether to give him or her outstanding human qualities, perhaps extending those of some actual personage, or to bestow superhuman powers. They can set their superperson to work on one of the seemingly insolvable problems people face today.

BALLAD

Much of folk narrative was originally sung as ballad. Traditional folk ballads have the same appeal to the ear as tales and have in fact survived mainly by memory

through oral traditions. A great many of the best ballads in the folk tradition have a special dramatic quality because they're told mostly through dialogue and have a sense of taking place now rather than being recounted from the past. Thus there's a strong link between this type of invented narrative and invented dialogue. Because so many folk collectors and singing groups have steeped themselves in and have imitated this traditional narrative song form, you may find a ready audience for it among teenagers. And of course ballads should be performed and heard rather than read. Comparing different renditions can stimulate student interpretation of ballads.

Encourage students to renew old ballads by writing additional verses to the story or by putting a new story to a ballad tune they know. Here's part of one done by a group of fourth and fifth graders who were inspired by an East Coast blackout. Fitted to the tune and meter of "Sweet Betsy from Pike," this ballad shows the stimulus of both a subject and a form.

BALLAD OF THE BLACKOUT

*At half past five Tuesday, November the ninth,
The lights went out and it gave me a fright.
We lit all our candles.
'Twas a spoo-ooky sight,
When the lights went out o-on that Tuesday night!
(Chorus)
The people were all right when candles were light.
But electricity is a much better light.*

*"What happened?" said Sally.
I said, "I don't know."
"What happened?" said Willy
While tying a bow.
They pushed the wrong button and turned to reverse.
The main truck line shorted with one great big burst.*

*(Chorus)
The li-ghts went ou-out.
The hou-ouse got dark.
The moo-oon came ou-out.
The do-ogs did bark.
The babies cri-ied.
The pe-eople sighed.
And tha-at's what happened on Tu-uesday night.⁴*

Ballads may be easily related to history and social studies, since many important events were cast into ballad form at the time they occurred in order to broadcast them or commemorate them. Students can write a ballad in this tradition about some personage or event they have learned about and been inspired by.

⁴From the Franklin Elementary School, Lexington, Massachusetts.

■ NARRATIVE POETRY

In addition to ballads there is a large body of story poems by authors of all periods. Like Robert Frost for one, most poets have written a lot of narrative. These poems, unlike ballads, are often cast in first- as well as third-person. (“The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” by Samuel Taylor Coleridge is told as memoir by a survivor of a collective experience.) So they can demonstrate how students might tell their biographical or autobiography stories as poetry. Suggest also that students retell favorite folk tales, fables, legends, and so on as poems. Groups or individuals can collaborate on a long poem, each contributing perhaps a stanza.

Collections of narrative poems to read should exhibit all sorts of options in stanzaic form, rhyme schemes, metric patterns. Like ballads, narrative poems lend themselves well to performance.

■ FANTASY

Modern fantasy, like folk and fairy tales, presents a world where magic abounds, where the logic of the everyday is turned on its head and things are not what they seem. In many children’s libraries this fanciful literature is often given a label such as “Wonder Tales” and shelved near the Dewey decimal “398” section where folk tales sit. In other libraries fantasy is shelved in with realistic fiction, and there is no way for a child hungry for make-believe to find it easily.

Many of the classics in children’s literature—*Alice in Wonderland*, *Winnie-The-Pooh*, *Pinocchio*, *Mary Poppins*, *The Black Cauldron*, *The Children of Green Knowe*, *The Borrowers*, *The Hobbit*, *The Sword of Shannara*—are fantasy. Their counterparts in adult literature are novels such as *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy or *Watership Down*, and classic allegorical works like John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*.

Works of fantasy do exactly what creative thinkers do: They take apart the familiar world and reassemble it in startling ways that show relations and implications one does not usually think of. To follow fantasy is rather like floating up in an observation balloon . . . or going down a rabbit hole. The novelty of such a perspective lets us see things we were never aware of before.

Fantasy-writing can be stimulated in many ways. Creating make-believe stories, especially those featuring animals, is popular even with preschoolers. Such a simple project as drawing a monster picture can be a beginning for a fantasy story. Kenneth Koch found that asking children to tell as fantastic and preposterous a lie as they could think of produced some fine fantasies and poems.⁵ Tall tales and exaggerated yarns can be swapped, taped, or written. Students might enjoy a tall-tale contest to see who can tell the most fantastic, the funniest, or the most ingenious tall tale. These tales can begin with story starters such as, “I dreamed I was a . . . and I . . .” or “One morning I woke up and I was . . .” Students can write these tales as after-the-fact autobiographical fantasy or as a series of diary entries.

Keeping records of dreams and daydreams is a good way to get material for fantasy. The vivid and bizarre images of dreams—most of which we forget—can be recalled if they’re rehearsed immediately on waking and recorded in some

⁵ See other good story and poetry stimuli in Kenneth Koch et al., *Wishes, Lies, and Dreams* (New York: Harper & Row, 1980).

way. Dreams are accompanied by feelings, often strong ones, which can be tapped for stories or insights about oneself. Nightmares are an effective resource for horror stories. Finishing incomplete dreams or changing endings may afford psychological resolution as well as good story material.

FICTIONAL ANIMAL STORIES

An ever-popular type of fantasy for children is animal stories told from the animal's point of view so that people are only dim figures at the edge of the action. Classic animal fantasies for children include such books as *Tale of Peter Rabbit*, *Charlotte's Web*, *Rabbit Hill*, and *The Wind in the Willows*. This interest lasts into adolescence, though with a shift toward more realism. Witness *White Fang* and some other novels of Jack London or Marguerite Henry's ever-popular horse novels. Youngsters identify with fictionalized animals, who usually have very human characteristics but may be less confusing or threatening and more understandable than adults in their real world. In the Kipling tradition of closely observed detail, good animal fantasy builds stories on factual realism. Thus readers can use animal lives as symbols for their own emotions and at the same time acquire factual knowledge about animals.

GHOST STORIES

These are part of the oral literature of children at camps and slumber parties. Collections of scary tales play into another reading motive that most children have—the desire to feel awe, the pleasurable chill of mixed fear and marvel, and to feel wonder, that strange mixture of intellectual curiosity and amazement. Reading ghost stories can start youngsters telling, retelling, and writing down the oral literature that is always floating about among schoolchildren. Encourage them to retell from memory or write down any ghost stories they know. By including ghost stories under fantasy, we don't mean to rule out the possibility that there may be real ghosts but simply to note that most literature treats them as fantasy.

SCIENCE FICTION

This type of fantasy, although appealing to the students' love of wonder and imagined worlds, is comparatively intellectual and thus potentially difficult. Despite its emphasis on plot and action, most science fiction sets up certain premises—physical laws or dimensions or perspectives—from which the action “follows,” so that the plot is a kind of working out of the ramifications of the premises. In addition, science fiction is usually loaded with true or possibly true information that is woven into, or causes, the events of the story.

Science fiction should be a regular option for elementary as well as teenage students. It's becoming an increasingly popular kind of reading matter in our technological culture, one a great many students respond to. Some devotees might want to subscribe to a science fiction magazine or book club.

Like myths and legends, science fiction is charged with a sense of awe and mystery and calls for an imagination that embraces the far-out. It incorporates humanity's knowledge of nature, reassembles this so as to explore the frontier between possibility and impossibility, and ultimately contemplates the universe both as an object of actual curiosity and as a humbling and fearsome unknown. It has been called predictive myth.

Students may generate ideas for writing science fiction by imagining a change in some natural law or condition such as a shift in human eyesight from visible light to another part of the electromagnetic spectrum, or simply a sharp decline in insect population. What would result? They need to decide whether to follow results through a group, as a kind of chronicle, or see them through the eyes of one or two main characters.

■ REALISTIC FICTION

In this category are stories and novels set in a world governed by the same laws of time and space and the same logic of cause and effect that we find in the customary world. Although they're fiction, for the happenings they present never took place in just this way, they *could* have happened. This is a popular category for both children and adults. Good realistic fiction evokes the world as we know it, features at least one fully rounded, believable character with whom we can identify, and unfolds through an inventive plot. Be they kings or antiheroes, the characters are people we recognize. Indeed, this identification is probably the strongest motive for reading realistic fiction. Some recent serious adult fiction like *Gravity's Rainbow* by Thomas Pynchon, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Gabriel García Márquez, *Beloved* by Toni Morrison, and *Midnight's Children* by Salman Rushdie keeps enlarging the boundaries of what's regarded as real by including phenomena conventionally classed as supernatural or fantastic. Students have to understand that such categories as we describe here are mere conveniences that can break down easily because the mind shouldn't be bound by what it creates itself.

Writing realistic fiction can begin with either an interesting character or an idea for a situation or relationship. Given this, what happens? In workshop discussion, partners can help each other talk out the idea further. How much will thoughts and feelings manifest in dialogue and action, and how much will the narrator need to take the reader into the minds of the characters? Who should the narrator be—a main character, a peripheral character, the author in her own voice? *How* a story is told relates directly to *what* it's about. Asking point-of-view questions, as discussed below, often helps the author realize what's essential in her story.

Also, which parts of a story should be fully "staged" with dialogue and other detailed action, and which simply be narrated more synoptically. Work with drama should help writers particularize scenes in narratives and develop a good sense of onstage and offstage.

Memories are another good beginning point. Let students search their past (and their notebooks!) for a moment of perception, in the model of James Joyce's epiphany experiences, when they suddenly discovered something about themselves or the world that they didn't understand before. Encourage them to look for and make use of such moments. They jot down all the things that led up to this awareness, then go over the list and select those events, details, and characters that seem most important.

Sometimes a setting or mood or atmosphere can be the beginning point of a story. Maybe a sensory recording or memory of a place starts the process. What's there? Who's there? What could happen there? For more mature writers introduce the idea of orchestrating characters and of playing variations on a theme. Inventing stories resembles, after all, composing music or making patterns in any other artistic medium.

POINTS OF VIEW IN STORYTELLING

Another kind of breakdown that cuts across all of these types will help to integrate them with each other and with true stories as well. Since it applies to both fictional and nonfictional narrative, it points out parallels between invented stories and the true stories they imitate, as the designations below indicate.

■ THIRD-PERSON NARRATION

When a narrator refers to all the characters as *he's* or *she's*, she is writing in the third person, that is, about other people and as an outsider. The narrator does not choose to identify herself in the text; when she does that, she is writing in the first person. The real difference for fiction, then, is whether the author is telling the story as an outsider or is ventriloquizing through one of her characters.

FICTIONAL CHRONICLE

Some third-person invented stories, like Shirley Jackson's classic, "The Lottery," have no central character but focus on a group. These stories and novels, which we're calling fictional chronicles, tend to have purposes and themes rather different from those of stories told from other points of view. Fictional chronicles are relatively impersonal in manner and transpersonal in subject. They emphasize *communal* experience. Readers enter the minds of either no characters at all or of many.

Folk literature is almost universally told from this most impersonal point of view, usually without going into anyone's mind, because the motives and feelings are presumed obvious and universal. Modern writers employ this technique too for collective experience, as in science fiction novels such as Ray Bradbury's *Martian Chronicles*, realistic novels such as Margot Benary-Isbert's *The Ark* or Jean Merrill's *The Pushcart War*, and fantasy like Sheila Burnford's *The Incredible Journey*. Though today's storytellers are likely to go into many minds rather than none, the effect is similar, since personal viewpoints become absorbed into the transpersonal perspective.

Short stories told as chronicles are Bret Harte's "The Outcasts of Poker Flat," Edgar Allan Poe's "The Masque of the Red Death," and Stephen Crane's "The Open Boat." Other novels of this sort are the J. R. R. Tolkien trilogy, Albert Camus' *The Plague*, John Hersey's *The Wall*, and William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*.

Students make up chronicles when they think of some group whose members all undergo some event more or less together, though perhaps each in her own way, like the characters in "disaster" stories of shipwrecks, earthquakes, fires, and so on, or in stories of expeditions and team sports. Many enjoy making up modern myths, legends, fairytales, and stories in other folk forms.

FICTIONAL BIOGRAPHY

Many stories lie between those featuring a group and those featuring an individual. *How many* minds an author takes us into relates quite directly to the purpose of the story, which may be, precisely, to show misunderstandings or tangled motives among several characters. Some stories alternate between the point of view of one character and that of another with whom it's somehow paired, as in Sherwood

Anderson's story "Unlighted Lamps," about a father and daughter who can't communicate to each other how they feel. Only an anonymous narrator outside the story can host us into two or more minds.

Third-person narratives told from the point of view of one individual are probably the most numerous and frame all types of stories, though much more rarely in folk literature except as re-told in modern times. This popularity is understandable inasmuch as a third-person narration affording a single character's point of view allows the author to inform and comment all she wants but also allows the reader to identify with the main character or at least to experience events, as we all experience real life, from a personal and privileged perspective. Sports, adventure, mystery, humor, and science fiction stories may focus more on the action the individual is involved in than on her thoughts. Presumably at the center of events, she gives us the best view of what happens. Serious, nontopical fiction zeroes in on character, on changes in the inner life, and on the qualities of experience, so that the reader is engaged more with the *sources* of action in the inner life and, conversely, the character's *responses* to external events.

Alternating between reading fictional and actual biographies will probably help many students sustain interest in both and appreciate some of the important relationships between making up a person and a story and researching the true story of someone who lived or lives—two very differently derived stories that might textually look too much alike to tell apart, especially in an era when real lives are so often fictionalized in their details.

■ FIRST-PERSON NARRATION

The first-person narrator identifies herself as *I*, the source of what we are to learn. If her main subject is another or others she has known, she is writing memoir; if the focus is on herself, it is autobiography.

FICTIONAL MEMOIR

Memoir often tends to be a privileged, firsthand view of a person or group but not as the principals experience it. Memoir is the hinge between first- and third-person narration—a kind of biography or chronicle but filtered through a character narrator close enough to the people and events to be an onlooker, confidant, or perhaps occasional participant. This I-telling-about-her framework is used for various purposes by professional writers.

Fictional memoir lends itself to colorful and humorous personal styles, because the storyteller is herself a fictional creation, a character voice, as in dramatic monologue, that is in itself interesting or funny. Students may appreciate this particularly when listening to a recording of such a story or when writing one themselves. Read Damon Runyon's "Earthquake" or James Thurber's "You Could Look It Up," for example.

Students can discuss why a writer will choose to tell a story through the eyes of a character who is herself more observer than principal. Consider Edgar Allan Poe's "The Gold Bug," "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," and "The Fall of the House of Usher," precursors of the Sherlock Holmes stories told by Watson. Often the title indicates the focus on "other" rather than author: Sondra Spratt's "Hoods I Have Known," Guy de Maupassant's "Mademoiselle Pearl," John Stein-

beck's "Johnny Bear," Herman Melville's "Bartleby the Scrivener," O. Henry's "A Municipal Report." If you want to endow a character with mystery, romance, or grandeur, you don't let her tell her own story; you let someone impressed by her tell it, as indicated, again, in the following titles: F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim*, Willa Cather's *My Ántonia*, and Alain-Fournier's *The Wanderer (Le Grand Meaulnes)*—all fine reading matter for high school and excellent instances of artfully exploiting the relationship between the first and the third persons. *Zeely* by Virginia Hamilton and *A Child in Prison Camp* by Takashima illustrate this point of view for elementary children.

Students should be encouraged to consider fictional memoir whenever their subject would seem to benefit from such mediation between the main character and the reader. The best time to discuss point of view is in writing workshop deliberations about students' own efforts to tell a story. One advantage of reading real and fictional memoir side by side is that students can see how the vantage point that is *necessary* to use in writing one's own memories may be *adopted* as a deliberate strategy in making up a story.

Especially interesting, by the way, are alter-ego stories, like Joseph Conrad's "The Secret Sharer" and Jean Stafford's "Bad Characters," that have a dual focus on both narrator and protagonist and thus hover between autobiography and memoir. And as for dual focus, are John Knowles's *A Separate Peace* and Robert Penn Warren's *All The King's Men* autobiography or memoir? Such a question will increase students' understanding considerably.

FICTIONAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Just as made-up stories in the third person are designated fictional biography, so their counterparts in the first person may be termed fictional autobiography. Again these terms call attention to the many similarities between actual first-person documents and the type of fiction modeled on them. This parallel may also suggest to students some alternative ways to write about their personal experience, including the possibility of distancing and clarifying it by fictionalizing true events.

Students who read fictional autobiography are often confused by and curious about the parallels they find between the fiction and the actual life of the author. Writing their own fictional autobiographies helps students understand from the inside how the pretense of writing fiction often serves to free a writer from inhibitions she might feel if she were offering the experience to others as the truth about herself. Through this process they gain insight as to why writers choose the fictional mode.

A happy circumstance of fictional and actual autobiography is that it usually features an older person telling about her experience as a younger person, often about problems of growing up. This makes it very easy for adolescents to identify with it. It also naturally provides a double perspective on this youthful experience—that of the narrator as a participant at the time of the events and as an author recalling those events after much intervening experience. In a sense, this dual perspective affords young people what they do not yet have and therefore enhances the appeal inherent already in material centered on growing up.

Fictional autobiography can be written as a story of an incident like John Updike's "A & P" or as a retrospective about a phase in the narrator's youth like Frank O'Connor's "My Oedipus Complex," Joseph Conrad's "Youth," or Ivan Turgenev's "First Love." This point of view has been a standard technique for the novel of growing up, of education-by-life, exemplified by Joseph Krumboltz's

And Now Miguel, Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations*, and Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*. Edgar Lee Masters' *Spoon River Anthology* is a series of capsule autobiographies uttered from beyond the grave and written as poems, and Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club* interweaves eight women's own stories.

Professional writers of fiction sometimes use a first-person point of view to create an imperceptive narrator, a person telling the story who says more than she thinks she says, because she doesn't understand the experience she's telling about, at least not in the same way the reader does. This is an especially useful fictional device, since it does deliberately what students, and indeed adults, often do unintentionally when telling about their personal experiences. Students, for example, who read Muriel Spark's "You Should Have Seen the Mess" will have to come to grips with the distortion in that story, that is, the fact that the values of the girl telling it are very different from those of many readers and hence make them feel that the story is biased.

Encountering fiction told by an imperceptive or biased narrator raises the possibility for students both to write such stories deliberately themselves and to perceive how their own and each other's personal accounts, true or fictional, may indeed seem biased in exactly the same way as "You Should Have Seen the Mess." Such deliberately biased stories are much like many dramatic monologues, which rely on the same technique of self-exposure (see page 321). Also, in reading letters to the editor and letters to advice columns, students may detect exactly the same sort of bias as in some fiction. In fact, writing deliberately biased material can become a very popular class sport among teenagers, along with detecting unintended bias and distortion in each other's writing. All of this helps overcome egocentricity. Interpreting of both real life and literature is involved.

The art by which a narrator betrays herself is the sophisticated art of Alan Sillitoe's "The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner," Henry James's "The Turn of the Screw," Ernest Hemingway's "My Old Man," Fyodor Dostoyevsky's "Notes from the Underground," and similar stories. Some students will try out subjective narration and fail in the first draft, thereby provoking one of the more interesting discussions of technique that students can engage in.

Personal values and private understanding of experience determine how one interprets what one reads, whether in fiction or nonfiction. No amount of literary knowledge can prevent someone from reading a subjective narration as an objective memoir or autobiography. Literature always breaks back ultimately into life. Seldom do more involved or fruitful discussions take place than those about amateur and professional stories narrated by teenagers whose perspective is transitional between stages of maturity. Try, for example, "My Sister's Marriage" by Cynthia Rich or "My Side of the Matter" by Truman Capote, both of which, like other examples, are narrated by adolescents. Some students will be taken in; others will not.

FICTIONAL DIARIES

Diaries and correspondences unfold a story bit by bit as it's happening instead of recounting it long after the events. This dwelling on the moment is an advantage for inexperienced storytellers, who tend to over-synopsise and over-explain instead of letting the reader experience what the characters are undergoing.

As a literary technique, diary writing may not occur to young people until they read a number of examples of it. Many nineteenth- and twentieth-century

novels, not to mention *Robinson Crusoe* in the eighteenth century, either are or include diaries. To focus on examples of this form is to make accessible a mode of fiction that features the natural language of the speaker and hence may become a vehicle to display the style and language behavior of the diarist. In this way diaries may be thought of as monologues and, like them, may serve as an occasion for creating or performing language of a strongly stamped style.

Because of the narrow perspective, diaries lend themselves to subjective or biased narration. Both Guy de Maupassant and Nikolai Gogol wrote a story entitled "The Diary of a Madman," and Daniel Keyes's "Flowers for Algernon," enormously popular with youngsters, is the diary of a mentally retarded man. There's an organic connection between the diary form and the subject matter. In all three stories, changes in the mental state of the diarist are reflected in changes in his style and language. Other good short stories for youngsters include Ring Lardner's "Diary of a Caddy" and "I Can't Breathe," William Harvey's "August Heat," Donald Barthelme's "Me and Miss Mandible," and Mark Twain's "Extracts from Adam's Diary."

Daniel Defoe's *Diary of The Plague Years* recreates history. André Gide's *Pastoral Symphony* may be the masterpiece of the genre, and the French have especially cultivated it: Jean-Paul Sartre's *Nausea*, George Bernanos's *Diary Of a Country Priest*, and François Mauriac's *Nest of Vipers*. Elementary children enjoy Hila Colman's *Diary of a Frantic Kid Sister*, and older students, Joan W. Blos's *A Gathering of Days*.

Students might consider how each such story would be different if told from the vantage point of the last entry. Of years later. How different would it be if another character had told it through *her* diary?

Diarists in real life do not know what is going to happen when they start making entries, and it's just this spontaneity that makes diaries interesting. But a fictional diarist chooses the form in order to tell a preconceived story. Help students think about which types of stories they might want to tell that would most benefit from being told by a character *as* the events occur. Some students may enjoy imagining a diary as some historical personage might have written it during a certain phase of her life, if they choose someone significant for them. Diaries do require some length, because it is the unforeseen development across a number of entries that makes them most effective.

FICTIONAL LETTERS

A one-way correspondence resembles a diary except in that it is addressed to a particular audience. The author of a two-way correspondence has to create two or more "letter voices," one for each character, and carry on a story by implication. The reader may need to read a considerable amount between the lines—and between the letters. As a kind of dialogue at a distance, letters not only report events but constitute events themselves, because writing to someone is acting on someone. This double action makes fictional correspondence both a drama and a narrative at once.

It might be good for some students to work up to the full possibilities of multiple exchanges by first making up a single fictional letter, such as a letter of apology, complaint, thank-you, advice, report, request, and so on, to practice creating a character voice—a written rather than oral monologue. This might fit just right for certain story ideas centered on, say, response to an incident. A series of letters

all by one person actually may *suggest* a story idea. Is the character writing to only one person or several? If to one person, why doesn't that person answer? If to several, what connects the letters?

One point of departure for two-way correspondence is a relationship of two characters such as mother and daughter, lawyer and client, two lovers. Exchanges of letters can create multiple, interacting monologues among any number of people and a complicated skein of relationships as some write *to* each other and some *about* each other. Another kind of story consists of a collection of letters from various people concerning a single problem or person, who need not necessarily be one of the correspondents. One student, for example, told the story of a man's hidden mental disturbance through letters from recommenders, employers, case worker, and relatives, all about him. Indeed, wonderful stories can be told by combining letters with all sorts of other made-up documents like notices, memos, transcripts, files, etc.

Writing fictional letters can best be done in conjunction with reading epistolary fiction. Discussion of both professional and student stories can help readers become aware of what is going on between the correspondents and the motive for writing each letter. Discussion of the style of the letters may focus on such questions as: Do the two correspondents sound alike or could you tell them apart if you were read scattered excerpts? Are there differences in their vocabulary, the kinds of sentences they use, or the way they move from topic to topic? Can you say what each is like as a person?

The fact that correspondence may call for colloquial writing may justify mistakes in spelling, punctuation, and other mechanics. Classmates should consider the possibility that mistakes are intentional in characterizing certain kinds of correspondents, but, on the other hand, students will often have occasion to remark that a well-to-do or well-educated person, as characterized in X's letters, would know better than to commit such and such a mistake, or would not use the kind of kiddish expression or slang that X has attributed to him. Elementary children will find some good models ranging from informal to formal in *The Jolly Postman, or Other People's Letters* by Janet and Allen Ahlberg. Children enjoy writing in the role of fairy tale characters as these authors did.

It is not accidental that one of the first forms of the novel was epistolary. As the novel developed during the eighteenth century it shyly simulated familiar documents like diaries and letters. But modern authors find their own very interesting reasons for wanting to tell a story through exchanges of letters. Films have been made of one of the first, Choderlos de la Clos' *Dangerous Liaisons*, as well as of Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*. Mark Harris's *Wake Up, Stupid* is another modern epistolary novel. Bel Kaufman's *Up the Down Staircase* mixes letters with memos and other documents.

Elementary children enjoy the travel adventure written on post cards in *Stringbean's Trip to the Shining Sea* by Jennifer Williams and also a novel as a set of letters, *Dear Mr. Henshaw*, by Beverly Cleary.

Short stories that would interest adolescents are "Jupiter Doke, Brigadier General" by Ambrose Bierce, "Life at Happy Knoll" by J. P. Marquand, and "Marjorie Daw" by Thomas Bailey Aldrich. Once interested in the form, some students may well want to read some eighteenth-century epistolary novels like Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa*, Tobias Smollett's *Roderick Random* and *Humphrey Clinker*, and Fanny Burney's *Evelina*. Poems in letter form include Kenneth Rexroth's "A

Bread and Butter Letter,” Louise Bogan’s “A Letter,” Karl Shapiro’s “V Letter,” and Robert Bly’s “A Missouri Traveller Writes Home, 1846.”

To complete this tour of point-of-view techniques look now at “Dramatic Monologue” and “Interior Monologue” on pages 321–325 and 329–332 inasmuch as these are ways of telling a story that carry first-person narration to its furthest point within the narrator, a point also where drama and narrative fuse.⁶

WORKING THE REPERTORY

As a student expands her experience across this repertory, she becomes more sophisticated as both a reader and writer. Many amateur stories are bad because the authors simply do not know what the possibilities are. As you counsel and coach students, encourage them to draw on all the various narrative and dramatic forms in the repertory when telling stories by combining *point-of-view techniques* with the *major genres* of short story, narrative poetry, and plays, and all these perhaps in turn with the *topical types* like mystery, humor, adventure, fantasy, and so on. They can experiment with points of view as these may work out in the genres and topics (see “Changing Medium, Mode, or Point of View” on page 213). They can see what happens when the narrator does not identify herself and reveal channels of information, and they can compare that with what happens when she includes herself in the story and openly reveals her relationship to her subject matter; when she speaks from within the events with when she speaks long after the events.

Expect students’ choices among these techniques to relate to degrees of self-awareness, including their decisions about your suggestions. On their own, younger children virtually never think to write stories as interior or dramatic monologues, diaries and letters. But this may be because authors of children’s literature rarely employ these techniques. Indeed, one finds them less frequently in adult literature too because they give the author less scope. Open the repertory to students of all ages and see what happens as they read stories told from viewpoints they haven’t thought of and as they naturally draw on models for their own storytelling. It is probably safe to generalize that as people grow they *differentiate* kinds of discourse more finely, so that, for example, students will be aware of a difference between first person and third person before they become aware of differences within each. The whole curriculum should sensitize students to discriminations among narrative relationships so that choice, whether intuitive or deliberate, becomes possible.

⁶ *Points of View: An Anthology of Short Stories*, James Moffett and Kenneth R. McElheny comps. (New York: Penguin USA, 1968) illustrates the whole spectrum of point-of-view fictional technique as described here and in the last chapter, ranging from interior monologue to chronicle. It contains many of the stories mentioned herein as examples. For samples of stories written in these techniques by junior high, senior high, and college students, see *Active Voices II, III, and IV* respectively (Boynton/Cook, 1987).

CHAPTER

TRUE STORIES

SIXTEEN

Like directions and invented stories, true stories are a kind of discourse that for the most part follows chronological order. By and large, the final two chapters, *INFORMATION* and *IDEAS*, deal with generalizations built up from true stories. So these three concluding chapters roughly trace an order of increasingly more comprehensive knowledge-making.

True stories derive from memory and investigation, depending on whether the narrator experienced or witnessed the events firsthand or learned about them secondhand. Reminiscence is unsought, investigation sought. The techniques of reportage and research that students learn in order to tell other people's stories prepare for the fuller investigation treated in *INFORMATION*. True stories cover much nonfiction, a lot of which traditionally belongs to social studies and science, like field reports and case studies, but that schools ordinarily don't take up either there *or* in language arts.

Students can receive and present true stories in the same range of media arrayed in the last chapter for invented stories on page 334. Videotaping with dialogue and voice-over makes for fine documentaries. See page 108 for ways to stage stories of real events. Here we shall emphasize reading and writing.

WRITING FROM RECOLLECTION

Autobiographical material comes to mind largely as nonverbal data, thereby providing a valuable opportunity for languaging, for shifting into words what as yet is a mixture of feeling, sensation, image, and thought. As one struggles to put personal experience into language, the experience itself becomes perceived, clarified, distanced, symbolized, ordered, understood, and even mastered in a new way. Telling their own true stories ensures that students will deal with certain problems of abstracting and composing and will know thereby the nature of such information when they encounter it as readers. In sharing the stories of their lives, moreover, they not only master their personal experience but learn how to create a rich community with others.

■ LETTERS

Inasmuch as letters spread news, they're a major way of telling true stories, a way children understand because they're addressed to people the writer knows. Corre-

sponding, as we said in discussing letters on page 309, essentially shifts conversation to paper and hence is a comfortable sort of writing. Children keeping calendars or diaries, as recommended below, can use these as reference when they write a letter to some friend or relative telling what they've been doing recently. Encourage students of any age to address occasional entries of their diaries or journals to someone they actually would like to tell about particular events in their lives—and to mail that off as a real letter.

Advice-column letters contain personal stories of all sorts, true at least from the viewpoint of the writer. Published letters offer readers a fresh view of history undigested by others, a view that retains the feel of the time and allows readers to draw their own conclusions. The letters of Nicola Sacco provide an internal view of the celebrated Sacco-Vanzetti case. Others, like Pliny's letter to Tacitus, give a vivid true story of a historical event such as the destruction of Pompeii. Whatever a student's interests, some correspondence exists related to it, because letters by people in all fields have been published—Columbus' letters to Queen Isabella, Van Gogh's letters to his brother, Bernard Shaw's and Ellen Terry's correspondence, George Jackson's letters from prison, Laura Ingalls Wilder's *West From Home*, E.B. White's *Letters*, and so on. Of course these correspondences often contain much more than news of events, but this will help students see how much one's thoughts and feelings surround events and are themselves events of a sort. (For fictional letters see page 351.)

■ CALENDAR

Memory is often aided by personal records. Keeping a calendar leaves a simple day-by-day record of what one is either scheduled to do or has done. Very young children can make up one large class calendar on tagboard with blocks for each day of one month. Then together they can write in or dictate entries for each day. The next step is for each child to keep his own calendar. Repeated writing of the names for the days and months should ensure learning to spell them.

Explain that many adults write notes to themselves on a calendar so that they will remember things they have planned to do—what, when, where, who, and perhaps other things. Then say that some people keep a diary of what they do and what happens around them so that they can look back later and recall what went on. This is like writing a real day-to-day story in pieces. They write for themselves, in whatever way the words come, not being held to complete sentences or to dressing things up for the teacher. They may draw decorations and illustrations on the calendar. Writing into calendars leads easily into keeping the other periodic records described below and should be a small child's way of starting to keep a diary.

■ DIARY

Like a calendar, a diary is a day-by-day true story, based on the memory of very recent events, noted within a day or so of occurrence and kept for later use. What is unique about calendars, diaries, journals, and logs is their serial nature; the writer's point of view is at once beyond some events and yet still in the middle of others.

In addition to their writer's notebook, reading journals, learning logs, and other sorts of special written records that students might keep at one time or

another, or concurrently, they may well want to keep a personal diary as an ongoing account of what they're doing and feeling. You might allow time in class for a while to help establish the habit of keeping a diary. Come to some agreement with students about who, if anyone, is to see it. The best policy is to let the diarist decide whether to show some entries to you or someone else.

Privacy may ensure more full and honest material, but some students will want you to read and perhaps respond to what they write. Obviously, diarists will often register not only events but the circumstances of the events, including their thoughts and feelings. Trust is critical. And of course maturity and temperament of the individual are big factors. Many teachers offer to respond regularly to diaries by passing them back and forth. Students may leave facing pages blank for you or some other respondent to write in. This creates one sort of double-entry diary that becomes a kind of dialogue. Encourage students also to write some entries as letters and mail them to absent people to whom they like to tell certain events.

Another sort of double-entry diary consists of responding to one's own entries after a lapse of several weeks or months. As diarists realize how differently they often view events from a later perspective—especially true during the years of rapid growth—they come to value this sort of recording from *within* the events.

USING DIARIES FOR LATER WRITING

Part of this value inheres in the experience itself of keeping a diary, but part of it lies in the mining of the diary as a source document for further projects. As diarists reread entries, encourage them to look for:

- a particular entry or event that might be elaborated or revised into an account of an incident.
- a series or scatter of events that might be stripped out and told as a coherent story.
- a long, continuous section of a diary that can be summarized and recast to focus on some important continuity that began and ended during that period—an action or set of conditions.

Encourage students to omit dates when rewriting, to delete and add material freely, and to rearrange and reword anything as needed to fit the new purpose. Rewriting diary material will create some of the autobiography and memoir described farther on.

PURPOSES. Plucking from or summarizing diaries confronts students with some excellent compositional issues in selecting and shaping the relatively miscellaneous material that accumulates from an ongoing recording of daily life. At the same time, it helps young people see patterns or connections in this apparent miscellany, that is, find meaning in their lives.

Furthermore, students' very strong interest in each other's lives is something we have often observed among students of all ages. It gives them a great incentive to read what their classmates have written. They want to know each other better but do not feel free to show this interest very directly to ones they don't already know well. Reading rewritten diaries overcomes this obstacle and allows young people to see what peers are making of *their* lives.

As a habit, diary writing can become a period of meditation and self-collection. It is also a time to rehearse one's writing alone, just as young children learning to talk rehearse speech alone in their crib before falling off to sleep. It's

relaxed practice. The students can make of it what they want—and what they make of it may continually change. But because they will write under the influence of present circumstances and in a particular state of mind, the entries will inevitably become in some sense a record.

The whole process is a way of phasing writing from spontaneous, private notation to selective, public composition. The selecting and summarizing entailed in working over diary material also gives students some fundamental research experience by having them abstract from a document of their own as they might do with documents created by others. Other purposes are to help make writing habitual and natural; to give importance to everyday occurrences and feelings; to encourage the notation of specific things of the moment; and to create a record of long enough duration to provide earlier and later perspectives on the same events.

PARALLEL READING

In their search for meaning and role models youngsters gravitate to true-life stories of people they can identify with or emulate. Published diaries written by such people but usually not *for* publication afford young readers an especially revealing interior view of experiences they're concerned with—such as how these personages handled problems they too face. Adolescents especially turn inward as puberty and relations with peers and elders force them to reflect on who they are and where they stand. From reading published diaries adolescents obtain a model for introspection. Since diaries are usually shelved in libraries with biography and autobiography, students can look them up by the name of a person who interests them, or simply stumble on them while browsing through those other kinds of true stories.

Have available diaries of adventures such as *Annapurna: A Woman's Place* by Arlene Blum or *The Overland and Oregon Trail Diary of Mary Louise Block in 1865* by Bert Webber. Diaries also provide a rich source of information about other periods of history. For example, Queen Victoria's diary gives fresh vitality to a historical personage now a household word. Whether kept by those who made history like George Washington or Thomas Edison, or those like Anne Frank, Anaïs Nin, and Samuel Pepys who experienced it in some quintessential way, diaries are a primary source document from which, students should learn, history as we know it is distilled.

■ JOURNAL

Educators use the term “journal” for many different kinds of notebooks, and it's so often used in common parlance as a synonym for “diary” and “log” that confusion easily results. We are defining a journal as more specialized or topical than a diary, which is more miscellaneous. It follows one set of experiences relevant to a single activity, relationship, school subject, and so on, like reading and learning journals. Because a journal in this sense has a more distinct practical purpose relating to an external subject or to other people, it tends to be less confidential. A log is still more spare and impersonal. But terms are unimportant so long as distinctions are made (see “Log” on page 370).

The sort of journal that concerns true stories tracks some enterprise and thus becomes an extended sort of eyewitness reportage of its progress. Students choose any enterprise they may be part of or witness to.

PROCEDURE

Activity directions might suggest this:

- Choose an activity or changing situation that you'll be participating in or observing for several weeks or months and want to keep a record of. This could be learning to play a musical instrument or to master a sport, training a pet, or watching a process. It could be observing play rehearsals or practice sessions of a team or the construction of a building in the community or the seasonal changes in a particular square yard of ground.
- Record in your journal frequent observations of the progress or development of whatever you have chosen to observe. If relevant, take photos or whatever other samples may register stages of your activity.
- Meet from time to time with your writing group or some confederer and either read or summarize your journal to them. Talk about the material you're getting and begin to plan how you might use it later.
- When the enterprise has ended, talk the journal over with a view to what you might do with it for whatever purpose you have in mind.

The journals may be considered pieces of writing for their own sake that could be edited and printed, or as material to summarize or rewrite in some other way. Photos plus narration based on the journal make good slide presentations and are particularly suitable for pet or plant growth, construction, rehearsal progress, etc.

PARALLEL READING

To read how Columbus himself reported what he found, what slaves themselves recounted of slavery, what Lewis and Clark said it was like to encounter Indians, how Davy Crockett and fellow defenders spent the last days at the Alamo, or how Captain Scott spent the last hours of his belated and fatal return from the South Pole—is to feel history come alive as it rarely does in the synoptic surveys based on such documents. The lab and field notes of scientists often constitute journals, like Charles Darwin's *Voyage of the Beagle*, a naturalist's record of the flora and fauna encountered, which students can compare with *Two Years Before the Mast*, a travelog journal of many of the same places visited during the same era by Richard Henry Dana.

■ ABOUT ME

Most primary children enjoy putting together booklets about themselves, the first few of which may have to be dictated to an aide. They don't much distinguish stories from other sorts of discourse. So expect their "stories" to include accounts of their routines, descriptions of pets, lists of favorite things, characterizations of family members, and so on as well as some actual narratives. Don't try to get them to sort out this mixture; they will differentiate kinds of discourse later as they discover reasons to talk along different lines for different purposes and as they see the variety of things older people are doing with discourse. But this sort of writing provides one of the ways in which true stories emerge.

■ MEMORY WRITING

Writing true stories based on diaries and journals provides a fine link to the writing of autobiography and memoir based on reminiscence. But recollective writing differs from diaries or letters in spanning a longer lapse between the experience and its recording. Also, diaries and journals act as memory aids for recalling, so that abstracting from them involves a somewhat different compositional process than writing from reminiscence alone, which is the kind of writing we take up here.

When we select from and summarize a diary or journal, we're doing consciously what the memory does all the time. It has its own way of composing experience, of which we are mainly unaware. It selects, summarizes, stores, and retrieves experience according to a classification and filing system based on some buried assumptions about what's meaningful or valuable or interrelated. Memory is not a miscellaneous heap but a growing knowledge structure into which new experience is being assimilated. At the moment of recall, memories exist already in significantly digested form, and we feel they're part of us. So no matter what subject matter they are *about*, memories are personal. They're a rich and various source of any writer's material, already mixed with his thought and feeling.

The question is how to *continue* the composing of experience already begun in memory, how to *re-collect* them. Students need some ways of tapping off this prime content and shaping it into one of the many kinds of discourse it stocks. Practically everything we do elicits memories, precisely because they're bound into our knowledge structure by networks of associations. Help students stay alert to these spontaneous memories and save some in their writer's notebook or other notes. See page 411 for special ways of witnessing the stream of consciousness, of which memories constitute an important part. Here we suggest how to deliberately gain access to the memory store at any time.

One teacher placed around the room several blown-up photographs of provocative subjects and then asked students to write down a memory that one of the pictures reminded them of. A sixth grader wrote this:

I remember when I was a little girl. I was singing a rain song. It was cold with the splashing of the rain in the puddles. The frogs were cracking, the skies were black and all the duck were saying quack quack. I loved to walk in the rain, it made me feel so clean inside. Although it was cold around me I was warm and safe.¹

PROCEDURE

The basic way is to break into the network of associations at some point and travel a while along some of its connections, making notes along the way. If your students don't seem ready to engage in the process below, start with show-and-tell, which can focus on true stories (page 77) if the directions say to bring in something from which there hangs a tale. Orally sharing these tales stimulates memory chains so that tellers remember more detail from being prompted and so that listeners recall additional memories from hearing others'. After swapping stories orally, they may write them down.

¹ From the Harvard-Boston Summer School located in the Roxbury section of Boston, Massachusetts.

As with sensory writing, you might work once through the sequence below with all your students so that they can repeat it henceforth on their own. The directions below are addressed to the student.

1. SPONTANEOUS FLOW OF MEMORIES *Look around the room at different things until something you see reminds you of something from your past—a place, person, or event. Write that down. Now what other memory does that person, place, or event remind you of? Once you get started, keep writing down your memories. Capture each one quickly. Don't worry about their being jumbled or jumping from one time to another. Write the memories in whatever way captures them quickly; these are notes for yourself. Don't worry about spelling or correct sentences; just record as many memories as you have time for. Stop in about fifteen minutes. These notes will be used for a later activity. For right now, it's better to get a lot of memories than to go into detail about one of them.*

Some students may mistake mere thought associations for memory links, so that *flag* might lead to *patriotism* and to *Fourth of July* and so on. Or some may keep returning so often to the room that they never get out of it. Present sensation is only a springboard, and once in the past, one stays there unless the chain breaks, at which time one returns to the surroundings for a new point of departure. To make the process clear, demonstrate it yourself first. Look around the room, settle on an object, and tell the students something it reminds you of that happened once; then say what other memory that brings to mind, and so forth. Jot these in short form on the chalkboard. You might then ask a student or two to volunteer to do what you just did. Then have everyone write his flow of memories as directed above.

Afterwards, ask for two or three volunteers to read or project their papers, or portions of them. Ask the group to discuss the different ways these writers used to note down their memories. Then ask the rest of the class to look at their own papers and say how they went about it. Let them consider the relative advantages of list, telegraphic, and full styles, including the issue of coverage versus detail. Since they're registering their own memories, they can control the speed of the material better than when recording external events, as in sensory recording.

Again use a couple of samples from volunteers to start discussion, this time about the *sequences* of recollections. Why did memory A lead to memory B and so on? What feeling, idea, or mood seems to connect the memories? The class can speculate about what the networks of associations are in the sample papers, then ask the authors for corroboration. Next they look at their own papers and share what they understand links their memories.

You can consider these questions as you read these notes by a student in a fourth-and-fifth-grade class. Writing pell-mell to get down a lot fast encourages some children to spin out the longer, more complex sentence constructions that they will try out freely when talking but will not often risk in writing. We've underlined two especially exemplary passages.

I see a top of a house and it is white. It reminds me of going up to maine at my grandparents cottage. that reminds me of the time Gail, Robin and I and Nancy were in maine and hid in someones pyle of hay when they came bye. The White on the house also reminds me of the ski slopes when I first when on them. That reminds me of up in maine when we went to bonds. We called to 17 year old tommy manahan who lives two houses away in maine a boy scout as he went by. That reminds me of when my family and I went to the end of the lake and

saw the lake and the ocean be divided by a huge metal that was aquad shape and sliding down the slide that lead to the ocean. That reminds me of when I first learned to water ski I fell and fell and then I Finally got up and made it First time around. That reminds me of when I caught my First Fish. It turned out to be a gold Fish. The remind me of when we went to canipe lake Park and I went on the biggest Roller coaster in New England. I also went on the house of seven gables and you see statues and I saw a statue of a man having his head sawe in half and going throw the huge barrels. That remind me of when I was four and went to boston with my mother. The reminds me of when I first learned to dive at Hayden day camp. That reminds me off the time Gail, Robin, and me went up the dirt road in maine and picked Blueberrys and rasberrys. That reminds me of the time I almost Drowned watersking. that reminds me of the time gail and nancy and I went in Mrs. Pratts canal

Some students, like the author of the sample below, may use a form of shorthand and produce very skeletal notes. The memory chain below began with spotting a flutaphone in the classroom.²

<i>boring music</i>	<i>practicing at home</i>		
<i>Miss Brown</i>	<i>practicing piano</i>		<i>having to take time for it</i>
<i>chorus</i>	<i>piano lessons</i>	<i>recitals</i>	<i>getting up early</i>
<i>for practices</i>	<i>performances</i>		<i>riding lessons</i>

2. EXPANDING A SINGLE MEMORY *Look over your notes from step 1 and pick out a memory of some incident that interests you and that might interest other people. To help you decide, read or tell to partners a couple of possibilities from your paper. An "incident" would be something that happened on a particular day, unless you feel that what happened on two or three different occasions goes together as one memory.*

Now think about that memory and for about fifteen minutes write down, as notes for yourself still, all the details you can recall that are connected with it. What did you see, touch, smell, hear, or otherwise sense? Let the most important event of that time happen again in slow motion in your mind and describe everything you experienced. Stop the action at the moment your feelings are at their height, and describe that moment in as much detail as possible.

Let the group compare sample papers from this step with the original notes from step 1. Ask what things the writer selected out in doing step 2. Then ask what new material he added. Once the selection of memory and its expansion in detail have been clearly established, ask the group why they think he chose that memory over the others. Then ask the author.

Now ask what more he might do to it for the sake of an audience. Does he still need more detail about some aspect of it? Does some of the detail seem unnecessary? Unnecessary for what? What seems to be the main point or feeling? This is critical for helping the author get the point of his selected recollection to emerge. Each writer can look at his own paper and apply the discussion to it.

Compare the drily listed flutaphone memories above with the expanded version below:

²These two samples are from Franklin Elementary School, Lexington, Massachusetts.

FLUTAPHONE

Piano lessons remind me of a recital I had this year. The room was full of chairs, each occupied by either someone's mother or a student. I was to play fourth.

"Merry is now going to play an English folk song," my teacher announced. I stood up and walked up to the piano. I could hear and feel my heart pumping and wondered if the audience could. When I was done I heard a lot of applause.

"Now Merry is going to play a composed song, she composed it." My piano teacher announced, "The name is 'Memories.' "

I played my short minor song and turned around to get up.

"Please play it again, it's so short and I think the audience will enjoy it more."

So I did, got applause and left the piano seat happily.

The core experience here was obviously pleasure, the flush of success and attention. It's rather hard to find a meaningless memory, since memories stand out for a reason, and the meaning engenders the coherence. Memory writing challenges egocentricity, however, because when we disembed memories to write about them, we can, without realizing it, strip them of the inner context that gives them significance. A composed memory that readers feel is pointless almost always fails to make clear the core experience that made the memory stand out in the first place. Workshop discussion can indicate that more explicitness, or perhaps just a more emphatic handling of facts, is needed.

The memory of the flutaphone recital seems to have emerged sufficiently and to have been written to communicate to others. That's because the author used stage 2 to compose a finished incident while she was expanding the detail. But many stage 2 pieces will still read like notes because the writers will have used it entirely to conjure more detail, in note form, leaving final composing until later. Both may have decided wisely for the memory they chose to work up. In other words, some writers will collapse stage 2 and 3 by an early closure, but others will need the stage below. A good solution might be to let the groups discuss which students should go a stage further and which not, and to give groups the editing function of preparing copy for printing. The project can be to put out magazines of autobiography and memoir.

Another possibility at this stage is to work more than one memory up through stage 2, starting either from the original stage 1 paper or doing a new spontaneous flow of memories. This will give students more choice of material for stage 3.

3. FINAL COMPOSED MEMORY *Go to your group with your step 1 and step 2 papers. Exchange these with each other. After you've read a partner's, write comments on his step 2 paper that will help him to rewrite it as a finished composition. Consider how the memory has developed so far across the two papers. Do you understand why the writer found this particular experience important and memorable? What things about the memory do you think he should bring out most when he rewrites? What would you like to hear more about? Do you know what he felt and thought at that time? Are there any things the writer should cut out? Do you have suggestions for rewording some sentences?*

Then exchange papers again until each of you has read each of the papers. Afterward, you may talk with the others about their comments on your step 2. Talk also about what you might do with your finished compositions as a group or separately, if this has not already been decided.

Finally, rewrite your step 2 paper. Follow the suggestions the other students made when you agree with them. Make all the big and small changes it takes to make your memory clear and interesting for other people.

You might copy or project all three papers of a couple of students for discussion, so that everyone can survey the entire process by which those authors got from first to last stage. Discuss the decisions and changes they made between steps 1 and 2, and between step 2 and 3. One way to go about this is to ask the students to guess what choices the author is going to make between one stage and the next; then show the next paper. Get them to relate the writer's progressive decisions to their own judgment about the final version. With one author's papers, you might show step 3 first, then 2, then 1—work backward from the finished product.

Here are all three stages done by one seventh grader.³

SPONTANEOUS FLOW OF MEMORIES

When I was little, I used to ride my tricycle all through the basement. Thought it was so much fun. When I was about six, there was a fire in our furnace. Two fire engines came. Everyone was running around throwing sand into the furnace. I took someone's hat, my dog, and pretended I was coming to save the day on my horse. They kicked me out! When I was at camp 3 years ago, we took a motor boat, went out to an island, and had an overnight. After we made supper we went fishing off the dock. I fell in the lake & had to be pulled out! I remember when I made a line pulley with my house & the house next door, the girl & I sent messages during the night to each other. I remember the time up at Camp Union, on the last few nights, when we had a square dance. One of the teachers fell off a chair & hurt his legs. I remember the first time I ever came to visit Weeks. Rainy cold. The front door steps looked gigantic.

SINGLE EXPANDED MEMORY

AN ISLAND ADVENTURE

It was a muggy night, during the summer 3 years ago. Up in Oakland, Maine. We were going to an island in the middle of a lake for an overnight. Motorboat was overloaded with people, food & sleeping bags. Front of the boat was high in the air. Waves from the boat were all white & foamy. Water was splashing through the air, causing it to be chilly for a few minutes. Many trees on the island. A few lashings between these trees. Long dock. Washing pots and pans in lake. A fish swam into one girl's pots. Screaming and running. Fishing—something tugged at my line and pulled me into the lake. All wet. Had to be pulled out! Pitching tents—got conked on the head with some else's stake. The ground was very hard to sleep on. Heard loons crying. Sounded very weird. Two other girls crawled into my tent because we were all scared. It collapsed on all of us. We were too tired to put it up again so we left it down until the morning.

FINAL COMPOSED MEMORY

AN ISLAND OVERNIGHT

It was a muggy night during the summer about three years ago, up in Maine. We were going by motorboat to an island in the middle of a lake for an overnight trip. The motorboat was overloaded with people, food and sleeping bags, and the front of it was high in the air. The waves from the boat were like soapsuds in a washing machine. Water was splashed through the air, causing it to be chilly for a few minutes.

³ At Weeks Junior High School in Newton, Massachusetts.

There were many trees on the island and a few lashings between them. After supper we decided to go fishing off the long docks extending from the island. We dug up some worms & hooked and baited out poles. I stood on the edge of the dock waiting for a bite.

Suddenly I felt a small tug on my line. I got very excited and pulled slightly. This time I felt that my line was being pulled out of my hands. I thought that I had caught a large fish and kept struggling. I pulled the rod back until the string was taught. The next thing I knew was that I was sitting in the lake. My line had gotten knotted with someone else's and we were both on different sides of dock so that we couldn't see each other. She thought that I was a fish when I pulled on the lines. I also thought that she was a fish when she pulled back. I was so embarrassed! I had to be pulled out of the lake because the bank was too slippery to climb up.

That night when we pitched the tents, I got conked on the head with a stake & was knocked out. That was quite an experience!

It would be good to have a number of finished compositions read aloud or printed up to give the class an idea of the variety of memory writing, like different points and moods but especially the differentiation into the kinds of autobiography and memoir treated below. In fact, booklets made by compiling all the finished compositions could be specialized somewhat by sorting memories according to which feature the author (autobiography) or other people, animals, or places (memoir). Of course, students might want to sort and print them by some other categories, almost any of which would help them think more about the variety of viewpoints and subjects that memories afford.

PURPOSES

If you think about how much of writing in the later years, and of adult writing, draws on memory for its material, and if you acknowledge the universality of the compositional issues entailed in memory writing, then you see how central recollection is to discourse. Together, sensations and memories are the individual's storehouse, from which—however bizarrely imaginative or abstractly formulated—much of his writing must necessarily proceed. Writing down sensations and memories not only shows students that the real stuff of speaking and writing lies all around them and within them at any moment, but it validates this stuff; it says plainly that their individual experience is of great worth, something to turn to and make use of.

Not all of people's recordings and reportings get written, but they occur inside anyway, and we further abstract these into the generalities according to which we see the world and according to which we take action. When these processes are themselves the basis of activities, then writing becomes an external and explicit reflection of what ordinarily happens inwardly and hiddenly. Students can thus gradually become aware of how they know what they know, and of how their experience shapes their thought. Their fancies and fictions are merely a different mode of making knowledge from these same raw materials. By spreading the composing over stages, we can lay bare and influence the internal processes of writing. This phasing of composition is the heart of what's meant by the "process approach" to writing. This staged activity here can help establish it for students.

Another reason for staging the process is to avoid a student's telling the gist of a memory so quickly that it's lifeless. Writing from detail in the first place helps avoid this problem, whereas writing from topics invites the problem of

paucity. Not only do topics work poorly as a stimulant for stories, they (1) can deaden the writing by categorizing students' experience for them in advance, (2) preclude discovery by the student of the significance of the memory and of the particular feeling or mood that can provide coherence for it, (3) bypass the most worthwhile compositional issues that learners should grapple with.

The underlying goal in spontaneous memory writing is to keep composition on a deeper, cognitive basis, since at heart it's the shaping of experience into understanding. Selecting one incident from a memory stream narrows down the first, miscellaneous array. Expanding into detail fills in what one had staked out, like pointing to a city on a map and then looking at the inserted plan of that city. Stage 3 finishes organizing and verbalizing the reminiscence to make its significance emerge for an audience.

Thus the student is working up inductively from a wealth of material instead of working downward deductively by trying to flesh out a given abstraction. Writing deductively from topics has a place higher up the abstraction ladder if learners are generating their own topics. Both sensory and memory writing are harder than topical assignments, because they pose greater difficulties for the writer's egocentricity and thus demand more objectification. The point of any process is not to avoid problems; it is to engage with the right problems in the right way. Phased memory writing does this extremely well.

■ AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Students who have gained some fluency with summoning memories through the process above may at the outset aim more directly toward the kind of outcome they want. Do they want to tell what it's like to undergo a certain experience, as protagonist, or to report what they witnessed, as an observer? This distinction between autobiography and memoir is really just a compositional way of thinking about one's subject. If one is not simply fishing among memories but beckoned by a particular memory, it's the subject or content of that memory that a writer thinks of first and honors most. But point of view and focus go with the subject matter. Whether one was protagonist or witness during the real events determines whether one tells a recollected true story as autobiography or as memoir. Inasmuch as *how* a story is told can't be separated from what the story is *about*, form and content are factors of each other.

Another case in point concerns another distinction. To simplify the basic memory writing above, we suggested that students choose an *incident*, something that happened once in a short period of time. If the span of time and space covered by some action broadens out over many incidents and different places, the writer has a much greater problem controlling the material. The problem is basically cognitive, because the *concept* of an incident in someone's life is much simpler than the concept of a *phase* of it. This distinction in time-space coverage entails differences in abstractive tasks for the writer that should become issues in writing workshops and conferences.

Writing a phase rather than an incident of autobiography can be defined by activity directions, but they most likely will not so much prompt this kind of writing as help a writer see what kind of writing certain recollections are calling for:

Tell what happened to you during a certain period of your life covering many months, perhaps even a year or so—some *phase* that seems to have had its own beginning and end.

ISSUES FOR THE WRITING WORKSHOP

To distill a period of weeks, months, or years in even one to two thousand words requires drastic editing of events. It is this editing process that teaches. Two main issues characterize it. What idea of “phase” does the writer use as his criterion for relevance in selecting and emphasizing? And what efforts does he make to offset the abstractness of summary? The crux of the writing challenge lies in some balance between precise actualities—what people did, said, felt, and so on—and some all-encompassing theme—a notion of a trial gone through, a stage of growth experienced, a set of circumstances lived through, a relationship developed. The author may not need to state the theme directly, depending on how obvious it will be to the reader, which is not always an easy thing to guess in advance. However, in order to get it across he’ll have to organize the memory thematically as well as chronologically.

Unless written as résumés for a job application, fragments of autobiography lacking the concrete qualities of the original events and feelings will probably be boring and pointless. And yet, if the author narrates too much in detail, quotes too often, and stays entirely in moments of the past, he cannot come near to encompassing in the length of an article what happened over a period of months. To preserve vividness under these conditions calls for shrewdness about when to pull in for a “close-up” of a certain scene and when to summarize in a few sentences the less important or repetitive events. Although necessarily more abstract as a whole than an incident, a phase need not be more abstract in its parts. A general statement about what occurred “in the meantime,” or what occurred habitually over a long period, can be cast into concrete words and phrases and specific references.

Most accounts of a phase combine narrative with essay. That is, either the paper generally progresses chronologically but contains topical paragraphs in which time stands still while a general point is made, or the progression is a development of general points illustrated by bits of narrative taken out of chronological order. These organizations naturally occur because a portion of autobiography has the double goal of telling what happened while saying what that means.

Meaning is a matter of time perspective. What enables a writer to disengage a thematic unity from the welter of past facts is a certain emotional distance. From a remoter vantage point one can see patterns. Autobiography is characterized by binocular vision: the writer splits into I-now and I-then, which means that he looks at events from the remembered viewpoint of the past and from his present viewpoint. When we say that *Great Expectations* is told from Pip’s point of view, or *To Kill a Mockingbird* from Scout’s, we mean, of course, that they are told from the points of view of two middle-aged narrators who have framed their childhood perspective within their later perspective. Compare *Catcher in the Rye*, narrated a year after the events, with *A Separate Peace*, narrated fifteen years later. How well a student succeeds in defining themes, then, will depend partly on how far he stands from the events in time. Discussions of papers should allow for time lapses and consequent perspectives. The very effort to write large-scope autobiography may help to induce a maturer perspective.

PARALLEL READING

Most autobiographies are full-length and mix incidents with phases, such as Maya Angelou’s *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, Agnes de Mille’s *Dance to the Piper*, Helen Keller’s *Story of My Life*, Sybil Leek’s *Diary of a Witch*, Charles

Lindbergh's *We*, Mickey Mantle's *The Education of a Baseball Player*, Louis Nizer's *My Life in Court*, Gordon Parks's *A Choice of Weapons*, Richard Rodriguez' *Hunger for Memory*, Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*, Piri Thomas's *Down These Mean Streets*, Richard Wright's *Black Boy*, or Yevgeny Yevtushenko's *A Precocious Autobiography*.

A major motive for young people to read autobiography, and biography as well, is to search for role models and to identify with persons who have done what the reader would like to do. There are a great many fine autobiographies written by members of minority groups. Readers should have access to those of their own ethnic culture. Also, a splendid way to learn about a type of career or subject area is to read an autobiography of someone immersed in it.

We suggest a triple juxtaposition in the curriculum—of student autobiography, fictional autobiography, and actual published autobiography. A valuable interaction of the three takes place, we believe, in the minds of students and gives considerable dimension as well to their discussion of each. A group can read in common a fragment of true autobiography for discussion. Then each student can read a whole autobiography by some person who interests him.

■ MEMOIR

Like autobiography, memoir is first-person narration. But some journals are as much about others as about the writer, and any first-person writing can center on subjects other than the self. Memoir is the bridge between author focus and other focus. Information is still firsthand, though the subject is in third person. These directions could elicit memoirist writing:

Tell an incident that you witnessed in the past in which you were involved only as an observer. Re-create it as you saw it and include your reactions at the time.

In memoir, too, it may be useful to distinguish an incident from some longer period requiring, like a phase, thematic summary.

Differentiating memoir into reminiscence about animals and nature, a place, a person, or group specializes the subjects of it in a way that may help students realize that they have memories they would like to tell about. These different subjects of one's recollection also correspond to different kinds of third-person writing—reportage, biography, chronicle, and history. Memoir serves as the hinge, then, between recollection and investigation, personal and transpersonal knowledge.

These different subjects of memory, furthermore, derive from different informant roles that the memoirist played at the time of the events recalled. An informant who is not a participant in events can know them by only three personal means—by observing firsthand, by being privy to what the participants in the action know, and by being privy to what a local community knows where the action occurred. Let's call these three informant roles *eyewitness*, *confidant*, and *chorus* (like the chorus in Greek drama). By arraying kinds of writing according to these roles we can help students sort out and discuss their memory writing and parlay it into investigative counterparts.

NATURE MEMOIR

Nonhuman subjects require no confidant or chorus roles, only eyewitness. Young people identify a lot with animals and are strongly drawn to nature. One of us

read more than one hundred memoirs of nature incidents written by junior high students, was hardly bored a single time, and was astonished by the fullness, the interest, and the generally high quality of the accounts, even when some of the authors obviously lacked verbal skill. Small children have already stored many images and experiences of the nonhuman world if only memories of pet behavior, weather, and objects in their home and community. All youngsters can recall great amounts of knowledge about *things*, living and inanimate, the assimilation of many incidents or moments that they simply witnessed. People are born recorders, the young most of all. Help them frame writing projects to tap this huge storehouse. Some such memoirs may pinpoint an incident, others may summarize recurring acts into a general action. In any case the memoirist played only one informant role—that of eyewitness.

MEMOIR OF GROUPS AND PLACES

Many memories focus on group behavior, sometimes associated with a place and its atmosphere. Common subjects are families and homes, teams and arenas, employees and workplaces, or special trips or projects. Whereas the memoirist of nature or things writes only from eyewitness information, the memoirist of a group or place may write as both an eyewitness and a member of a chorus that may be the group itself or a community surrounding the group (neighborhood people, for example, who all know what some teen gang or criminal element is doing there).

To tell a group story the author must see something common in the behavior or activities of a number of individuals. They're trying to raise funds for a school, ostracizing some other people, vandalizing for entertainment, and so on. And such a story may recount once-upon-a-time incidents or recurring action, resulting in true *stories* or simply true *descriptions*. Workshop discussion might sort some of this out by way of helping authors to determine which direction they want to go in or how they want to mix these. Summary description of habitual or characteristic recurring action blends into sketch, profile, and personal essay.

MEMOIR OF A PERSON

Telling about what happened to another individual raises the issue of the confidant role, which for nature and group memoirs may be irrelevant. If the main experience happened to someone else, how does the memoirist know how that person felt? Perhaps in some cases, the inner life here, too, is irrelevant to the events. Maybe the memoirist is writing as an eyewitness or as a member of a chorus, and that external view suffices. But if readers want to know how the protagonist experienced what happened, then only a confidant role will satisfy. How well did the author know the subject? Did the protagonist confide to the author what he felt? Did the memoirist know what happened *only* from this confidence? Only from eyewitnessing? Only from common knowledge of the events in the locality? Or some combination of these?

Since knowledge sources determine some compositional possibilities, workshops can discuss what might best be done with a memoir given the roles that were available to the author. Whereas the demon of autobiography is one's lack of distance, the chief difficulty in writing about others is too much distance. But distance that would work against one handling of a memoir can be turned to an advantage if the composition is reconceived.

Many professional memoirs of people are not stories but character sketches or profiles. Workshops need to become sharp about seeing where pieces of writing stand on a spectrum from narrative to description and about making adjustments to fit the material and the author's intention. Has the author organized by *acts* or by *traits*? Which should dominate in a given case? Portraits may unveil a person or invest him with a nostalgic aura and be equally good writing. But less skillful authors may summarize their subject so much that the reader doesn't feel he has got to know the person himself. In this case the author may need to get back behind the over-digested recollection to some more specific memories of acts that give instances of the traits. Some expanded-memory noting might help.

Try to help students see how their misgivings about a paper may stem from the author's relationship to the subject and hence to his knowledge sources and perspective. Many problems are abstractive, because they concern making meaning out of the material by summarizing it so as to show something. The further the author moves, for example, from an incident to a series of events, from acts to traits, or from individual action to group action, the more he must generalize across particularities. Likewise, having to take an outside point of view about the behavior of animals or of a person the author doesn't know forces the author to *infer* motives and responses. This risk-taking is inherent in forming ideas and should not be avoided, but students need to become aware of what they're doing as they abstract beyond recollection toward reflection.

PARALLEL READING

Ivan Turgenev's *Sportsman's Notebook*, one of the masterworks of memoir in all literature, runs the gamut of the various combinations of informant roles and of relationships to subjects. One of us used the book for several years with maturer high school students, who seemed drawn rather than repelled by the lower-keyed action, suspense, and climax. Turgenev shows marvelously how to make the most of accidental material and of whatever informant roles fall to the reporter's lot.

Most libraries include a large body of memoir near chronicle and history. The motive for reading memoir is less to learn about the narrator, who may indeed be relatively unimportant, than to find out what he knew about some other people or some enterprise. Many memoirists, for example, are read because they moved in certain social or artistic circles or took part in some government administration or military campaign or scientific exploration. They're valuable as informants privileged to have played confidant, eyewitness, or group-membership roles regarding certain events. So their focus may be close to that of biography or chronicle, and interest in such a memoir depends on prior interest in a given subject.

Memoir presents information in an attractive way—via narrative and personal channels. Whatever topic or activity a student is interested in, he will almost surely find some memoir featuring it. Reading each other's memoirs may help students considerably to value and to pursue this kind of material.

Steinbeck's *Travels with Charley*, *On the Road with Charles Kuralt*, William L. Heat Moon's *Blue Highways: A Journey into America*, and the *New Yorker's* "Talk of the Town" department contain accounts and sketches lying somewhere between recollection and investigation, being memoirs of veteran reporters cruising about with an eye out for material.

WRITING FROM INVESTIGATION

The knowledge that recollection supplies is adventitiously acquired. The knowledge that investigation supplies is deliberately acquired. This difference in source makes composing with each differ also. By the time one starts writing from recollections, they have already been partially composed by the way memory digests experience. By the time one starts writing up some investigation, one has done some visits, interviews, or background research. In both cases some pre-writing activity has gone on—part of it unconsciously accumulated in the mind, another part initiated consciously to find out something “on assignment.” Though they influence the writing differently, both the filing-and-retrieval system of memory and the legwork of reportage and research constitute decision-making for knowledge-making and therefore a primal stage of the composing process.

■ WAYS OF INVESTIGATING

An investigator goes and looks (eyewitness), goes and asks (confidant), and goes and joins (chorus). That is, he visits, interviews, and (more rarely) immerses himself for a while in a target community. Reportage mimics the ways we acquire knowledge firsthand by chance. But the other part of investigation is research, which goes further into secondhand sources and further from chance to choice. That is, to reportage the investigator adds research into documents, for knowledge previously stored by others, and experimentation, for action that cannot be witnessed unless especially set up and controlled. The document research is scholarship, and the field or laboratory manipulation is science. Naturally, investigative writing combines these sources in various ways, depending on the subject and purpose, that raise different compositional issues, as we will indicate.

We suggest guiding students into investigation by modulating from the informant roles of memoir into kinds of reportage and research that require only one sort of investigating at a time. As students gain experience with more sorts, they begin to mix them for more complex kinds of writing.

Recollective and investigative writing come closest together in notation—preliminary writing as memory aids in the form of diaries and journals, field and lab logs, and journalists’ notebooks. Memoirist and researcher alike consciously digest these in drafting their final compositions.

■ LOG

Comparable to day-by-day accounts like calendars and journals are logs. These focus not on the narrator but on external events that are noted rapidly and succinctly as in police and ship logs, often by different people. A log can be written like a calendar on a wall chart or in a book with blank blocks or pages for each day’s entries.

Students can keep logs of anything that changes—weather, growing plants or animals, sports events. The point is usually to monitor functioning or progress. Observations are made at intervals, and descriptions are recorded as dated entries in the log. These logs can be used to make charts or graphs, summaries of recurring events, or generalizations in the form of informative articles. See *IDEAS* for more on this type of expository writing. Primary-grade children can begin their

logs as drawings with captions; older students can keep a higher proportion of their record in words.

Discoveries that come when growing animals are closely watched in the classroom not only delight learners but provide a rich opportunity for careful observation and accurate reporting. For example, bird, hen, or reptile eggs, a newborn mammal, larvae, or tadpoles can be brought for youngsters to care for and note their food, ideal environment, including temperature, and other requirements. The children can set up a routine for taking care of the animals. Since waiting for an egg to hatch or an animal to reach a new stage may leave little to observe at times, it's best to have more than one thing growing at once. Observation need not be daily if little is happening. With planning—and luck—youngsters can record special events like births, moltings, and metamorphoses. And they can observe at times of particular events, such as the feeding of ladybugs to leopard frogs. The cycles and relationships in nature will teach the most and provide the most interesting material for recording. The child is rare who is not entranced by watching a caterpillar become a butterfly.

An alternative to growth as a project structure is the complex workings of social insects. It's possible to buy "ant farms" that have a transparent wall for observing. At the end of each week or so, youngsters can list the most interesting things from their logs. More mature students might summarize logs into a more abstract sort of reportage in which recurring events and observations are generalized, as pursued in "Report of Experimentation" on page 382.

■ EYEWITNESS VISIT

This may take off directly from the sensory recording described in "Writing." Students choose a place or enterprise that they want to know more about or have been assigned to cover for some publication. What goes on here? Who would like to know about it? They observe there, take notes, and write up the visit according to a purpose that they may discuss with partners before the visit and refer to in workshop sessions afterwards.

The reporter of a visit has more options than an eyewitness memoirist because he can choose when and where to observe, which sensations to record at the scene, and how to digest the notes later. But the more miscellaneous material of a visit may require considerable selective shaping before some significance emerges. Random locales are fine if the writer is willing to make more visits than he writes up, or if he develops the sophisticated knack of seeing *something* in *anything*—a great goal to work toward. Specific reasons for choosing a locale or activity will make writing up easier for the beginner. The point of the reportage can be any number of things about the character of the locale, the behavior that goes on there, the atmosphere, and so on.

Remind students of the possibility of poetically rendering what they witness. Writing poems of observation alongside longer prose accounts keeps the writing honed, not only for rendering particulars but for charging them with meaning. See "Haiku" on page 396. If reporters keep the option of narrative poetry constantly in mind when visiting, they may more readily understand how, even in prose, they can make an apparent miscellany cohere by perceiving patterns in at least some of the action or by giving it a little metaphorical or symbolic spin, as the tenth grader did in the following poem, the best three sentences he wrote all year.

EIGHT BALL

*He breaks the two to the side pocket right,
 With kaleidoscope colors runs the three through the seven,
 Then banks the one true on the green.
 With sweat-laden fingers he powders the cue
 And calls the eight left corner down.
 The white knight charges, ramming
 The black towards the awaiting
 Abyss and
 In.⁴*

Workshop deliberations should help an author pick up on and pluck out such possibilities, whatever he does with the remaining material.

The workshop can also help a reporter decide how much to include himself as observer. First person is neither good nor bad. When should a reporter give his account a strong personal touch? Should he stay out entirely, play lightly in and out, or color all that he sees with his own reactions? Only consideration of the material and purpose can answer such questions. Is the reportage going into a school newspaper? If so, what department? A magazine of local sketches? Is the writer compiling a collection of his own? Or perhaps the reportage will feed into a project about a certain subject, like animal behavior, for which the locale was chosen.

Regarding newspapers, if students identify certain “stories” in advance, such as a parade, a store opening, a strike, or a political rally, they should have a ready focus for some good eyewitness reportage. Students who need this given focus may report this more conventional news, while writers who have developed the knack of composing randomness into a short sketch might take on the optional offbeat stories.

PARALLEL READING

Besides journalism itself, collections of eyewitness reportage in the classroom can include transcripts of sportscasts or other blow-by-blow accounts of action; miscellaneous accounts characterizing a place rather than reporting news; travelogues; single short eyewitness incidents; and first-person accounts by professional reporters that show their eyewitnessing before it gets written up into impersonal third-person newspaper stories. Most reportage is based on more than eyewitnessing alone, as developed below (see *Twentieth Century Reporting at Its Best*, edited by Louis Snyder and Richard Morris, Walt Whitman’s *Civil War*, edited by Bryce Rucker, and *By-Line: Ernest Hemingway*).

For many students, “action” or “event” may mean only rapid movement on a large scale. To offset this limited notion as well as to introduce them to some of the relevant literature of nature reportage, acquaint them with Karl von Frisch’s *Bees: Their Vision, Chemical Senses, and Language*, Henry David Thoreau’s *Walden*, and the books of Gerald Durrell, John Muir, Farley Mowat, Peter Mathiessen, Anne Morrow Lindbergh, and Annie Dillard. A great many poems, like

⁴From Phillips Exeter Academy.

many of Robert Frost's, are first-person narrations of action the poet observed—people's behavior or other action in nature.

■ VISIT PLUS INTERVIEW

While going and looking, youngsters should be gaining experience also in going and asking, treated on page 383 as "What Other Persons Know." Combining visits with interviews, in fact, provides the material for a great percentage of feature journalism as well as a natural follow-up to simple I-am-a-camera visits. Eyewitnessing of some scene or enterprise often needs to be supplemented by querying people on site about aspects of the activity that can't be seen or heard. Television reporters often let the camera do the eyewitnessing and interview participants or observers to garner what the camera cannot capture—invisible background information and personal reactions.

Students ready to go look *and* ask can simply choose locales or enterprises where looking isn't likely to tell the whole story. But maybe they won't know this until *after* a visit. Suppose, for example, they visit a juvenile court but in trying to report on it realize they don't understand some of the terms and the significance of some of the action. That's fine. They will have felt the need to query people on site and probably a reason to return prepared for this. Indeed, repeated visits and interviews at the same locale or enterprise make for more challenging in-depth reportage.

■ ORAL HISTORY

Everybody knows lots of true stories, some of which would interest other people just for their general human interest or because they are funny or horrifying or revealing. Children may have heard such memorable stories passed down or around in the family and may in fact know them well enough just to write them down in their own words. Groups can pool these and make booklets of them.

One form of interviewing is just to ask others to tell you true stories from *their* memories. Directed perhaps by an activity card, younger children can elicit stories from relatives, family friends, peer friends, and others they feel comfortable with and can get easy access to. They can tape, transcribe, and edit these stories, or they can just listen and write them down later in their own words. Children will enjoy swapping these through bulletin boards or booklets, perhaps even categorizing them into funny, scary, and so on.

With social experience and confidence, students can venture to call on people around the neighborhood or community whom they don't know but who know true stories they would like to hear—oldtimers full of the past or veterans of some interesting way of life or members of another ethnic group. We have found that students too shy or timorous to do these interviews alone really enjoy doing them with a partner or two. A small group also thinks of more questions to ask, to get the subject to elaborate the story, and can collaborate on putting the story together later in writing.

If the interviewers have drawn out the story in bits and pieces, or if the interviewee has backed up a lot, the group may end by re-composing the story consid-

erably, whether working from a tape, notes, or their collective memories. Photos taken of the subject and habitat during the interview can illustrate booklets of these stories, which can be titled according to subjects or themes stories may have in common.

Get copies of the *Foxfire* books and other work by Eliot Wigginton and associates, who pioneered in oral history as a school activity and who now promote student investigation of other sorts as well, such as described in this chapter and *INFORMATION*. The original impetus was to capture the waning Appalachian folklore of a corner of Georgia. Enabling students to publish their work as magazines and books has contributed much to both the education of the students and to the preservation of regional lore and history. The *Foxfire* projects stand as an inspiring example of realistic learning because they embed writing in broader activities that include the sources and purposes of the writing.⁵

Their publications sometimes mix stories with accounts of folk ways of making things and other local lore. At other times the publications specialize in only one sort of oral information at a time—history, remedies, customs, etc. Students elsewhere might organize projects similarly to cover, say, only oral history or to mix it with other lore so as to create a composite picture of a whole way of life. Such projects can offer a way for young people to deepen their understanding of their own ethnic background and to find out about other ethnic cultures.

■ BIOGRAPHY

A biography is a story of what happened to someone other than the narrator. Unless the story dwells only on external action, the big compositional issue concerns how the narrator knows what the person experienced. The sources of information vary considerably according to whether the subject is alive and whether, if so, the author has access to him as confidant. Does the author know the person, or can he arrange to interview him?

Much depends also on whether the story will cover all of a person's life, or only a phase of it, or a thread stripped out of it. Undertaking a full-dress biography may exceed the capacity of all but the most advanced students, since even a compact *vita* is very difficult to pull off without synopsisizing to the point of aridity. We assume other students will be writing only part of another's life story.

Children can write simple true stories about a relative or friend by drawing on what they already know and by asking for more, illustrating these written-up accounts with snapshots and drawings.

Older youngsters choose an interesting person in their school or community to go watch and talk to—a person with a special skill or past, a political leader, a person in an interesting job, and so on. In fact, a major motivation for youngsters is to sort out possible careers for themselves by getting to know the lives of people who have chosen certain lines of work.

Students will also choose subjects for biography who represent other role models, such as successful members of their ethnic group, or who typify personality traits like courage or self-sacrifice that they aspire to or identify with. Students may

⁵ See the ongoing *Foxfire* series, ed. Eliot Wigginton and others (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Anchor Books; New York: Dutton). For the account of how the projects developed and how they work, see Eliot Wigginton, *Sometimes a Shining Moment: The Foxfire Experience* (Doubleday, Anchor Books, 1986).

investigate someone to find out how he got to be the way he is. What experiences has he had? What does *he* think is his most significant achievement? Questions for interviewing come from things the biographer has reasons to want to know.

If the subject is unavailable for interview, or if the investigator wants to supplement interviews with him with other information, he can write to the subject or interview people who know him. The biographer then decides on one event or phase that would make a good true story about the chosen person and writes it up. He can submit a draft of this account to the subject for reaction and suggestions before rewriting it as a newspaper feature story, part of a project in career selection, a case study, and so on.

It's best to hold off biography that depends on documents until a student is well versed in firsthand investigation of a living person. Paraphrasing encyclopedias and other reference works or secondary sources does not constitute real investigation or composition. Students will make better use of these in writing if they work their way up to them through firsthand sources and *primary* documents. If, for example, students choose a relative or ancestor to write about, old photographs, letters, certificates, diaries, and other documents might be available as sources for the account. If they choose an important but remote figure, they can draw on newspaper accounts, archives, letters, diaries, autobiography, and memoir. Experienced investigators can write biographies of dead or unavailable persons based largely on documents, but the more they draw on third-person sources that did what they are doing, the closer they get to paraphrasing and plagiarizing. See page 388 for ways to shape this kind of material into a profile.

■ CHRONICLE

Whereas biography focuses on an individual, chronicle focuses on a group. History certainly is about groups also but larger, more remote groups than we have in mind here, encompassing much more time and space, like whole regions, nations, or cultures. Students might decide to tell what an athletic team, a club, a gang, or a neighborhood anti-crime organization did that is now over. Completed action makes it a story. If the group still exists, like an organization, it might be interesting to tell its history up to now—how it got started and developed, its vicissitudes. In either case, an investigator interviews members for their account of what happened and puts it together with what he learns from interviewing persons outside of the group who might have a different perception of what the group has done.

If the investigator is a member of the group, he can enjoy the chorus role in addition and tell what happened as an insider. Perhaps the organization kept minutes or other records that might be consulted. If the group's action received public attention, other documents like newspaper files, police records, county and municipal records, and transcripts might provide more information. If students want to tell the story of some group they have only heard or read about, they have to be experienced enough working from documents to role-play historians without simply copying from them.

PARALLEL READING

Besides their value as portraits of people to whom youngsters may be drawn for important psychological reasons, biographies usually contain much valuable factual information included to illumine the careers or the circumstances in which

the main figures are involved. This way of acquiring geographical or scientific or political knowledge may be much easier for many students than reading expository articles on these subjects. At the same time it may encourage these students to turn next to just such nonnarrative articles.

Short complete biographies of significant figures are frequently written for a juvenile audience or for adult magazines, but collections for adults are rather rare. Two appealing books containing them are Plutarch's *Lives of the Noble Greeks and Romans* and John F. Kennedy's *Profiles in Courage*. Virginia Woolf wrote vitas of Mary Wollstonecraft and other important feminine figures, collected in *The Common Reader*.

An example of a suspenseful chronicle is Bruce Bliven's *The Story of D Day*. *Time of Torment: Nineteen Sixty-one to Nineteen Sixty-seven* by L.F. Stone and *My Lai Massacre and Its Coverup: Beyond the Reach of Law?* by Joseph Goldstein et alia are two chronicles of the sixties that raise serious moral issues. Berton Roueche's *Eleven Blue Men* and his narratives of medical detectives make absorbing reading and are examples of chronicles that are cases. Close-ups of historical moments can be found in periodicals such as *American Heritage* and *Journal of Negro History*.

Biography and chronicle provide students a more personal and concrete approach to the figures and events of history, which textbooks and other synoptic works notoriously overcondense. Chronicle typically covers much of what is generally called history except that the degree of abstraction is not as great because it breaks history into smaller units and stays closer to primary sources. It may often happen that some students will become interested in a whole period or country or phase of history as a result of reading a couple of biographies or a chronicle from it. If students also read some of the letters, diaries, autobiographies, and memoirs from which biographies and chronicles are written, then when they do read the more synoptic kind of history, they may better understand the process by which it in turn was distilled, and become more sophisticated about the necessary biases and emphases and omissions inherent in the selectivity of history.

■ THE CASE

A case study is a true story about an individual or group that *represents* the experiences of other individuals or groups. Although many biographies and chronicles may be *understood* in this way, case histories are explicitly written to typify their subjects' stories. So they bridge considerably from narrative into essay. A case tends to treat an unknown person whose situation or traits have applicability to others, whereas published biography is generally about a person who's already famous or interesting to the public.

Cases constitute an important kind of writing that's practiced extensively in our society. A social worker periodically visits a family on relief and writes a report, based on notes, of the family's changing conditions. A psychotherapist writes up notes of interviews with a patient and produces a clinical case study. An educator writes an account of the mental growth of a child under certain conditions. And schools of law and business have for some time relied on case reading as a way of plunging their students into actual situations such as they will encounter professionally. "Getting down to cases" is looking at real instances that characterize common problems or issues. An account of the course of a lawsuit, a

commercial negotiation, a piece of legislation, or a labor-management dispute serves as a window on certain sorts of practical problems that the account embodies. When used for discussion and exercise in decision-making, the case is often presented incompletely, the conclusion being withheld until the trainees have had a chance to resolve the problem themselves.

Students might create a case by any combination of investigative techniques discussed for reportage, biography, and chronicle—on-site visits, interviews, and documents (see “Composites of Information Gathering” on page 388). A simple way to create a case is to keep a specialized journal of visits and interviews and to summarize it later so as to make clear in what way the events are generalizable to other people or situations. The use of documents might be to frame the research with past background or general context such as the state of knowledge in the area which the case can illumine. Depending on whether firsthand or secondhand sources dominate, and on how significant a role the author played in events, a case may be written in either first person or third person. It focuses, at any rate, on the other, not the author.

PARALLEL READING

Many feature articles in magazines and newspapers are brief cases. The *New Yorker* is an excellent source, as it is for all kinds of reportage and research. In addition, there are many case books in various fields that include accounts for laypeople that are not too mature or technical for adolescents. Classroom collections of biography should include some case histories to provide a model for student composition. Robert Coles's *Children in Crisis* and others in his crisis series, like Robert Lindner's *The Fifty Minute Hour* about psychiatric patients, provide highly readable examples of cases. Many short stories—Willa Cather's “Paul's Case” and Conrad Aiken's “Silent Snow, Secret Snow,” for example—are fictional equivalents of the personal case. As noted before, juxtaposition of real and invented accounts reveals the special qualities of each mode of reporting on human experience.

One of our articles of faith—founded, we believe, on some real evidence—is that older adolescents are capable of doing on a smaller scale what adult practitioners of a career do. The point of role-playing the professional is not only to learn how to be a lawyer, social worker, scientist, or business person but to be able to understand and care about what those people are doing. More basically, the purpose is to understand how it is we know what we think we know. Even if his future job will not require case-writing or other written investigation, a student should learn from direct experience how the information of his world is created. In fact, the principal justification of any writing program is not so much to prepare students for careers as it is to develop their thought and understanding.

CHAPTER

INFORMATION

SEVENTEEN

This chapter extends investigation beyond narrative and therefore carries true stories into *generalized* information. It comprises factual articles such as those printed in magazines, newspapers, professional journals, encyclopedias, and certain manuals and memorandums that mainly set forth facts. This is expository discourse, dominated by the present tense of generalization and organized around explicit statement.

Personal information is dealt with in other chapters, in the form of sensations, memories, feelings, and reflections. The charting, graphing, and mapping of information are treated in *LABELS AND CAPTIONS*. A large part of task and topic talk, described in *TALKING AND LISTENING*, concerns treatment of information. Oral experience in selecting, describing, and ordering facts develops that most crucial skill in the composition of informative articles—explaining one's material.

Creating information entails many fine learning tasks in observing, experimenting, thinking, and using language. It draws on work done in other kinds of discourse—actual dialogue, true stories, directions, ideas, all of which it may also incorporate. Some of the classic problems of exposition and argumentation concern how to synthesize factual narrative, directions, general statements of fact, and general ideas in one or another combination. Sometimes one serves merely as evidence or illustration embedded in another, which serves it in turn as context.

These last three chapters, *TRUE STORIES*, *INFORMATION*, and *IDEAS*, represent continuous stages of making knowledge that naturally overlap as one subsumes the one before. We separate them only to clarify this process for learning purposes. Where a given discourse falls along this continuity depends on whether narrative, fact, or idea *dominates* the organization.

We proceed here, as in *TRUE STORIES*, by relating the investigator's sources to kinds of discourse. But since the main ways of investigating and recording have been covered in previous chapters, here we will refer a lot and add a little. Information may be drawn from four main sources: (1) what the environment shows (2) what experiments reveal (manipulations of the environment for purposes of observation), (3) what other people know, and (4) what records store. Help students to determine what they already know about a subject, what they still want to find out, and which of the following resources they'll need to utilize.

WHAT THE ENVIRONMENT SHOWS

Any environment is beaming information at the learner. The degree to which she's responsive to this stimulation and can perceive, assimilate, and make sense of it is the degree to which, at that moment at least, she's educable. Practice in observing and accurately reporting information that an environment presents is one function of the sensory recording activities described on page 215.

The easiest material to start with is that from a close and familiar environment—objects from home or pets in the classroom. All one has to do is observe and verbalize things with which one already has some personal relationship. To this can then be added the practice of visiting places less familiar for the express purpose of “reading” the environment there.

■ THINGS FROM HOME

Personal objects are the focus for show-and-tell oral composition as presented on page 77 for students of all ages. Some show-and-tell presentations can be taped and later transcribed. Others can be written up after sessions in which all members of a small group have spoken about and answered questions on the items they brought in, thereby benefiting from group interaction. Writing-up might be most appropriate when the session is specialized in the direction of, say, explanation—“Bring in something of interest and explain its purpose, use, care, or operation.” Having rehearsed while talking, and having received from their audience an idea of how to explain some things better and what emphasis might be most interesting, youngsters should be ready to write. The personal choice of the items and the intention of printing the papers as information booklets should ensure motivation.

Older students can bring in objects they want to write about and explain them first orally to a small group, perhaps their writing group itself. Also, see on page 293 the explaining of whole exhibits through captions. Captioning makes a fine lead into factual articles.

■ THINGS IN SCHOOL

All kinds of observing and measuring can go on in the school if it's well-stocked with pets and plants and objects. This occurs best as part of practical projects, discussed later, rather than as exercises in observing and measuring. Just for the sake of the process involved, consider here one staple sort of project—caring for living things. Within the caretaker role children can role-play the naturalist, the scientist as observer rather than experimenter. Students situated so they can observe plants or animals in their natural environment can of course do this better. But for pets and schoolroom plants the point of observing can be, precisely, to understand them well enough to know how best to care for them out of their natural environment.

For elementary school children, the more the subject moves, the better, although once involved in a project children do become motivated to observe small changes from day to day, if, say, they are growing certain plants, culture molds, or crystals. The practical purpose of regular observation can be to learn how the living things behave and what they need so as to care for them well. But of course children want living things around anyway because they feel affinity

with them and are already curious to learn how they differ from themselves. This is all part of the sorting out of life to know where one stands in it that basically motivates people to inform themselves.

When children are new to the process of recording what they observe, they can take notes as they watch for five or ten minutes and then meet with their small group. The function of the notes is, first, to remind each child of what she observed so she can “compare notes” with her colleagues and, second, to provide specific words, phrases, and observations for a group write-up of a journal entry.

Some observing sessions can be devoted to drawing pictures or taking photographs of the subject while watching it. If more than one kind of animal is in the room, children can compare and contrast, making drawings to show the differences in the animals’ feet, ears, noses, tails. These pictures can be dated and captioned to explain, for example, what the animal was doing at the time and can be added to the journal. Their drawings might be put together into a presentation for the class, using an overhead projector. If photos were taken, students can make a slide show.

The observers collate their individual notes in a small-group discussion and write together a dated entry for that day in a group journal. Since a lot of the same words are used over and over, these can be gradually added to a long-standing list somewhere, which members can consult for vocabulary and spelling. A scribe writes down what the group decides should go into the report. There may be disagreements about what was actually seen and precisely what the color, shape, movement, and so on was, which may have to be settled by returning to their subject for another look.

At intervals the group meets to read over its collective journal and then tell or write a summary of it in continuous prose to share with others as a kind of information article (see “Collective Writing” on page 201). In other words, they’re not after just a story but generalized facts about appearance and structure, what the subject does and likes, how it functions and interacts, and so on. If the journal is about an ant farm, one would not expect the summary to get at development, but at generalities in behavior—the routine operations and labor divisions of the colony. One would expect such a journal to record repetitive behavior on different occasions, so that gradually a general picture builds up. The guiding question might be “What different kinds of ants are there and what does each kind do?” which partners could periodically discuss as they try to pull together observations.

■ OUT OF SCHOOL

An appropriate extension of classroom observation is a trip to a zoo, museum, or natural environment. If small groups have been delegated to record there specifics such as eating behavior or diet, or to describe and draw particular parts of the bodies, they’re more likely to observe and record accurately.

On the social studies side, youngsters can plan to record what people spontaneously do in various circumstances and locales that the observers often find themselves in anyway or seek out for purposes of investigating. They can keep and summarize a journal as described on page 357. “Eyewitness Visit” on page 371 treats a single sortie to write up as a story, but *repeated* visits afford the opportunity to generalize *recurring* action from particular instances and thus to characterize rather than narrate what is true about some locale or enterprise. See “Profile” farther on.

STILL PLACES

Reading an environment where little or nothing is happening yields a very different sort of information than recording action. Landscapes and buildings reveal *stored* information, *past* action perhaps as in marks of vandalism or erosion, but the observer usually must infer a lot by piecing together many details. Often one can make some interesting generalizations this way from a single visit. For example, you can say a lot about our society from poking about in a garbage dump or shopping mall.

But take a very specialized place like a cemetery. From gravestones students can discover, for various epochs, the most common names and nationalities and religions, longevity, infant mortality, epidemics, sentiments about death, and so on. The revelations of one cemetery can be compared with those of another. Rubbings of epitaphs or carvings can illustrate cemetery research reports. When trips to the cemetery are combined with research with local archives and documents in historical societies, students have a valuable opportunity to role-play historians.

Of course observation stimulates other fact-finding such as reading and asking experts to extend what students have observed for themselves and to answer questions they know enough now to ask.

■ PARALLEL READING AND VIEWING

Elementary school children can read books of observation, such as David Burnie's *Tree*, which focus on distinctions that children can then observe for themselves. Magazines such as *Ranger Rick's*, *Scienceland*, *National Geographic*, *National Wildlife*, *Natural History*, and *Audubon* feature records of observation. A lot of information comes across best through nature films, television documentaries, and encyclopedic videodiscs.

WHAT EXPERIMENTS SHOW

When the environment is manipulated, new information emerges. "If you change this, what happens *then*?" The best context for investigating is a project to *make* something, *effect* something, or *discover* something. Experiments are projects to discover something.

The starting point, as in all investigation, is something that somebody wants to know. Even small children should understand early that if you can't find out what you want to know by observing things as they are, then set some conditions so that you *can* observe it. If you want to know which eats more, a hamster or a gerbil, then make a comparison possible by feeding both and keeping records. Which is smarter? What would show that? Which can be taught more quickly to let you know when it's hungry? Students can learn to control experiments by, for example, growing plants of the same species under different conditions of light, water, diet, soil, sand, and so on to find out which conditions allow it to thrive best. This is a matter of practical intelligence, which the "scientific method" merely formalizes.

The combination of manipulating while observing and recording can develop important language skills. While visiting one third-grade class that was recording what happened to candle flames when various things were done to them, one of

us noticed that several papers contained sentences beginning with *if* and *when* clauses—a rarity in the writing of children this age. Then we noted that these sentence constructions were mimicking their physical manipulations of the candles: “If I put a jar over the candle, the flame goes out,” or “When we throw alum on the flame, it turns blue.” This is typical of the organic linking among physical operations, mental operations, and language operations that brings on sentence complexity.

■ REPORT OF EXPERIMENTATION

In groups or alone, students record observations and digest journals as described in the last section and on page 357. Experimental findings tend to be written up as a mixture of narrative and generalization, of telling what happened during the experiment and of drawing conclusions from this story. This kind of narrative is not a tale told just for its own sake; it’s a kind of case history in that it substantiates some statement that purports to apply to other instances as well. The sequence, progression, growth, or change informs in a general way: *what happened* to these creatures is *what happens* to others of their kind in similar circumstances. But how far the claim of typicality should go is an important matter for cross-commentary in a small group. Do the conclusions square with evidence from elsewhere?

The experimenter is also the reporter. The natural scientist who tries to isolate a compound or a social scientist who wants to determine how a problem-solving group evolves over time does not simply observe naturalistically; she arranges what she will observe. Because she chooses the subject and situation and sets the occasions and duration, usually in order to test a hypothesis, a lot of what she reports is of her own making. This control over the material creates some difficulties in allowing for one’s own influence and for one’s personal investment in the outcome—very real problems for all scientists.

■ READING

Recourse to documents may be necessary in order to enlighten and orient the lay reader sufficiently for her to grasp the significance of what the experimenter is trying to prove or discover. Whether the experiment deals with animals, things, or people, the writer frequently has to situate her material by referring to the findings of others or to the history of the subject. Her case may be one more instance of a generality previously reported by other people; or perhaps it contradicts prior evidence. The findings may be understandable only if the writer, for example, fills in a bit of welfare history, or sets forth some established facts about ducks or legislative routine. This secondhand information must come from library research, and this is a good way for students to incorporate some reading into their writing—to situate their original investigation.

Magazines like *Science Digest*, *Popular Science*, or *Psychology Today* report results of experiments that might interest students. The best way to cover the literature of research on a certain subject is to consult the periodical indexes in a library reference room to find out which magazines and journals have published relevant articles.

WHAT OTHER PERSONS KNOW

The most common way a young child finds out what she needs to know or is curious about is to ask questions. Once she's asking more than one person the same question, she's doing what more sophisticated pollsters call a survey. Asking honest questions and sharing what one finds out are appropriate activities for any age.

■ INTERVIEW

Interviews can be part of many different kinds of information-gathering projects, from light reportage to heavy research. One of the best ways for a young person to find out about something is to ask questions of a specialist in the subject. A student can interview an expert to get leads or to supplement information she has already created from observational visiting, experimentation, other interviews, or book research. Some interviews aim to draw out the interviewee herself to the extent she may be the subject. For various uses see the sequence starting on page 373 of "Visit Plus Interview," "Oral History," "Biography," "Chronicle," and "Case." Note the other uses in this chapter also.

PROCEDURE

Models for the process can be broadcast or transcribed interviews between reporters and experts. Published oral histories like those of Studs Terkel show the fine information that can be obtained but often don't include the questions or other elements of the interview that elicited it.

A good way for youngsters to ease into the unfamiliar role of interviewer is to ask questions of peers, for which an especially strong motive exists early in the school year when learners do not yet know each other well. But classmates can still be appropriate after that if interviews are focused on such topics as books the subject would recommend or the origin of her name and the names of her family members. Aides and older students in the classroom would make fine subjects as well as children in other classes.

A get-acquainted game is to interview each other in groups of two or three, taking turns asking each other questions and answering those others ask. Then take turns telling each other a summary of what you heard each one say about herself, correct any misimpressions, and then take turns introducing each other to the class as a whole, telling as much as you can remember. Another thing to do is to have each person write up a report about another person after the interview and then read that to the class and see if they can guess who is the subject of the report.

After doing oral history with relatives and friends a next step might be interviewing newsworthy subjects to gather material for a newspaper. A small group discusses which people in the school or community would be good to interview for any number of reasons—their involvement in newsworthy affairs of the moment, their representativeness, their kinds of occupation, or qualities of their personalities. In discussing why they want to interview these people, the reporters should help each other crystallize the kinds of questions they would ask. They may want to try these questions out on each other.

Interviewing is an art, and composition of the reportage begins with the selection of questions. Queries about date of birth, education, and so on will read

later like a dossier or encyclopedic entry of a minor poet, though of course some such bare facts may be relevant if inserted into more promising material. Don't attempt to head off this problem, however, by admonishing. Emphasize, rather, the deriving of questions from their original intention in wanting to interview the subject they've chosen.

SINGLE INTERVIEW

Assume an interview written-up to stand alone, for any number of purposes, as is common today. The directions are to arrange the time and place for the interview, with the idea of catching the person in appropriate surroundings, tape or take notes during the interview, and write it up afterward. The write-ups are exchanged and discussed by a group acting as editorial board for a newspaper, booklet, posting, or other medium for sharing.

ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

After their first interview, the group can share any problems they may have had in interviewing and ask for suggestions for solutions. This discussion may range over matters of technique:

- which sorts of questions are most productive
- when to give the interviewee an opportunity to go ahead without questions
- when to skip prepared questions and ask spontaneous ones
- how to ask further questions on the basis of responses to the first questions

Help a beginning group to examine a sample transcript or set of notes and ask the reporter to criticize her own interview in regard to the questions above. Invite her colleagues to say how they would handle some of the same problems. Then together look at her write-up of the interview and ask her to explain how she went about digesting the notes or transcript. When is it best to quote and when to summarize? How much should you shuffle the actual order of remarks for the sake of better continuity of ideas? Should the reporter include her own questions? How much physical description should there be in relation to verbal matter? Are you going to play up surroundings, mannerisms, and dress, or sacrifice some of these for what was said? Do you describe appearances only at the beginning or return to them?

Let's note in passing that these are not only very real decisions that any reporter has to make but also some of the options the novelist or playwright has to play. The way these questions are answered is by referring them to the overall purpose that governs decision-making and that determined the choice of interviewee and setting in the first place. The focus may be on the person as personage, on her expertise, on her relation to the locale, and so on.

MULTIPLE INTERVIEWS

Interviews might be part of a project to find out the answer to a question such as what school dropouts say about their experience. Each interview would then be a mini case history, written independently but compared later with others for possible generalizations about dropping out. Contrasts, generalities, and other ideas can arise as secondary effects of interviewing if the interviewees are deliberately

selected for oppositions, similarities, and other relationships. What do different dietitians say about a vegetarian diet? What do a retailer and a repairperson say about the same product?

When placed in the service of a project, interviewing can lead to further writing and to a special issue of a newspaper in which appear not only the related interviews centering on a certain subject but also some articles of interpretation and generalization that refer to the interviews as testimony.

■ SURVEYS

Information gathered by polling a number of people can be presented as a survey. Young children can poll their classmates to find out such things as what they do on Saturday morning, what TV shows they like best, what time of day they were born or what their birthweight was, what hobbies or collections they have. The results can be displayed on graphs or wall charts (see page 295). Older students may prefer opinion polls on burning issues among their peer group like resisting drugs or on feelings—ambitions and anxieties. They can start by questioning students in the class, then go to others outside of class or school. For example, teenagers might take a survey of what many different sorts of people think about the same current social or political controversy. From these responses they can draw some conclusions about how different people think.

Polls conducted on paper are questionnaires. A group might use a questionnaire to inventory each classmate's personal likes and dislikes, travels, physical condition, ambitions, and so on. Then they could chart or graph or write up a class profile on the basis of the answers. Similar questionnaires could determine the pool of resources and competencies collectively offered by the class. This would help in planning projects.

After some experience collecting information via questionnaires, students can solicit opinions on various subjects, learning in the process how to word questions so they're not "loaded." Unbiased and open-ended questions are often the most difficult for immature survey-takers to formulate, particularly if their own opinions on the subject are strong. Drafting a good questionnaire is a fine challenge to be precise, clear, and objective (see page 408 for ways to scale opinions).

If a computer is available, students may store accumulating results of all sorts of surveys into a database and interrelate them to create further information.

WHAT RECORDS STORE

Books, periodicals, films, recordings, computer data bases, archives, and documents of all sorts, including family records such as birth and marriage certificates, store information. Marriage of videodisc with computer enables students to summon vast amounts of documents, films, and audiotapes bearing on subjects indexed for searching. Such multimedia electronic "libraries" should not only make research easier and more attractive in schools but facilitate originality by affording students access to a far greater range of documents, including primary sources, than was formerly feasible. In the meantime make students aware of all available local sources, like municipal and county records, historical society archives, microfilms of old newspapers, photographic archives, special museums, and so on.

A high proportion of information is of value only to the degree that it's up-to-date. This provides another reason for students to read newspapers, periodicals, and recently published almanacs, reports, and compilations, such as the know-your-town type of studies done by the League of Women Voters or Chamber of Commerce. Specialized magazines cover a myriad of subjects from electronics and astronomy to consumerism and health. Articles are more inviting for students than tomes, not only as sources of information but also as models for writing. And the more rapidly information proliferates, the more critical becomes publication lag, and the more people rely on either computer data bases like InfoTrac, which can be continuously updated, or on what we will call state-of-knowledge articles.

■ RESEARCH WITH DOCUMENTS

Students experienced in the kinds of recollective and investigative writing recommended in *TRUE STORIES* and in this chapter should be able to pull together information from a variety of sources to do original research. However, to cull, synthesize, and interpret the content of what others have written presupposes maturity, motivation, experience with abstracting one's own documents, and the capacity to organize a long piece of expository writing. Original research with higher-order documents is, of course, not impossible, but unless one is an authority in a subject area, the likelihood of originality decreases as the abstraction level of the sources rises. In treating historical subjects, for one example, the farther events are from the present, the more likely that previous researchers have already assimilated them. Recent events offer better opportunities for working from primary sources and for synthesizing in an original way.

SCOPING THE SUBJECT

When a student pieces together information and ideas from several books that are themselves syntheses—encyclopedias, summary articles, synoptic histories, or definitive biographies—she really has little choice but to rearrange, reword, and regurgitate. So often the “long paper” or “research paper” is just a collage of book reports. But if she sifts lower-order documents, many of them of the sort she has previously written herself—eyewitness accounts, transcripts, journals and diaries, correspondences, fragments of autobiography and memoir, cases, and profiles—and some of them of a sort she has not been writing, such as municipal files, archives, and congressional records, then she can do a piece of honest research that no one has done before—the only kind she *should* do. From having created most kinds of primary documents herself, she will know how they come into existence, what the nature and worth of their information is, and consequently how she should assess them.

Conventional school “reports” and “research” have actually generated a lot of bad expository writing by making students digest sources that are themselves synoptic. This sort of writing about books may serve to monitor a student's reading activity or to help her assimilate some material, but checks and study aids should not be confused with either composition or real research. This is a critical matter, because many educators think or claim that students are being taught to do scholarly research when they're in fact just summarizing summaries. A *précis* is not in

itself research. Such broad generalizations create the delusion that students are investigating at a high level of thought when they're really just absorbing what others have distilled for them. This absorption is necessary, but if we don't also arrange for learners to generalize about some material of their own, we'll have short-circuited their knowledge-making processes and instilled in them a misleading notion of real research.

Furthermore, practically speaking, the scope of an investigative subject must be reasonably commensurate with the length of the paper written about it. Treating too broad a topic in too small a compass has been the bane of school writing. It invites vagueness, dullness, and cliché. We urge you to help individuals and groups keep an eye on this ratio. The more a subject extends in time and space—the more people and places and events it “covers”—the longer the investigation and the composition should be to do justice to it without merely plagiarizing someone else's longer work. Help students frame investigative projects that will accommodate both what they want to find out and what they're willing and able to do. They need to see realistically how much a project and paper of a certain length may and may not accomplish. But a project can be appraised and reconceived after it's under way as the investigator learns more about what her question entails.

Also, groups can investigate a subject whose scope exceeds what an individual is willing or able to do. Airing a proposal in one's group will help define the subject and determine what it may involve. If it seems then too big or complicated, partners may be enlisted to collaborate on it. Indeed, group investigation may solve many problems of matching the scope of the subject to the students' capacities. Members of an investigative team can agree to delve into different sources, documents or otherwise. Help from you and other adults plus some quick reconnoitering will probably help shape projects for greater efficiency and ultimate success. Then, during the gathering of information, students periodically tell their group what they've done so far and discuss problems they foresee.

This approach leaves many more decisions up to the student—from selection of sources to drawing conclusions—but if this is not so, a research paper is not worth doing. Furthermore, she can have plenty of consultants. Subject matter teachers can give leads to sources, librarians and clerks can help in locating documents. The way to teach so-called library skills is not during an arbitrarily scheduled class tour of the library but when individuals are hot on the trail of information to answer a question they have.

For the reasons we've indicated, only well motivated students with much other investigative experience will probably want or be able to do original research based entirely on books and other documents, that is, pure scholarship. So it makes sense to work reading research first into other projects calling for mixed methods. Investigators naturally feel the need to supplement observing and interviewing with information they get from reading, starting with brochures put out by some government agency they're visiting and ranging on to technical articles or basic texts on physics, say, when the enterprise is an electronics manufacturer. Journalists often have to study up on a subject in order both to understand their visits and interviews and to give the reader background when they write their article.

As their interests enlarge and their knowledge structures expand, students increasingly want to know more about remoter things and want to situate their immediate environs in a broader context. For this they have to shift from firsthand

to secondhand sources for both facts and ideas. Exhausting what she can glean from the nearby environment and its inhabitants spurs the learner to look in books as powerfully as any reason can. She discovers one of the main functions of literacy, after all—to find out things the people and places around you can't tell you.

CITING

Citing sources is a mere mechanical matter, but some teachers have made so much hoopla about it that it has overshadowed far more serious and difficult research issues. It should never appear to students as a kind of scorekeeping. It simply credits other people for quotations or ideas and shows the reader where to pursue certain topics. Publishers issue style sheets to their authors to cover the format they want for footnotes and bibliography along with other printing niceties that vary among publishers. Simply make available a common style sheet for students to follow, like that of the Modern Language Association or the American Psychological Association. Any recently published research with documents that you might obtain as reading material for students will also exemplify for them the handling of citations in the text and the setting up of a bibliography.

COMPOSITES OF INFORMATION GATHERING

The kinds of informational writing described below *might* usefully be done by some students entirely on the basis of research in stored information, as we'll indicate, but more likely will be done by most students as composite investigation. If the subject is specific or new and not much researched, students will feel a need to investigate it themselves and can perhaps successfully encompass the relevant literature on it in a compositional length they can handle.

■ PROFILE

A profile characterizes a person, place, or enterprise. It is about recurring or typical things—traits rather than events. Not progression, but pattern, will provide the shape of the material. But the material is still concrete, as in case writing, and the generalities are exemplified with anecdotes.

Younger students can approach profile by shifting from a character sketch of someone they already know well, which is based on memory, to a portrait of someone they have to find out about. They visit, observe, and interview both the subject and others who know her. The more visits with the subject, and the more viewpoints about her, the more depth to the profile. The goal is to render what the subject is like, not a narrative of her life except as patterns in her action illustrate personal traits.

Another kind of profile describes what goes on routinely at the site of some enterprise—a farm, post office, bakery, factory, or hospital. We remember funny, wry, and fascinating accounts students have written of picturesque or rarely observed activities—at a Vermont country bookstore, on a Hudson River tugboat, and in an organ factory.

Subjects for profiles reflect the student's private interest or her work in other subjects. For a project in science she could visit a laboratory, research center,

observatory, or agricultural station. For government there are municipal operations and state agencies. For social studies, including economics, any business or other enterprise is germane. Seeing for herself how a profession or enterprise is conducted, and who goes into it, can also help a high-schooler deliberate about a career, and reading the printed reports of other students will extend this knowledge of job options considerably.

The gist of directions is:

Go visit some enterprise, perhaps on several occasions, talk with people there, watch its operation, take notes, and read any printed matter available there—official manuals, company brochures, house organs, sample transcripts or correspondence, and so on. Write afterwards a profile that characterizes the enterprise and gives a lot of information about it.

Some profiles may comprise interviews with many different people, any number of visits on different occasions or to different departments or sites of the enterprise, and considerable background research, like many *New Yorker* profiles. Interviewees can give not only printed matter but leads on how to get other information needed to understand their enterprise. Keeping a journal as indicated on page 357 will facilitate writing up the material later.

A simpler kind of profile may be based on the material of one visit, like some short and casual sketches in the *New Yorker's* "The Talk of the Town." While working on their profiles, students may read examples there or in numerous other magazines and newspapers so they can see for themselves how professionals handle the assignment with different subjects.

PROCEDURE

Don't try to distill a formula. It's better to let students (1) garner techniques from the reading and (2) try to foresee with partners the problems that their particular subject is going to raise. An insurance office, for example, which offers nothing but desks and papers, is going to limit the reporter almost entirely to relying on conversation and perhaps brochures. The project involves re-creating some of the dialogue of the interviews, recounting actions, describing appearances of things, and setting forth facts. Having received some data directly through her senses, and having received other data in verbal form from her informants, the student is dealing with information of different orders from different sources. She must digest all this and fuse the different modes of drama, narrative, and exposition into a whole piece of reportage that makes some general points about the subject.

For a simple enterprise visited once, a narrative account of the reporter's visit provides an easy frame, but the stipulations about conveying information and characterizing the people and the place force the student to make a lot of decisions that will modulate the narrative toward essay. She may interrupt it to linger over description or to inject explanation she acquired at some other point in the visit. She may digest in her own way information received from the people and feed this in gradually or in blocks, the alternative being to quote everything her informants said at just the moment they said it. Dialogue is a good way to characterize people and a readable, but inefficient, way of conveying information; compromise is necessary. Anecdotes and description will convey automatically a lot of information about the physical aspects of the people and the operation they

carry on but cannot convey generalities and other unseen facts such as background, purposes, and overall method, based on interviewing and reading. When she comes to summarize her journal, a reporter will probably have to organize by generalized aspects of her subject—kinds of matters handled in a court, differences in how several companies solve production problems, what so-and-so does and is like. In this way profiles represent an important bridge from the familiar haven of narrative to a form of essaying, from story to statement.

WORKSHOP ISSUES

This shift raises a key issue of how to sequence material in *any* nonnarrative kind of discourse. When paragraphs don't follow the order of time, what succession should enchain them? This would be a key question for discussion and cross-commentary while journals are in progress and during the writing-up. Which kinds of court matters, for example, or which comparisons of production methods, should precede which others? Although there are standard logical orders, such as big to little, important to unimportant, and specific to general, discussion and suggestions should especially consider: (1) What's the best organically logical order for the subject—which succession of items or subtopics would allow earlier items to prepare for later ones and allow for the most meaningful juxtapositions and transitions? (2) What is the best *rhetorical* order—to begin anecdotally or with a general frame of reference, to feed in background gradually or to insert it once in a block, to build toward conclusions or assert conclusions first and then substantiate them? And for each item or subtopic, how much anecdotal illustration should one give? The same amount for all items?

Papers tending toward miscellany represent difficulty finding coherence either in the operation of the enterprise or in one's attitude toward it. This common difficulty usually means that the student got lost in the details and never let herself react to the totality of the enterprise. At some point in writing up the material she should survey it for general impressions and try to recall what characteristics were salient about it. Perhaps the enterprise struck her as quaint or inhumane or indicative of some future trend. It's good to have in mind at least a working title while writing, one that keeps at issue the unity of the profile.

■ SHOP AND TELL

Consumer research brings together so many kinds of investigation that it works well as a group project. Inasmuch as students are consumers, they understand the practical purpose—to determine which products are best to buy. Elementary children can do some version of this. Different working parties of such a project may

- examine and, if necessary, take apart samples of the products to be compared, noting ingredients or components and how made.
- test out the samples for their purpose but perhaps experiment with them in other ways also to determine characteristics.
- research the technology or science needed to understand and explain to others the results of examining and experimenting.
- poll some users of the brands or types of the product and collate what they say

- compare purchase prices in relation to quantities or qualities and do a cost analysis that takes into account possible later expenses such as maintenance or refills.
- by interview or letter ask manufacturers or marketers to respond to the findings.

Then the groups get together, exchange what they've learned, and write it up as a consumer report that compares products and makes recommendations. Most often, the report will have to include some technical information as background, and might include charts, graphs, photos, and samples. Some anecdotes about the investigators' examinations, experiments, or polling may enliven and illustrate their conclusions. Including company responses can give an extra perspective.

This staple sort of project can be repeated with experienced individuals replacing subgroups for the different functions listed above. It provides excellent opportunities not only to work with science and social studies but also to make measurements, calculations, and other good use of mathematics. And it's a hands-on way for students to generalize some information from particulars and to see the practical value of investigation.

For reading, a number of magazines like *Consumer Reports* are commonly found on newsstands and in libraries, but many other periodicals on particular subjects like cars, computers, and health foods include a consumer department in some or all issues.

■ STATE-OF-KNOWLEDGE ARTICLES

Beyond the daily news, most people today get their information from broadcast or print journalism in the form of "feature stories" or "documentaries." These are catch-all terms for articles or shows that go beyond reporting news to inform about topics and issues of current interest. Journalists have developed reportage and research to the point that their investigations often overlap in method and subject matter with that done by specialists in social psychology, political science, economics, public health, and other disciplines. Many so-called feature stories or documentaries correspond to memoirs, eyewitness accounts, interviews, cases, or profiles. There's another sort of feature story which we haven't yet treated and which we'll call the "state-of-knowledge" article, because it pulls together and updates what experts know about some evolving topic or issue that many people are following.

Suppose the subject is solar generation of energy and what is being done to develop it. Unless the investigator can visit some enterprises devoted to making or installing photovoltaic panels, say, she'll have to rely on recent articles and on what she can induce experts to say about it. (Interviews and articles provide leads to each other.) Actually, state-of-knowledge investigation is one kind that, even if based entirely on previous writing, allows a student to make a useful and original contribution, because its very nature is a "review of the literature" and because the subject is changing all the time. The key source for solar generation of energy would be articles in magazines and journals published within, say, the last two or three years and listed in periodical indexes specializing in the various sciences or technologies, or filed in computer data banks. Clearly, though, visits and interviews will increase the immediacy and readability of the final write-up.

Because of their obvious value for their own sake, state-of-knowledge summaries on popular subjects could not only be much in demand for student publication but might be very welcome also in local newspapers or even in specialized magazines. A very large number of feature articles that we read all the time in many periodicals are of this sort. Many serve as running background to recurring news stories on subjects such as the homeless or medical treatment for blocked arteries. In fact, a student team investigating backed-up schedules in local courts might decide to update knowledge of judicial reform as a context so that readers can better understand why delays of justice are so widespread.

■ PROJECT-CENTERED LEARNING

If you and your students keep the repertory of investigative techniques in mind, along with the kinds of discourse they can result in, groups and individuals can constantly devise their own projects for fact-finding and knowledge-making. Some investigation may be entailed in other projects than writing but will pay off in writing. Building classroom equipment, for example, such as a pet cage, a terrarium, or a device for watering plants over the weekend, calls for research. Putting on a performance to mark a historical event such as the first opening of a school or a town's birthday will entail interviews, examination of documents, collecting photographs or slides, and seeking out old furniture or props for the stage. Even when investigation doesn't end in a written composition, it often produces a lot of good learning talk, some reading in sources, and valuable subsidiary writing like notes and transcripts or labels and captions.

And here, in investigation, come together the various subject areas and disciplines, because all are engaged in building knowledge structures in culture and in consciousness. Realistic, purposeful projects naturally make for an interdisciplinary curriculum. Language needs real subjects, and subjects need real language (as well as each other). An investigator needs math to quantify and English to qualify what she looks into. And what she looks into can't stop at academic boundaries between science, social studies, arts, and vocations. Holistic learning may not be tidy, but it's closer to the truth.

We have not tried to cover all the possible forms of writing generalized information, because they tend to be very hybridized, perhaps because of the very functionality of investigative writing. Much depends on the purpose and audience. Taken together with true stories, such representative forms as experiment reports, consumer reports, profiles, and state-of-knowledge articles will indicate, we hope, the possibilities for projects students may conceive. Evolving information technology that can integrate text, graphics, and audio presentations will influence investigative projects enormously as they facilitate access to previous knowledge-making and the dissemination of new investigation such as the students'. Be prepared for much of what we have considered here to shift from page to screen. Computers, videodiscs, and allied technology should become tools for youngsters to explore the world with, to do projects no one ever dreamed of before in school.¹

¹ The "buttons" on such software as HyperCard enable students to create documents that coordinate text, pictures, and sound—all drawn from original sources.

It's about time, because future operators of the planet will need to reach much sooner and farther into the inherited knowledge wealth than any of their elders ever did. Schools can't afford to be a holding tank whose inhabitants are the last to know. Students investigating government and law and economics, or medicine and genetics and ecology, or psychotherapy and cultural comparison and history, can learn far more than textbooks could hope to teach, and remember it all better. They cannot remain just *recipients* of knowledge waiting to enter the world but must get out there well before graduation and find out for themselves how society and nature work and how they change. As investigators they should witness court sessions, legislative debates, hearings, neighborhood meetings, and observe businesses, agencies, laboratories, and factories. They must know what the problems and issues are *before* commitments about working and mating make it difficult to just *look*.

CHAPTER

IDEAS

EIGHTEEN

This chapter comprises any kind of discourse intended chiefly to assert general statements—aphorisms, essays, editorials, manifestoes, discussions of ideas, theses, and some lyric and philosophical poetry. It is not easy to separate fact from thought, especially since, when explicit, both are asserted through the present tense of generalization, but still this difference in emphasis is what distinguishes *INFORMATION* from *IDEAS*. Here we're concerned with opinion, reflection, generalization, and argumentation. These are often supported by material from *INFORMATION* and *TRUE STORIES* as evidence or illustration of points, but no matter how great the quantity of such documenting material, the discourse here is predominantly organized around general ideas.

But of course *all* writing is about ideas. The other kinds of discourse embody ideas or embed ideas. The characters and actions in fiction, drama, and poetry, for example, exemplify people and events so representatively that the plot and its "conclusion" *imply* some general truths. Story *embodies* statement. In addition, the narrator and the characters frequently make explicit generalizations about the subject of the story and perhaps about life at large that the author *embeds* in the story to prompt the reader to reflect on it. (If he does so too obviously, however, such characters may be regarded as "mouthpieces" or *raisonneurs*.) The idea element of invented stories is traditionally called the "theme," and much of literary interpretation, for better or for worse, attempts to distill this meaning. Inasmuch as true stories serve as cases or examples of one sort or another, they too embody generalities, and they too contain embedded generalizations, often at the beginning or end to frame the story with significance.

So ideas may either be expressed *implicitly* or stated *explicitly*. The explicit seems to emerge from the implicit in a developmental way in the growth of the child and in the process of composition. Before plunging into discourse organized for the bald assertion of generalities, let's look a moment at the implicit or symbolic mode of treating ideas, because it shades into the subject of this chapter, as we've been trying to suggest broadly by the progression of kinds of discourse in this Part Three. Since the blending of implicit and explicit occurs in various ratios throughout all discourse, we'll merely sample a kind that may best show how ideas may be implied, and how poetry and essay complement each other.

LOADED DESCRIPTION

Sometimes a description is not intended as an objective rendering of things; it's so infused with attitude or response that the things described become, rather, a medium of expression, a language themselves. There's no neat dividing line between the two, however, as we showed in the samples of sensory recording in *WRITING*. Subjectivity always infuses description, as it does everything we do, but here we're considering the type of description that is deliberately loaded—either for a rhetorical end as in an advertisement, or for the expression of personal response as in a considerable amount of poetry. This intentional pseudo-description implies ideas. The things described, in other words, become figures of speech.

■ ADVERTISEMENTS

Advertisements are pseudo-descriptions inasmuch as products and services are transformed by language and imagery into metaphors for desires and fears. This is not an odious comparison between advertising and poetry, because only the method is similar, not the motive—or the result.

Exploring the techniques of ads (and other propaganda) has the effect of preventing youngsters from being taken in by them. Surely one obligation of a language arts program is to dispel naive credulity. Ads make good discussion topics, and reading ads for this purpose is a valid school activity. Some are clever, witty, and rhetorically quite skillful, but discussion should constantly call the key question, "Is this also honest?" Does an ad document or prove its claims? By what evidence or reasoning? How much of an ad is mere allure? Which fears and desires does it play on?

Again, writing in a form one reads makes a more perceptive reader. To role-play an advertiser is to engage in a specialized type of show-and-tell, since the aim is not only to inform or entertain your listeners but to stir them to want what you have to sell. Improvising and writing up sales pitches are activities that are easy for most youngsters because of the immersion in this medium that our culture affords. Students can advertise services they're willing to perform for each other in exchange for other services, items to sell or trade, or services wanted (as in newspaper want ads or personals columns). They can proclaim invented products that meet a need as yet unmet by things now on the market, or they can try to get rid of items no longer needed.

Ads can be oral, like radio and TV commercials, or written, as on posters or in magazines. What do students find themselves saying in order to make clear in a succinct presentation what they're selling and to attract and convince customers? Part of this process might be to take an object and describe it objectively, then describe it again as if they were trying to sell it—a clear way to experience what happens to facts when they're used for a specific rhetorical end.

Some ad-writing might be for fun or discussion, but ads should also be treated as realistically as other discourse—placed or published wherever they might reach potential consumers. Some classes may want to hold contests for the most unusual or effective advertisements. Setting up criteria and judging entries should embroil students in all the right issues of methods and morals, effectiveness and honesty. Do some ads do justice to both? If so, how do they succeed?

■ MAKING IT STRANGE

If loaded description comes from looking at the world from a partial point of view, then *all* description by mortals is loaded. True, but most of us most of the time don't *intend* to invest things with our mind-set. (We just can't help it!) Poetry and advertising deliberately exploit all the wiles and guiles of rhetoric to achieve an effect on us. Their purpose is to make sure we don't see something just as we ordinarily do but that we see it *their* way, through a new lens.

Poets try to make us see familiar things in an unfamiliar way, to freshen and deepen our vision. So they load their description in a way that will teach us to see anew, to look again. But why not do this for oneself? This is the idea of making something strange. One way is to describe the familiar behavior, artifacts, and customs around us as they might strike a foreigner. Eighteenth-century writers like Voltaire (*Micromégas*), Montesquieu, (*Persian Letters*), and Swift (*Gulliver's Travels*) imagined what a visitor from another culture would make of the one he visited—a good way to critique and satirize one's own. In our day Gore Vidal did this in *Visit to a Small Planet* (earth). An anthropologist's accounts of other cultures often differ amusingly from the subjects' own view. How would an archaeologist from a future culture describe what he dug up from America of today? A number of students might enjoy writing a description of their neighborhood, home, workplace, or other familiar settings as they might appear to an alien.

Any comparisons may, by comparing something from one realm to something in another (a mushroom to a frozen geyser), make it strange.¹ One way to evoke original metaphor is to contemplate an abstract design or simple shape and brainstorm a list of all the things it looks like.² Thus a pattern like this



might remind students of: a row of chimney pots, the top of a medieval tower, or jack-o-lantern teeth. A follow-up is to make up one line of a poem describing one of the items on their list of things the design suggests, then write a line about a second item, and finally a third line that could refer to either. Here's a class collaboration written by a group of second and third graders:

*At midnight, shining sky scrapers—
teeth of the zipper that holds
the night sky down like black velvet.*

■ HAIKU

Haiku are noted for making a subtle statement through a closely observed sensuous moment. As students work with haiku, they learn to express feeling in the concrete terms of what evokes it and so gain entrance into the whole world of

¹ The notion of "making it strange" came from a book of that title (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), now out of print, that presented a series of creative activities for putting ideas about familiar things into metaphor.

² Our thanks to Michael Anania, University of Illinois at Chicago, who invented this prompt while poet in residence at Lincolnwood School, Evanston, Illinois.

poetry. As loaded description, a haiku is at once about observer and observed. Its fidelity to things gives it a certain objectivity, but things are always registered by some sensibility. The object one senses is usually something in the natural world that the poet presents in an unexpected way.

Because haiku offers a number of special advantages for learning how figurative language can be used, we'll dwell on this form at some length here. This doesn't mean that other poetic forms should receive less treatment in the classroom but simply that haiku characterizes poetry generally and yet is short enough for concentrated focus on a whole discourse. In a haiku every word counts.

Since the original haiku form is defined to a great extent by qualities peculiar to the Japanese language and not present in English, it's useless to try to define it too precisely by form. The Japanese original has no rhyme and no punctuation, uses a stock of "cut-words," or particle words, that serve for expressive punctuation, and contains a much smaller number of syllables than an English poem possibly could. All we can say about the haiku form in English is that it usually consists of one sentence, often broken in the middle by a dash or colon, set typographically into two or three lines. We prefer the three-line form because it gives more opportunity for making use of line-breaking, which is a unique feature of poetry. Because the form can't be defined technically in terms of English prosody, the matter of line length, rhyme, and metrical dimension must be left open. The best definition is probably not by form but by substance—the luminous moment. In any case, it's better, as usual, to let students infer what haiku are from reading instances of them and from trying to write their own.

Writer's notebooks, sensory and memory notes, diaries, and other previous compositions might all contain particulars from which to make a haiku. One second will do, some moment when a sound, sight, smell, taste, or touch triggers a strong response or sets a mood, releasing a feeling. After writing partners have drafted some haiku, they pass them around and each member of the group writes on and around the haiku of the others, with the understanding that this is for suggestive value to the writer, who may perfectly well prefer his version to the revisions. In comparing and discussing different versions, the students can see how almost every change of vocabulary, sentence structure, and punctuation alters image and impact, sound and sense. Booklets of student haiku, we have found, are eagerly read and often discussed.

THE PROBLEM OF OVERABSTRACTING

Like poetry generally, haiku let metaphor imply ideas in the form of perception and feeling. The difficulties students encounter trying to write haiku are the difficulties they encounter trying to write most kinds of poetry. The biggest, most consistent problem—which we observed many times as various teachers, including ourselves, have proposed haiku writing—is that students overabstract. They see macroscopically, grossly; instead of caterpillar hairs they observe:

*A warm silent lake.
On a calm summer day...
Wake up, back to work.*

This ninth-grade boy's haiku is very typical of many efforts. First, he has generalized an entire day, instead of registering what could be perceived only within a very brief compass of time and space. (It is fine calibrations of time and space that

define concreteness.) Second, he has named, instead of rendered, the sensations—“warm,” “silent,” “calm.” Likewise, he has stated, instead of implied, the season and the time—“summer day”—and all but flatly asserted his feeling—“Wake up,” “back to work.” This overabstraction of both outer things and inner experience is the mark of amateur poetry and of much nondescript, ineffectual prose as well.

Why should such writing be the spontaneous tendency of a person this age? We’re not sure, but we think two very important learning factors are involved. One is developmental: youngsters grow gradually away from crude lumping toward finer and finer discriminations of perception and thought. The other is conventional: most expressions of perception and thought that youngsters hear and read are hasty, inexact verbalizations of the real things people want to express. Familiar general phrases like “summer day” come out of us automatically and indiscriminately in response to very different moments of experience.

Some masking of particularity is learned from reading bad, vague poetry, and some is learned from thoughtlessly diffuse categories that adults hand down:

SNOW STORMS

*Window's shuttered white.
Children showing sheer delight.
Oh, what loveliness.*

“Shuttered white” renders a nice metaphor and rhymes pleasantly with “sheer delight,” but this seventh-grade girl doesn’t depict how the children showed delight, nor does she evoke the feeling she had. She simply labels both feelings. The fact that the title is plural betrays the abstract attitude. We’re not criticizing the children (or the teaching), for the problem epitomizes everyone’s lifelong struggle to experience afresh and not let the ever busy abstracting apparatus reduce it to generic platitude.

For contrast, here’s what we think is a very good haiku, which notes inner and outer reality at once. A tenth-grade boy wrote this:

*Breath on the window-pane—
remnants of someone watching
others play.*

The breath did not linger as a remnant on that windowpane for more than a few seconds—and that’s the chief reason for the poem’s success. But a lot of sophistication lies behind such specificity and behind the indirect expression of feeling. Because the writer puts us in the moment, we feel the poignancy of it, as we couldn’t if he merely named a feeling we were supposed to feel.

To help students as much as possible to zero in on a moment and to render it as they really perceive it, the most useful thing you can do is to say, “Catch a feeling that you could not have had several minutes afterward or several minutes before.” The more students read of each other’s poems, the more impatient they become with imitation; this peer pressure exerts a strong force in favor of originality. Students can help each other to sort the fake from the real.

But borrowing is also necessary; from a common stock of phrases the individual gradually forms new combinations of words. The need for slow metamorphosis was brought home to one of us by the following haiku, which was far more popular among the author’s tenth-grade Exeter classmates than we thought it should be.

*Green shoots take breath
and bathe in tears for
winter's death.*

Whereas advanced students probably would have scorned its clichés, the tenth-grade boys liked it tremendously for its slick play of sounds, the regular meter of the last two lines, and the rephrased but essentially familiar imagery. Without judging their judgment, we thought about their reasons for enjoying it and realized that the poem had the same winning way that so many hackneyed but pretty Elizabethan lyrics have, the kind that are moving when set to music but are distinguishable one from another only by variant wording when examined as texts. Still, a student recombining old stuff in his somewhat new way is enjoying language, exploring it, and getting ready to make it do his will.

The breakaway from clichés occurs most often with fresh subject matter, for familiar subjects come replete by association with the language that others have cast them into. Hackneyed description is *culturally* not *personally* loaded. That is the kernel of the matter and a powerful reason for tying writing to fresh perception.

Here are two poems by tenth-grade boys, both of whom began with their own sensory experience, not generalization:

*Towels hung up to dry
Across the road—
It's raining now.*

*Through the cracked planks
of an unfinished house,
one violet opens.*

These poems illustrate how the subtlety of haiku teaches the reporter's art of making an indirect statement by sheer juxtaposition of two physical facts. It reminds us of how powerfully focus alone speaks. The simple singling out of a detail immediately invests that detail with meaning—loads description—even when the diction is neutral and no attitude is otherwise detectable. In this sense, poems may state ideas. Many photographs demonstrate this power of sheer selection.

Generalizing in poetry is not in itself bad. Explicit statement can sometimes spring feeling in a startling way. Shakespeare's phrase, "uncertain glory of an April day," for example, evokes fleeting cloud shadows and passing showers, because the reader fills in the abstraction with concrete details he remembers; as he does so, he feels the way he has felt on experiencing such weather. What makes this work is the unusual yoking of "uncertain" with "glory," plus a skillful prediction of the reader's associations. (But the original meaning of "glory" is more concrete—"aureole"—and so suggests here the sun appearing and disappearing.)

So students may sometimes come off well using this sort of generalized wording. The test is in reader response, which cross-commentary can furnish. Class discussion and small-group reading should help students sort out mere vagueness from happy phrasing that's abstract but evocative. On page 406 is a sample of a student's philosophical epigram in which concrete objects are used symbolically.

Haiku is a form that lends itself to imparting a state of mind without departing from the physical facts. A ninth-grade boy wrote:

*From the darkened heavens,
Striking all around,
Rain.*

By suspending the subject “rain” until the last line, he lets us be struck from the dark without knowing at first what is striking. The pattern of words conveys as much as their meanings. This high school boy was a very knowledgeable naturalist:

*Emphatic song
ascending through the woods,
the oven bird.*

*With bulbous eyes,
soar above the pond
the dragonflies.*

When young people write, they work intuitively with rhythm, especially if they’ve experienced a lot of poetry. Unable to render the birdsong itself, in the first haiku, this boy captured the ascension (of the bird and the song with it) by sustaining a regular iambic meter, thereby illustrating what a text on prosody might explain in vain, that lines beginning on an unstressed syllable and ending on a stressed produce a swelling, lifting effect if the lines are relatively unbroken. Like Keats’s nightingale, this bird remains unseen and hence easily invokes the impression of disembodied spirit, especially since it is ascending. His second haiku combines a stunningly salient detail with precise diction (“bulbous,” “soar”), natural rhyme, and a tight, suspended sentence structure.

How to break the lines and whether to rhyme are important decisions student writers of haiku will have to make, along with any consideration about meter and rhythm. Most haiku tend to break, or pause, at the end of the first or second line or in the middle, a thought form that students may be left to observe themselves. Using this kind of caesura in composing haiku will usefully influence their choices about sentence construction, punctuation, and development of image and idea.

Some students might enjoy following the “answering” haiku pattern, in which one poet writes a three-line haiku and another writes a variation of it or a response in two additional lines having a caesura between.

ILLUSTRATING HAIKU

Another way to gain a perspective on what haiku can do is to draw, paint, or photograph the image in a particularly visual haiku and compare illustrations of the same haiku. Discussing these haiku with illustrations brings out what can be rendered visually and what must remain in the words of the poem. Which aspects of the poem did no one succeed in conveying visually? This tends to show how much is either word play or idea.

COMPARING TRANSLATIONS

Students can look at two translations of the same haiku side by side, read them aloud, and discuss which they prefer. This can be especially worthwhile because the translations of haiku differ so markedly in image, tone, and feeling as well as in the use of rhyme, pattern, and number of lines (two to four). Does some “idea”

nevertheless persevere across translations, expressed perhaps more explicitly in one version than the other? Or do variant translations of the same haiku seem to have different points?

■ OTHER POEMS OF OBSERVATION

The comparison approach can also help bridge from haiku to other poetry. Students can pair off a haiku with some other fairly short and concrete poem that seems to treat a similar subject. Of course *similar* involves interpretation, which makes good discussion. For example, Carl Sandburg's "Grass" and Emily Dickinson's "Snake" seem remarkably like two haiku in the Henderson collection (pages 166 and 181) cited in our footnote on page 163. Such pairs might be given thoughtful class readings before or after discussion. ("Grass" is a kind of soliloquy spoken by the grass itself.)

According to the poems the haiku are paired with, a number of interesting issues come up. Sheer length, for example, involves these differences:

- the moment versus time sequence
- subtle suggestion versus descriptive elaboration
- intrasentence versus intersentence relations
- the single and sudden impact versus progression and development
- the isolated verse unit versus multiple stanzas

What are the gains and losses of brevity? Of length? Several times students have pointed out that Dickinson's "Snake" contains several possible haiku embedded in it, and that the climax is really a haiku. What these juxtaposed pairs do is set off the particular qualities of each poem. They induce discriminations valuable for understanding and appreciating many kinds of poems.

Like haiku, many concrete English poems consist of only a few lines, some of them only a single sentence, like Robert Frost's "Dust of Snow," Francis Frost's "Skaters," Samuel Hazo's "The Parachutist," and Anna Engleman's "In a Vacant Lot." Students first venturing into poetry writing might try their hand at such poems of loaded description. An inspiration might come from a striking pattern other than that of haiku, like the one in William Carlos Williams's "The Red Wheelbarrow"—four stanzas of two lines each, the second line being always a single word. Or it might come from a beloved or pressing subject, such as sports, animals, or weather. When students read other classmates' writing, they should acquire the habit of writing "poem" in the margin when they see something they think the writer ought to make into a poem.

SINGLE STATEMENTS

Some generalizations stated in a sentence or less constitute complete discourses in the realm of ideas. Thus sayings and slogans offer a legitimate opportunity to analyze and otherwise work or play authentically within the structure of a single sentence. Such isolated statements can be looked at for refined work with construction without being divested of point and purpose as sentences pulled out of context might be. Young children appreciate single statements many years before they're able to create or make sense of a developed and supported essay.

Encourage students to read and test each other's generalizations and to rewrite them. Both the content and the form of a statement can be discussed and amended to qualify the idea by altering or adding words, phrases, and clauses; and to improve the rhetoric by adjusting diction and sentence structure for greater effect. The brevity encourages many students to spend much more time working on a single phrase or sentence than they would if it were part of a longer continuity. They can examine alternate ways of punctuating, ordering words, or constructing sentences to see which best suits their purpose.

Short statements have another great advantage in that they are small enough to post in the classroom, to show together, perhaps as the work of several students, or to serve as the basis for a semipermanent board that can be continuously added to and changed, prompting people simply to walk up and add or change statements already posted there. These also invite illustration and thus become captions (see "Wit" on page 298).

A good way to stimulate short discourse is to set up a graffiti board. Ideally, this board should be erased, painted over, or covered with clean newsprint or wrapping paper every night or very frequently so more students can have a chance to contribute to it, and so there's incentive to check it out often, or to copy the best for a classroom graffiti collection. One teacher solved the problem of space for a board by propping a large pad of newsprint on a paint easel and flipping over a new page each day.

A badge-making kit is a popular stimulus for sharing values or insights in the form of short maxims. These may be nonverbal messages, of course, like the smile buttons. If you don't have a badge-making kit, use pop-bottle caps, removing the inside carefully, painting the cap, printing the message on it, and pushing the material of a shirt or blouse into the back of the cap and sealing it with the inside of the cap. Maxims can also be printed onto T-shirts or made into bumper stickers. Posters or protest placards are another medium for presenting short idea statements. Students often enjoy adding a design or picture to emphasize the message.

Popular culture abounds in advice and maxims—short and snappy statements of ideas. Most are propaganda or advertisement of ideas, many are humor, and some are pure word play. All provide an entrée into short idea statement. They perpetuate in modern media the ancient tradition of epigram or moralistic aphorism.

■ EPITAPHS

Another type of environmental writing is inscriptions on tombstones or monuments in memory of the dead, or any short elegies in prose or verse. They're a more ancient and respectable cultural form of what lives on as graffiti. Students can go to graveyards and look for epitaphs on the tombstones, making rubbings to show the class. The older the cemetery, the more likely students are to find epitaphs. Children might want to write epitaphs for pets who've died. They can also make up apt ones for famous persons whose biographies they've read. Some may find it intriguing to write an epitaph for their own gravestone.

Collections of epitaphs, such as *Over Their Dead Bodies* by Thomas C. Mann and Janet Greene (The Stephen Greene Press/Pelham Books, Lexington, MA), can be part of the classroom library. For example, on the day after the poet John Donne's burial in 1631 some unknown friend wrote this epitaph with a piece of coal on the wall over his grave:

Reader! I am to let thee know,
Donne's body only lies below;
For, could the grave his soul comprise,
Earth would be richer than the skies.

■ PROVERBS

Proverbs are pithy folk sayings in metaphor and are often partly versified, like “Birds of a feather flock together.” Part of a long tradition, they express generally accepted views of common human experience; it's understood that anyone can easily supply his own instances of these general truths from his own experience.

Because proverbs are in the air, part of the oral literature passed down by word of mouth, they'll be recognized by many children when they see them in print; they'll know some as they do jokes and riddles that they can write down and collect.

Because they're virtually always based on a figure of speech, they provide an excellent way for students to work with metaphor as a complete discourse in itself. Far too many school efforts to have children focus on metaphor in longer kinds of discourse desecrate it in the very act of isolating it from context.

As noted on page 88, proverbs make good topics for small-group discussion, pushing students to translate the metaphor into other applications. What do they think are examples of a rolling stone not gathering moss? Encourage students to read proverbs aloud and talk about each one long enough to explore its meaning, implications, and potential truth. This amounts to testing each, trying it out on each other, and attempting to find instances that would support or refute it.

A good way to lead into this discussion or perhaps follow it up is to illustrate some proverbs graphically as well, because unless one simply draws the figures of speech themselves—a rolling stone or birds flocking together—one has to depict some example of it such as discussion would bring out. If members of a group show each other their illustrations of the same proverb, any tendency to illustrate the metaphor literally will probably be noted and discussed by partners or at least challenged at some point. Illustrating a proverb by depicting some application of the metaphor is an excellent way to deal with literal-mindedness and to bring out the way in which any figure of speech works—by standing for something similar in another domain.

Another thing students can do is to write individually why they think a proverb the group has chosen is true or not and then come together afterward to read and compare ideas about it. Testing proverbs this way entails not just supplying instances but using them to prove or disprove a statement, that is, arguing a mini-thesis.

Collections of proverbs provide excellent reading matter focusing on metaphor. See the *Book of English Proverbs* by V. H. Collins, *The Wit and Wisdom from West Africa* by Sir Richard Francis Burton, *Proverbs and Common Sayings from the Chinese* by A. H. Smith, *Dictionary of American Proverbs* by David Platkin, or *Proverbs of Many Nations*, edited by Emery Klein.

After they've read some proverbs, students can try their hand at writing their own. Original metaphors that distill general truths aren't easy, but they're well worth trying. One way to begin is to state a truth nonmetaphorically and then see if you can compare it to another kind of experience. What comes to mind? A game like the metaphor game described on page 396 helps limber students up for proverb-making.

■ APHORISMS AND MAXIMS

These single-sentence sayings are concise statements of a principle—typically, rules of conduct stated sententiously. Unlike proverbs, they're not metaphorical. They may be in verse, as in Benjamin Franklin's "Early to bed and early to rise/Makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise." Their truths are of general import, as in the African-American maxim, "You can't hurry up good times by waiting for them."

A good way to begin writing aphorisms is to write morals for fables (with their own morals covered up), folk tales, myths, or legends (see page 339). The moral of a tale, taken by itself, is much like a proverb or maxim in that it usually represents an extreme condensation of common experience. Hence it can be used as a way into discussing, reading, and writing ideas.

There's a natural relationship between anecdote or incident on the one hand and generalization or idea on the other; students can see it in their own knowledge-building—namely, that out of a build-up of instances one distills generalizations or ideas or principles of behavior, and that, conversely, one's reflections are just that, a reflex or reaction to factual things, often to events, objects, places, or people, that directly stimulate certain ideas or generalizations. The close relation between instance and idea is the essence of knowledge-building and provides organic motives and means for reading and writing.

Students can pluck from magazines and newspapers or other reading matter certain statements that they think could stand alone as a saying and then illustrate each statement with a drawing or photograph or with an anecdote that fits it. Others might like to make a little booklet in which each page bears a saying and some illustration that may or may not go with it. A very popular activity may be for a small group to ransack different books of proverbs and aphorisms, especially from many different cultures, and put together their own anthology.

Aphorisms and maxims are very useful as ready-made topics both for group discussion and for idea writing. It's important that students choose or make up their own sayings to talk or write about, since success in treating a generalization depends a great deal upon interest in the idea.

Sometimes students can create their single statements

- to serve as topics for discussion.
- to crystallize points made in discussion.
- to restate a generalization that was implicit in or beginning to emerge from some previous writing.
- to prestate their main idea for some new writing.

Thus writing single-sentence generalizations ties into dialogues of ideas and the writing of essays.

Steep students in literary examples of generalization—those that are propositions and thus lend themselves well to discussion.³ Conclusions based on experi-

³ Many discussable statements can be found in Blaise Pascal's *Pensées*, François de La Rochefoucauld's *Maxims*, and the poet-mathematician Paul Valéry's analects in his *Collected Works*. See also, of course, Benjamin Franklin's *Poor Richard's Almanac*.

ences, observations, or experiments invite challenge from those whose experience does not support such a position. Students might enjoy amending, documenting, or refuting literary generalizations. Here are some that invite response:

It is because of men that women dislike each other. (Jean de La Bruyère)

Nobody can misunderstand a boy like his own mother. (William O. Douglas)

Where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise. (Alexander Pope)

Problems are difficult to solve when they require the use of the familiar in an unfamiliar way. (Bernard Berelson and Gary Steiner)

One is ordinarily more convinced of something by reasons he has found himself than by those that other people have thought up. (Blaise Pascal)

There are people who would never have been in love if they had never heard of love. (François de La Rochefoucauld)

Among the many other uses of one-line sayings is the supplying of fodder—ready-made statements—that students can use in certain activities of making syllogisms and spotting illogical connections among statements (see page 425).

Collections of literary generalizations for the classroom library might include: *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations* by John Bartlett, *Contemporary Quotations* by J. B. Simpson, and the *Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*.

■ DICTIONARY DEFINITIONS

Defining is the process of arraying synonyms or explaining what something means. Some definitions present information; others, ideas. Obviously, students need repeated opportunity both to use dictionaries and to make up their own operating definitions for words and concepts they use. When defining is not done by citing synonyms, it consists of single-statement generalizations in the present tense.

One of the best ways for students to become involved in dictionaries is to compile one of some special lingo. This can be their own local or age-group slang or the special vocabulary of some activity and its practitioners, like dirt-bike riders or computer hackers. The idea is to supplement standard dictionaries. In the process of checking their usage with dictionary listings, they'll become familiar with the format and can imitate it as they compose their own entries. They collect words on index cards bearing their definitions, collate variants for the same entry, and alphabetize final versions. Polling is a good idea even if the compiler belongs to the group, because often members have different version of a term's meaning once they start trying to define it (see "Dictionaries and Encyclopedias" on page 298).

The meanings of words reside in human communities, and dictionaries merely record these meanings. Dictionaries of nonstandard ethnic or regional dialects like Gulla in South Carolina make interesting reading and constitute an important kind of investigation. They also help validate and honor minority speech, something that might be appreciated by the native speakers, whom students can poll as part of collecting words and phrases for entry items.

Specialized dictionaries that some students would enjoy are Ambrose Bierce's satirical *The Devil's Dictionary* and one of Isaac Asimov's, such as *Words of Science and the History Behind Them*.

Students can follow Bierce's example or write other sorts of imaginative or humorous dictionaries. A very different model is the "Happiness is..." books. Con-

cepts such as “life” or “hate,” various colors, or objects can be defined metaphorically, or operationally as in the picture book *A Hole is to Dig* by Ruth Krauss (“Sisters are to be jealous of.”). “Daffynitions” are funny or witty ways of defining that can be thought up in groups and made into booklets. Sometimes the humor is in the wording (“picnic” as an “eating outing”), sometimes in a point of view (“risk” as defined by people in different walks of life or professions). Imaginative and witty definition leads naturally into epigrams, many of which are just that.

■ EPIGRAMS

These are witty, brief, pointed remarks or observations typically marked by antithesis, like this:

War is for the sake of peace, but peace is not for the sake of war. (Menander)

Sometimes epigrams are memorable definitions, as:

White is calling Africa the Dark Continent. (Preston Wilcox)

Work is the curse of the drinking class. (Oscar Wilde)

A cynic is a man who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing. (Oscar Wilde)

Radicalism is the conservatism of tomorrow injected into the affairs of today. (Ambrose Bierce)

Other epigrams are verses:

A Robin Red Breast in a Cage
Puts all Heaven in a Rage. (William Blake)

OF EPIGRAMS

Short epigrams relish both sweet and sour
Like fritters of sour apples and sweet flour. (Robert Hayman)

In trying to write haiku, some students will come up with philosophical epigrams. Often these will be hand-me-downs, but many times they’ll be fairly original expressions of an idea as in this remarkable compact expression of a generality through imagery:

The stone axe falls,
Discarded beside a rusted musket
And Bikini vanishes beneath the waves.⁴

This tenth grader has written a three-line history of war delineated by the weapons used.

⁴ From Phillips Exeter Academy, Exeter, New Hampshire.

DIALOGUE OF IDEAS

Improvisations such as Playing the Problem described on page 108 help students explore ways to deal with difficulties in their own lives. Because they're in role, they're able to examine the problem and explore solutions more imaginatively. After an improvisation they can write their own generalized statement of how to deal with such a problem; this might become a topic for a discussion, an advice-column letter, or an essay.

■ TOPIC TALK

Discussion consists of constant adjustment: words are substituted, sentences qualified, ideas amended. You can facilitate this process of adjustment. Suppose the topic is "Getting Along in Families." Opinions are piling up on all sides, but no idea is fastened and examined for a moment. Students are agreeing or disagreeing too quickly, without knowing what the statements of others mean or imply. They are lining up sides, identifying with or opposing other students. Word meanings are loose and statements unqualified. You suggest that they linger over one statement: "Ellen just said, 'Younger children of a family get their way more often than the older children.' From what Bill just said it's clear that he disagrees. But look at her statement a moment. Is it *never* true? Is it *always*? Instead of just accepting or rejecting it, see to what extent you can accept it and to what extent you cannot."

In other words, suggest *a strategy of amending a statement until it becomes acceptable*—that is, of *quantifying* and *qualifying* it. In regard to how many people is the statement true—all, most, some, a few? For what kind of people, background, circumstances? The qualifying leads to linguistic amendments. One adds: limiting adjectives and adverbs; phrases of time, place, manner, and condition; clauses of condition, concession, exception (introduced by *if*, *although*, *unless*, and so on). Qualification of thought and elaboration of sentence structure tend to go together. Show that the group can correctly tailor a statement to fit what the majority thinks is true: "In America today a younger child is more likely to get his way with parents than an older child but is no freer because the older child restrains him in turn."

But disagreement may well continue. "Bill, what evidence would Ellen need to convince you?" The piling of opinions represents not only a failure to consider closely what others have said but also a tendency to stop short at assertions instead of supporting them. For a given assertion, ask them what *kind* of evidence *could* support it. Is it supportable at all? If so, with what? Firsthand examples? Citations from authorities? Statistics?

Help them to distinguish between disagreements that cannot be resolved by documentation and those that can. Often a discussion falters because none of the participants can support a stand. Tell them to bring evidence to the next session. If each can base his case only on personal experience, then what is that experience? Anecdotes may be appropriate for homespun subjects but very inadequate for supporting generalities of a more scientific sort. "How could we find out which of us is more nearly right?" That question should recur throughout discussions and will prompt some excellent investigative projects.

The best strategy for discussing a certain topic might well be exactly the strategy that students should adopt in *writing* about that topic. Through discussion, they can learn together how to handle many of the problems of abstract idea writing, from how to assert single statements to how to phase an attack on a subject.

Involved idea writing often results when a spirited but unresolved small-group discussion is taken to paper. The topic is whatever the unresolved issue is about. Such writing gives everyone a chance to rebut or get the last word. Papers can be fed back into discussion by projecting and distributing them. Interaction between discussion and writing is essential. Generalizations plucked from student papers can become topics for small groups. Many of the investigative activities of the previous chapter will produce good subjects for idea discussion. When students in a writing workshop discuss the compositional issues of each other's papers, moreover, they usually discuss the truth of the ideas as well. These discussions generate a classroom drama of ideas.

■ ADVICE LETTERS

An advice column modeled after "Dear Abby" in a class newspaper or on a bulletin board is another stimulus to a dialogue of ideas. Students with real or pretended problems can write for advice, using fictitious signatures if they like, to avoid exposure. Other students can answer the letter and post or distribute both the request and advice letter. A group may discuss and role-play such a problem then draft a response collectively. Or members of a group may write separate responses, then compare them in discussion or post or print some or all of the responses for others to compare.

■ SCALES

After a small group has discussed a problem, they might arrange their opinions along a scale, which is a graphic display of a continuum. For example, group members might range in opinions on how a parent should deal with a child's misbehavior. At the ends of the scale would be the most extreme positions on the subject they could think of, and along the line between these extremes could be arranged the opinions of the group members. Thus a scale might look like Figure 18.1. After discussing a problem and making a scale to display the positions of the group members, each person could write out his own position, stating his reasons for holding that opinion. Scales may also be used as a way of displaying the results of an opinion survey (see page 385).

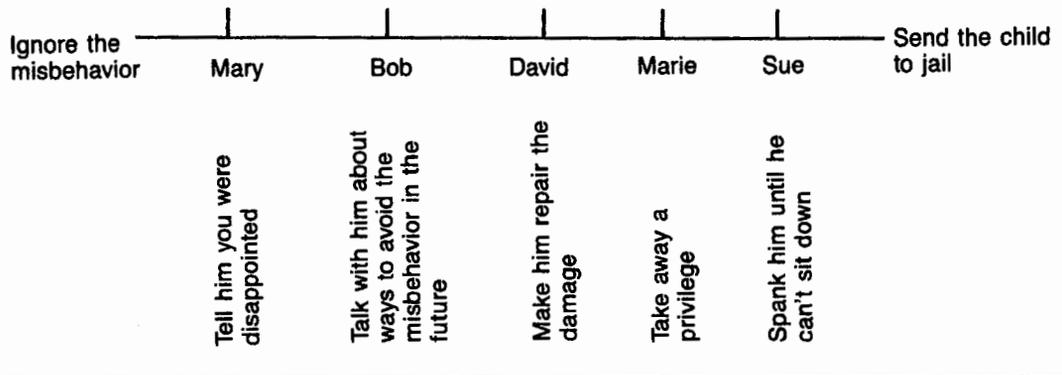
■ SCRIPTS

Experience with informal classroom drama (Chapter 5), invented dialogue (Chapter 14), and topic talk (Chapter 4) leads naturally into writing dialogues of ideas. Drama and discussion are really just different wavelengths on the same band. Drama has a higher proportion of emotion; discussion has a higher proportion of thought.

PROCEDURE

To accomplish the shift from drama to a discussion of ideas, students (1) start with a minimal situation that centers the action on a conversational topic, (2) eliminate

FIGURE 18.1 SCALE OF GROUP OPINION



stage directions, and (3) let the characters become less individual (approaching types) while the setting and topic become general. For example, one junior high student wrote a dialogue between a boy and a girl about teenage drinking with no setting or stage directions. Personal interaction was rather strong, but the characters essentially just represented two positions on drinking based mostly on gender difference. Giving the speakers generic names like Boy-Girl, Mother-Daughter, and Student-Teacher, or neutral names like A and B or One and Two, is a device that may help students disembodify the dialogue and thus shift to ideas. Minimizing or eliminating stage directions also shifts dramatic dialogue to a more abstract plane.

Basic directions are to make up dialogue between two people of different minds about some problem or subject. Encourage students to write these out pell-mell, as if they were transcribing overheard conversation. This is an improvisation of ideas on paper in script format, lasting as long as the writer can sustain the interaction and his own interest. Introducing a third character may salvage a dialogue from impasse.

Though an easy way at first to write a dialogue of ideas, the duolog limits not only viewpoints but ideas within each viewpoint. Certain personalities may also lock horns too much or slide off each other. A third speaker can break up polarities and deadlocks and allow the author's mind to slip the limits of his own creations. Help students think of this strategy as a possibility in mid-writing or between an initial script and a later version. It corresponds exactly to changes made during live improvisations and can be discussed in writing groups in that same creative spirit.

Exchanged and made legible if necessary, these scripts can be acted out as is with far more interesting and entertaining results than one would think for such unrevised material. Reading these dialogues aloud in small groups can be followed also by discussion of the ideas themselves. This can reveal rigged arguments, misinformation, omitted points or points of view, illogicality, and so on, without necessarily impugning the author, who can claim not to be represented in his dialogue but will wear the shoe if it fits and benefit from it in making further use of the script. Then, of course, groups can help authors decide whether to revise their dialogues as a script, use them as a base for some other kind of writing, chuck them, or use them in some way as they are. Some interesting possibili-

ties arise if the speakers in a dialogue are judged to be different parts of one person. See, for instance, “Alter Egos” on page 326.

VALUES

Above all, writing this kind of dialogue should help a student proliferate ideas, examine matters from all sides without fear of contradicting himself, activate points of view he already has, and try out new ones. It provides a casual, expansive form for writing down thoughts before attempting to trim and organize ideas into an essay. It opens a face-saving way to abandon dogmatism and egocentricity.

Requiring students to shape thoughts into a consistent, logically continuous essay and then picking holes in their arguments retards idea writing more than it advances it. The important development for a while should be the exploring of ideas, not the constructing of watertight arguments. The fear of being illogical and inconsistent is very inhibiting when you’re trying to find out what you think and when you still are only flexing your new-found logical muscles (at least in verbally explicit form). Monological essays of ideas will be better later—more thoughtful, qualified, rich, and complex—if a period of dialogical writing is allowed as preparation. To buy a neat organizational job at the price of simplemindedness is no educational bargain.

PARALLEL READING

Plato wrote nearly all of his ideas in the form of dialogues, modeled supposedly on Socrates’ dialogical teaching method (the truly classic example of parlaying discussion into writing!). Many later thinkers, like Galileo, perpetuated the tradition well into the Renaissance, and indeed writers as recent as Gregory Bateson have used it as an alternative form of essay. But transcripts of public dialogues such as legislative deliberations, panels, or trials (see page 309) will provide the handiest contemporary parallels to those written dialogues of ideas. Sometimes a good way to write an editorial or other essay is to begin by reacting to the ideas recorded in a transcript.

Quite a number of interesting poems are written as dialogues of ideas. In “Dialogue of Self and Soul,” W. B. Yeats expresses two inner selves in conflict, using generic names, which we find also in “The Leaden Echo and the Golden Echo” by G. M. Hopkins and “Two Voices in a Meadow” by Richard Wilbur. In “Ulysses and the Siren,” Samuel Daniel lets two famous characters utter two common viewpoints. “The Clod and the Pebble” by William Blake shows how two points of view can be represented by objects as well as personages.

CONVERTING DIALOGUE TO ESSAY

One of the things that an author can do with a dialogue of ideas is convert it to monologue. For students who’ve spent plenty of time developing their ideas through discussion and written dialogue, this conversion may prove an excellent way to approach essay, especially if their subject at hand has benefited from this development. In the same way that summarizing a diary or journal produces a story by obliterating dates and blending events, digesting a dialogue of ideas can produce an essay by fusing the speakers’ viewpoints into a perspective broad enough to contain their differences. Ideas that are at odds in the dialogue become

thoughtful considerations in the essay. Compositionally, it's all a matter of finding (1) a *framework* in which a subject may be variously viewed and (2) connective *terms* like “however,” “on the other hand,” and “inasmuch as.”

REFLECTION

At almost any given moment, thoughts are running through your head—a spontaneous mixture of wonderings, wishes, conjecture, generalities, opinions, and other mental productions equally difficult to name accurately. It is this mixture that we will call, for convenience, reflection. By using this term, we would like to emphasize the reflexiveness of these mental productions; they're ongoing reactions to what is happening and to what has happened. As such, they flow in and out of sensations and memories, by which they are stimulated and to which they are linked by associations of either public or private logic.

But a part of what is happening now is this flow of inner events itself; reflections prompt other reflections and thus create what we call trains of thought. In unfocused moments our thoughts wander freely as we let various sorts of inner and outer stimuli draw our minds one way, then another. This spontaneous mental life is a rich source of material for writing that we can draw from at any moment. But it doesn't of course exist for that. It is the very river of our existence or what psychologist William James long ago called the “stream of consciousness.” All ideas we will ever have will come from it. Before relating it to writing, we have to respect it and work with it in itself.

■ ATTENTIONAL PRACTICES

Attention is central to learning and thinking. To what are we attending at a given moment? Voluntarily or involuntarily? Researchers at Harvard's Preschool Project found that those children later judged in school to be the “brightest, happiest, and most charming” had spent as much as twenty percent of their preschool time “staring” at some object or another, the largest amount of time those children had allotted to any activity.⁵ “Staring” is gazing, a rapt absorption in something as a way to know it. This is why “to contemplate” means both “to behold” and “to think intently about.”

In this most important sense, gazing should be cultivated. As a natural activity it doesn't need school. Indeed, school usually interferes with it by scheduling other activities so fully and by restricting what may be gazed upon. But teachers can foster it in two main ways. One is by individualizing activities so children can do it naturally. The other is by re-introducing it as one of several attentional practices for students to keep in mind and do on their own.

How you present these practices, as sketched below, depends much on the age of your students and on your own experience with such practices. The more you do them yourself, the readier you'll understand how to sponsor them. Lead students through them enough times for them to feel comfortable with them and to experience the benefits of them enough to continue on their own. Though the

⁵ Reported in Burton White, *The First Three Years of Life*, (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall 1975).

practices can all be done concurrently, the order here would make a good order of introduction. Upper elementary and adolescent students can do them all; many primary pupils will probably have a limit on how much they can focus *inward*.

Smaller groups are better than larger, but relaxation is the key. Talking students through progressive relaxation, by focusing successively on different parts of the body, makes a good preliminary along with some deep breaths and slow exhalations. Body awareness is part of attentional development. But this is not guided fantasy, which we don't recommend if it means planting images and thoughts in someone else's mind. If lying down is feasible, that helps for relaxing, but students should sit up for the practices themselves, the spine straight but not stiff.

Allow time after each session for talking about the experience, what it may be good for, and what seems to ease or impede it. It's essential for students to feel that they can't do any of these practices wrongly—that whatever happens is good because you can learn from it, that one practice will sometimes slip into another because attention has a mind of its own, that understanding and controlling attention are *goals*, not something one can necessarily do at the outset.

GAZING

Because it looks like looking, and is directed outward, gazing is simplest and applies most to all ages. Hold an occasional session when you direct students to:

- find or bring in some object you want to contemplate.
- close your eyes and get very relaxed.
- open your eyes and gaze steadily at your object, letting yourself be drawn into it, shutting out everything else and closing your eyes for a while if you need to rest them.
- talk afterwards in small groups and then with the whole class about what you experienced gazing.

The discussion should help to understand attention in general and how, in particular, we can learn to *see* more and hence *know* more. What holds and breaks attention?

VISUALIZING

After gazing a while in some sessions, students may close their eyes, relax, and visualize the object on some "screen" in their mind. If this inner image grows dim, they open their eyes briefly to reestablish it. If other images or thoughts come to mind, they release them and refocus on the image of the object. Again, they discuss the experience afterward.

Visualizing shifts attention inward, but it brings some of the outer world in with it. This is another way of knowing the object more fully. At the same time it gives students a chance to know their own mind better also—how differently their attention may work once inward, what kinds of things influence it, and what may be done to control it. The practice should strengthen thinking, reading, and writing, since all depend on visualizing, on bringing external material inside where the mind can work on it.

WITNESSING THE INNER STREAM

Like the other practices, this is best done alone, but most students will need to start it under your direction and sponsorship until they get the idea and the point.

Direct students again to close their eyes and relax. Then tell them to do nothing but watch their thoughts, memories, sensations, etc. stream by as if these were a river and they were sitting on the bank witnessing them, not moving with them. After three or four minutes, ask them lightly how well they were able to do this, and parlay this into broader discussion of the practice. Recommend that they do this often on their own as a break when they're physically resting.

Discussion can sometimes be very interesting about why this is not easy. One may drift obliviously with the thoughts, sensations, memories, and feelings instead of watching them and thus lose awareness of them. Or the mind may want to fasten on some arresting subject to the exclusion of all else. On what? Did students find themselves trying to control the flow? Some will say they went blank. Discuss what that means and how it happens.

STOPPING THE INNER STREAM

This practice consists of deliberately trying for several minutes at first to slow down, and then suspend completely, the inner stream. Present this as the profoundest way to rest and relax. Most inexperienced people find it difficult, if not impossible, but some go blank easily. If you ask afterwards whether some devised measures to stop thinking, you'll get some interesting and revealing answers, including some reinventions of age-old attentional techniques.

FOCUSING THE INNER STREAM

This practice aims at the state most akin to the one in which writing is done. For the first sessions students might just review the day's events and note their responses to them. Then:

Choose some subject you want to understand better, perhaps some problem you want to solve, and focus just on that by concentrating on some image or phrase or idea that represents it for you. Such a subject might be one that recurs when you try to still or witness your thoughts, or it might just be some situation, person, object, place, or idea that attracts you. Follow through in this way by giving full attention to whatever is already asking for more attention.

You might create a framework for these practices by relating them to other activities your students are familiar with that call for strongly focusing attention, like playing sports and musical instruments, building things, or doing after-school jobs. Then say that writing is another activity that you get better at by developing attention. Contemplating and visualizing make us seers. Writers are seers. Witnessing makes us aware of the unceasing productivity of the mind. Suspending this mental activity renews it later and gives us some control over it. (The verbal life is grounded in the nonverbal.) Focusing it allows us to apply it to a particular task, like writing.⁶

⁶ For more rationale, see "Writing, Inner Speech, and Mediation" in *Coming on Center*, James Moffett (Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 1980, 1988).

■ STREAM-OF-CONSCIOUSNESS WRITING

By risking to write whatever comes into one's head, a writer is more likely than not to get out some valuable writing material amid the pages of "garbage," as Peter Elbow calls it. His and other educators' "free writing" corresponds to this activity, though the procedure varies.⁷

PROCEDURE

Inventing an interior monologue (page 323) amounts to making up some stream-of-consciousness for another person. Some students may need to project their flow onto invented persona before they confront it in themselves. For others, writing out their own stream first may make reading and writing interior monologues easier and more meaningful. At any rate, connecting them will facilitate both. Directions are:

Go alone to some quiet place and write down, for fifteen minutes, pell-mell, everything that comes into your head, using the first words that occur to you and without concerning yourself about grammar, spelling, form, and continuity. This should be a kind of fast note-taking to get down as much as you can of what you think, feel, and sense during those fifteen minutes. Keep the focus on the "right now" so you concentrate on what you're actually experiencing. No one else will ever see this, but it will be important for later work.

The point of quietness is to reduce sensory stimuli and encourage an awareness of inner things—emotions and backaches as well as thoughts. Perhaps the students' own rooms would be good for the first attempt. When a small group is writing a stream of consciousness, you can join them and write your own along with them. Then you can examine your writing along with the others.

One purpose of writing out the stream of consciousness is to provide each student with a sampling of his own verbalization that he can examine afterward in order to learn about putting things into words. For this purpose set up discussion with some questions that a small group can answer as they look at their own papers. With these questions as starters and the students volunteering short quotations from their writing, discussion can move into several important areas of language, semantics, and rhetoric. Here are some of the types of questions you might ask a group or put onto an activity card:

What did it feel like to do this kind of writing? Was it difficult? Is your mind ever blank?

How did you decide which thoughts and feelings to put down and which to leave out? What standard of "important" or "interesting" did you go by, since the directions indicated no topics or values or audience? Did you find yourself, despite the directions, trying to stay on a subject, find a continuity, or move toward a goal? If so, why?

Did you use whole sentences or fragments? What kind of words were most dispensable? Did you paragraph? If so, why? (What kind of logic determined new paragraphs?) Did you punctuate? Since no one else was going to read this, what purpose could it serve?

Does your paper jump; that is, could someone follow from one part to the next? What would prevent them? In a month, would you be able to follow it yourself? Does it have any particular beginning or end?

⁷ Peter Elbow, *Writing With Power* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981).

Students can label the contents of their paper by writing “sensation,” “memories,” “emotion,” “fantasy,” “reflection,” and whatever other labels they think appropriate by the side of the original writing. Some students might have been fastened on the surroundings, some on the past, some on a dream world, and some on anticipation of coming events. Since verb tenses often indicate these different focuses—the past for memory, for example—students might mark the tenses they have used, note shifts, and determine which tense, if any, dominated. Distinguishing between the progressive form of the present, which records ongoing action, and the present tense of generalization is an effective way of distinguishing sensory data from ideas. How characteristic is this sampling of their thinking all the time? How much does it reflect the circumstances of the writing? This kind of awareness may be personally helpful to many students, and they’re generally interested in this analysis because it’s of their own text, although it obviously touches on universal issues.

Then comes the crucial question that pulls many of the previous questions together and that gets to the heart of rhetoric: What would you have to do to this paper to make it, first, comprehensible, and second, interesting *to someone in particular* you know (get a definite person in mind)? After they have thought this over and given some answers aloud, they may decide to make the paper comprehensible and interesting *to a larger audience*, in which case they should consider everything from word choice and punctuation to complete reorganization and reformulation of the content.

After a group has written two or three thought streams they can select one of the papers and use it for a composition. The emphasis—and that’s all it is—on reflection comes now in selecting from and shaping the spontaneous papers in the way described on page 359 for memories. The students can pick out trains of thought but without disrupting the setting or necessarily eliminating the sensations that triggered them, the emotions stirred by them, or the memories that may have occurred (some of which may exemplify the general reflections).

In other words, reflections are not simply sorted out, but the weight of the writing is thrown on them by lowering sensory stimuli at the time of recording the stream and by focusing on reflections when selecting for revision. The point is to act as secretary to oneself, not consciously selecting at all, and then only later, when acting as editor, to select. The reshaping and rewriting may result in a poem or a reflective essay.

Beginning in a private verbal chaos has the great advantage of letting the students discover for themselves the reasons and ways for moving toward form, communication, and a public universe of discourse.

SAMPLE

Here’s a stream of consciousness written by a tenth grader who had difficulty writing, claiming she never knew how to begin. Compared to her self-conscious and awkward language production on other occasions when she spent much more time, her stream-of-consciousness efforts flowed more naturally.

I want to write for the next 30 minutes straight. It’s really hard to begin. I’m scared, I haven’t handed in hardly any writing assignments. I’m overdue 3. (My project is going to be a writing thing. It’s got to be. I can’t begin. It seems like I’d go nowhere, if I started. I’ve got lots of things important to me. I put those in my journal, far and few, they’re important nonetheless. But how do I mold them into a

story with a plot, developed character, and a universal conflict and them, symbolism backing the whole thing up. Where do I begin ?)

I'm babysitting now and this has been a steady job, now in 2 weeks they'll be gone, it's kind of good, lately I get busier and busier on the weekends and schedules have been conflicting. I'm so glad I lost that weight before they moved. Everything, 3 yrs. is a long time. I remember the first time I was here, rocking Alexandria then a blond 18 mo. old in green feety pajamas; in a wicker chair and that was the first time I sang what later evolved into "The Song; Our Song." Froggy Went A-Courting, and this year I made her a fluffy soft frog, so she'd never, ever forget. That one summer I babysat everyday for 2 weeks she loved grapes and she'd stand by the frig. and say "bapes" which turned into "gbapes" and finally "grapes." One of the first signs of really growing up. What is really growing up? We're never finished, but people talk of it like it happened. Slam-bam-thank you ma-am. I'm grown up. Not quite, who or how could we think that? Mistake.

And now at most babysitting jobs after 5 times of babysitting the food begins to taste alike, the furniture and air get monotonous. Not here. Rare. And I remember thinking I hope I sit here again. On that first time when Bram was born, how exciting those last mos. 7-9 were. Bram was born naturally and they let me in on the whole process, everything that happened, was happening and would happen. I was fascinated. I guess my first real understanding of the miraculous complexity yet simple idea of a baby.

He was so ugly. Big ears, saggy eyes, have you seen a 3 week old kid with big purplish-black bags under his eyes? Bram looked just like he had a hangover all the time.

Now he grows up (more!) every time I see him, calls me "Kerner" [her name is Karen] just like Alexandra did.

They have a real Christmas tree. Ours is fake.

I have three brothers (no sisters). Sometimes my parents have 4 sons. Ken, 21, Harold, 18, Bobby, 13 (but he's a real, real jock, and is a whole lot bigger than me, he can press 150 lbs.) Harold is a frosh at college, Purdue. He hasn't spent the night at our house this vacation. He stays with Mike (a 28 yr. old bachelor, who went to New Trier and his track record is still up at E.T.H.S. in the field house).

Well I was sitting in the living room and I noticed Harold's stocking was turned the other way. Face forward to the back. And I thought how perfect. He really isn't a part of the Xmas. Well he ate Christmas Eve dinner with us, a grand total of 23 mins., but I thought some more and decided the stocking symbolized his being in college, "growing up" and away from the "fold." Keep going. He never was an actual part of us, too freaky, messed up, easily influenced, funny and handsome, to be one of us. All this saddened me but I left the stocking the way it was, the way it honestly had to be.⁸

This student begins with a complaint, reflects on "growing up" as she faces the end of a baby-sitting job with its memories, and finally is reminded of the Christmas stockings in her living room at home, which leads to her final reflection on "growing up," triggered by a concrete object. This stream-of-consciousness writing could provide her with good material for composing a memoir, a reflective poem, or a personal essay.

Some of the most valuable and interesting thoughts occur in association with passing objects and momentary circumstances to which they are reactions. The

⁸ From George Seidenbecker's class, Evanston Township High School, Evanston, Illinois.

connection in which thoughts arise is as important sometimes as the thoughts themselves. Consider a skylark or a Grecian urn, for example. In fact, it's often impossible to separate profound thought from the sight or sound that sets it off.

Lying on my bureau is my pay envelope. By the standards of the American economy it is very little. However, to me ...

So begins the paper of a girl looking meditatively around her room. How much more interesting an opening than the pompous generalities that students dredge up for the teacher's benefit.

■ REFLECTIVE POETRY

Encourage students to write poetry based on their stream-of-consciousness writing, because most poetry depends on the kinds of personal and idiosyncratic thought and feeling that characterize a stream of consciousness rather than on the logically developed thought of dialogues of idea and transpersonal essays.

Help students see that more reflective poems are largely thought trains prompted by something seen or heard, or by the mood of a place. Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale" is a beautiful example, though not necessarily the best to read first. Keats's poem is actually an interior monologue, but meditative rather than dramatic, except in the sense that the inner life can be very dramatic. The poetry follows moment by moment the movements of a man's sensibility as he stands in the odorous dark of summer shrubbery and hears a nightingale pass. Many poems conform to the immediate concatenation of sensation, fancy, and reflection. Others, like Robert Burns's "To a Mouse" and Robert Frost's "Departmental" talk to and about an animal or object that sets off thoughts, wishes, and wonderings, or perhaps broad generalizations ("The best-laid schemes o' mice and men gang oft a-gley [awry].").

Beginners who don't find a form of their own might try writing in one of the shorter poetic forms such as the cinquain to shape the comparatively formless material of stream-of-consciousness notes. A cinquain is a five-line poem with two, four, six, eight, and two syllables in each respective line. This cinquain by Mabel Meadows Staats is the kind that might crystallize out of reflection:

SPRING THAW

If birds
Return to build
Each spring when winter goes
Must you recall cold words and stay
Away?⁹

(See also "Formulaic Verse" and "Comparisons" starting on page 283).

At some point in exploring poems, mature students might appreciate a traditional but flexible form such as the sonnet. Let them read and try writing sonnets that consist of reflections inspired by an object, like Keats's "On Seeing the Elgin Marbles," or pure reflection, like Wordsworth's "The World Is Too Much with

⁹ Mabel Meadows Staats, "Spring Thaw," from her book *Bright Quarry*.

Us.” (Many of Wordsworth’s poems have the quality of spontaneous reflection and are often entitled according to the time and place in which they were composed.) For students who have worked with haiku, an object or setting will not seem a strange way to begin a poem.

As a vehicle for ideas, a poem may be written as:

- an invitation
- a vision of hell
- a vision of heaven
- an invocation to a spirit or force
- an address to a public figure
- a response to a news item
- an epitaph or elegy
- a eulogy
- a celebration of an occasion
- a farewell to something or someone
- a blessing or prayer
- a prophecy or warning
- a blues or lament
- a lullaby
- a letter of advice or thanks

One of these, or others, might be just the right vehicle for a certain student to say what he has to say. Post such a list or put it on an activity card. And be sure that your students read around in good mixed anthologies of poems that offer interesting instances of these and other similar ways of writing a poem. Help them to become aware of this array of uses of poetry and of what opportunities this offers them for expressing their own ideas.

The “cloudy symbols of high romance” of Keats’s “When I Have Fears That I May Cease to Be” are like the concerns and wishes for the future that adolescents want to express. And expressed as a poem, such feelings are less embarrassing. Juxtaposing disparate things along an emotional continuity is licensed, and the structures of poetry help fix this personal continuity in the public medium of language.

Most poetry is loaded with this free association of sensations, memories, fantasies, and reflections. It’s multileveled. The surface structure of many poems is narrative or description, but its deep structure is idea. (See page 342 for ballads and story poems—both invented story.) We noted in Chapter 16 that true stories could be written in poetry as well as prose. Some invented dialogue is poetry. Poetry *fuses* the thing described with the reflection on it, as we said for loaded description. This kind of simultaneous expression contrasts with personal essay, which *takes off from* objects or events and reflects on them. In an essay, thought and feeling are more separately stated—unless it’s a poetic essay.

■ PERSONAL ESSAY

This is the prose counterpart of reflective poetry. Much of the student stream-of-consciousness sample on page 415 is actually reflective essay—the expression of

personal thought and feeling. Students can occasionally recast a short essay, or a main idea or feeling from an essay, into a poem, or vice versa. As they work to express the same idea or feeling in both prose and poetry and other media as well—letters, diaries, proverbs, slide shows, collages, dances, songs, and so on—they test the potential of each form.

We're using the word *essay* in the original sense that Montaigne gave it, of an effort or trial to understand something or to render an idea. Personal essays don't follow any particular form, but they are informal, often in first-person. And the thoughts often remain embedded in the circumstances or setting that inspired them. Sometimes they are personal responses to public events. After doing their own stream-of-consciousness writing, students will recognize in published personal essays—sometimes whimsical, sometimes very serious—chains of thought like their own that are not meant to be proved or documented.

Many good reading selections may be culled from columns, editorials, transcripts of speeches, and books of essays. Some essayists are Jonathan Swift, Charles Lamb, William Hazlitt, Thomas De Quincey, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Alice Walker, George Orwell, E. B. White, Virginia Woolf, James Baldwin, and Joan Didion. Columnists like Russell Baker, Erma Bombeck, Peg Bracken, and Ellen Goodman produce short, timely essays. Alexander Pope's "Essay on Man" illustrates generalization written as poetry.

TRANSPERSONAL ESSAY

Reflective essays should help students get a greater feeling for the difference between informal personal essays and those essays that become more transpersonal in tone and more formal in the wording and ordering of the ideas. Documentation and argumentation become major issues as the responsibility to prove and persuade assumes greater importance.

Students who have gained experience with the other types of idea writing outlined up to here in this chapter may be ready for this more intellectually structured essay. There's a continuity between personal and impersonal essay, of course. Poems like Tennyson's "In Memoriam" illustrate each at different points throughout the work, being partly lyric, partly philosophical.

The chief issue in essaying is how to assert, support, and connect generalizations. This process is both logical and rhetorical, for while the writer is classifying and syllogizing, he is also patterning and phrasing his ideas for maximum effect on a reader. The past tense of narrative will sometimes remain important for purposes of illustration and documentation. But such concreter discourse is embedded in abstracter discourse through the relation of story to statement or of instance to idea.

Journalistic essays bridge from informal to formal generalization. In the following kind, we can see a generalization in the making.

■ THEMATIC COLLECTION OF INCIDENTS

Despite its makeshift name here, this is actually an extremely common form of essay found in magazines and newspapers all the time, often as a "feature article." A reporter tells three or four incidents that all illustrate a point he wants to make about, say, what happens to ex-convicts trying to start a new life.

Tell briefly several incidents that you think show the same thing, that illustrate a certain observation you want to make. Draw these incidents from any source you trust—memory, other people, books, and so on. State the theme only as much as you think you need to. You might use your title also to indicate your point.

Whether the writer draws the incidents from firsthand experience or from hearsay and books will probably determine whether this results in a personal or transpersonal essay. Also, replacing *incidents* by *instances* could shift the examples from events to circumstances, that is, from narrative to description. In this case, the writer might be showing how teenage girls in blue-collar or white-collar families respond to learning they're pregnant. This flexibility about choice of examples makes a natural transition from personal narrative to transpersonal generality.

This is a crucial kind of writing, because it weans the student from organization by chronology to some other organization. For many students, narrative is a kind of haven that they're reluctant to leave because chains of events have a ready-made sequence, whereas exposition requires that the student create and assert a new order of his own. He can follow a time order only when he's telling one of the incidents; since the next incident will be a new beginning, he must bridge by means of the idea. Chronologic will not hold together the examples, which may be drawn from scattered times and places; some other logic must, some categorization of experience. In what sequence is he going to place the several incidents to make his point? And how is he going to get from one incident to the next? If the incidents are summarized in a pointed enough way, so that the similarity they share is apparent, and if the author's common classification for them is also clear, the paper should be successful, at least logically.

ISSUES FOR THE WRITING WORKSHOP

Group discussion of the first drafts should test an author's classification against the understanding of the group. An effective way to do this is to use the titling device described on page 204. Further: Is there one incident that doesn't fit the theme or classification as well as the others do? Are some of the incidents summarized in such a way that their relevance is not clear? Does the order of the incidents make any difference? Would the paper be more effective if they were placed in another order? Does the author make transitions between incidents? If not, does he *need* transitions? (Would juxtaposition alone make the point?)

Does the author state the main idea in the title or in a sentence or paragraph? Where does the statement come—at the outset, at the end, or during transitions? Sometimes withholding the statement until the end creates suspense and permits the reader to make up the classification along the way. He may even have to change his classification midway as he encounters new incidents, and this could be very thought-provoking. However, if the connections among incidents are too difficult to make without guidance, then the author should probably make his statement early in the paper or use transitions to guide the reader. Some discussion about how well the examples from real life and the examples from reading go together might be profitable also.

PURPOSES

A student who masters this kind of writing should learn a lot here about that classic problem of coordinating example and statement, of illustrating generaliza-

tions. Examples are usually drawn from a level of abstraction lower than that of the statement being illustrated. Frequently, the examples are narrative. The difficulties are (1) summarizing the bit of narrative or description so that it will fit under a heading containing other bits of summarized narrative or description, and (2) finding an apt and accurate heading that can logically contain the incidents or instances assigned to it. The narrative summaries must be trimmed of irrelevance and worded abstractly enough to stand clearly as items sharing similarities with other items in their class. This is precisely what's required when illustrating generalizations in formal exposition or essay. Writing morals for fables and other highly pointed stories should help establish this relationship.

This project, furthermore, relates concept formation to composition. The student creates a class concept of his own by clumping items that he sees as instances of it. In fact, the physical model for this assignment would be to take a pile of mixed objects and sort them into several piles of like objects according to one's own notions of similarity.

DRAWING FROM READING

Students can draw the whole thematic collection of incidents from their reading experience, possibly mixing poems, plays, and fiction. The purpose, of course, is to put together one's reading according to categories of one's own by seeing similarities among events, characters, or situations. But like most of the following kinds of writing, this experience will also serve well when writing many examination essays and term papers designed to find out what students know and understand about course texts and lectures. Any student who can create a generalization and support it by instances from his own material will be able to do that with course material.

DRAWING FROM PREVIOUS WRITING

This activity holds the important possibility for students of drawing some of their incidents from their own previous writing. If they've been following this program and keeping papers in their folders, they should have a stock of narratives, some of which, in fact, would have implied or stated a generalization. These previously told incidents would need to be summarized and retold in order to fit clearly the category that would contain them.

Whenever possible, the basing of later writing on earlier writing should be encouraged. Students can look over old diaries and reportage, research, autobiography, and memoir (any sensory and memory material), cull generalizations they made, and then try some of these out in their minds. Are there other incidents from reading or real life that illustrate or substantiate the generalization? By drawing on a sensory recording, two memories, and two reading selections, one teenager illustrated how people avoid silence.

One advantage of further abstracting material they have already abstracted from recollection or investigation is that students can then understand as they never would any other way how the raw material of life is processed by stages into more and more abstract symbolizations. Another is that they can get ideas for this present paper by building on previous ones. At the same time, finally, they're building their own knowledge structures by combining firsthand experience and observation with material from other sources and thence distilling a truth from them.

■ EDITORIAL

An editorial has no particular form, but it does assert some generalization in the relatively short space that magazines and newspapers allow on their op/ed pages. Editorials vary considerably in how much they just declare and how much they document. Some consist mainly of opinion, others mainly of factual exposition. But they share purposes that require some general statement. They tend to be activist in the sense that they attempt to play some role in events and circumstances such as the news portion of the newspaper or magazine reports on. For example, editorials often comment on current trends or happenings or to what others have said about them, creating a kind of ongoing forum. Or the main statement may take the form of a proposal for some public undertaking, based on some facts and conclusions. Or an editorialist may want to influence events by persuading minds.

Inasmuch as students may be involved in current issues, this action orientation combined with the availability of editorial models can make this an attractive kind of writing. Groups can discuss timely subjects and how best to make their editorials effective for their purpose and fitting for some publication.

■ REVIEW

Few kinds of writing may touch more bases than another journalistic “department,” the review. Reviews are of all sorts and about all kinds of things—from restaurants, circuses, and videos to concerts, books, and art exhibitions. This flexibility in both form and content lets students find their own ability level and interest. At the same time, reviews share a fairly common, utilitarian purpose, like editorials, that makes sense to young people: they evaluate something so that readers may decide if it’s for them or not.

The reviewer may go about this in a number of ways involving various narrative, expository, and analytical kinds of discourse. He may summarize the plot of a play, for example, feed in factual background about the epoch of the action, critique the performance or the composition of the script itself, compare either with counterparts elsewhere, situate the play within sociological or artistic trends, debate the truth of the play’s themes, and assess the value of the play as written and as produced. Some major essays turn a review of a book or brace of books into commentary on the whole area in which the books fall.

A student reviewer may do only one or two of these things, as indeed many professional reviewers do, but the possibilities are all there and pertain to the critical, evaluative function, which makes a review coherent even if it mixes many kinds of discourse. Consumer research too aims to help the reader sort out goods for himself, but it does this by presenting factual findings, whereas reviews depend more on personal judgment and experience. At any rate, sorting out things has high priority among young people, who need to realize what kinds of discourse they can find and create that may prove useful to them. Also, they want to know what their peers in particular think of products, performances, and resources because they believe their criteria will be closer to their own than those of another generation. So they will be good audiences for each other’s reviews, as adult peers are. And the journalistic nature of reviews, like editorials and timely feature articles, makes them easy to find and to disseminate.

■ GENERALIZATION SUPPORTED BY INSTANCES

This goes a step beyond the thematic collection by developing the generalization itself more than the instances, which are more subordinated. A huge number of essays in both popular and technical publications are basically structured around a statement cast into the present tense and supported by examples. But this framework may be infinitely complicated by establishing first one or more substatements that build up to the main generalization, each of which may need to be separately supported. Or the support of some generalizations may require combining various sorts of documentation and argumentation in complex ways. But consider for the moment an essay framed by a single generalization:

Make a general statement about some aspect of people's behavior that from your own observations seems true to you. Use a number of examples to illustrate your generalization. Draw your examples from among the things you've observed, investigated, heard, and read about that led you to this generalization in the first place.

This process essentially just shifts the ratio between instance and generality. The main purpose of it is to throw the emphasis definitely on ideas. Illustrations are distinctly subordinated, and paragraphing follows a logic inherent in the generalization. Although the task calls mainly for an assertion and examples, most generalizations break down in some way into lesser ideas or into variations of the main statement. Thus, a typical pattern would be for the first paragraph to assert the generalization and for the lead sentences of the following paragraphs to make the substatements, with follow-up sentences illustrating them. But there should be no formula for such a paper. The first paragraph might consist of an arresting example that's to be explained later, or the substatements might lead inductively up to the generalization as the conclusion of the paper.

For instances of generalizations, refer students to those such as are treated under "Single Statements" earlier in this chapter. Some they wrote or read as epigrams, maxims, or definitions might serve as the generalization for this composition and will prove much superior to "topics" of the sort usually stated in only a word, phrase, or sentence fragment. But emphasize that generalizations may come from anywhere. "What generalizations are you *assuming* as you go about your daily life? Are these really true? Test them out. Can you support them by exemplifying and reasoning?"

ISSUES FOR THE WRITING WORKSHOP

Each student paper will embrace a certain segment of the abstraction hierarchy. Some generalizations will be on a very high level of abstraction, encompassing a wide range of time and space. If a paper contains no past tense, this means that the illustrations are also generalizations, though presumably of a lower order than the main statement. The issue for the writing workshop, then, is whether such illustrations *illustrate* well enough or whether they themselves are so abstract as to require examples.

The highest point on the abstraction hierarchy in any paper will be the main assertion, and the lowest point will be the most concrete example. If the main assertion is high, such as "People have a strong need for exploration and adventure," one would expect the secondary assertions and the illustrations to run high

also, though they should still be well below the main assertion. But if the main assertion is something like “Older sisters are more confident than younger sisters”—a much more specific generalization—one would expect all the other statements in the paper not only to run below this one but to dip down into past-tense, narrative sentences, which are near the bottom of the hierarchy.

Concrete and abstract, specific and general are entirely relative terms, relative to the master statement that provides the context for the whole paper. Illustrating is translating a statement down the hierarchy. A generalization in one paper might be an illustration in another. But if the illustration is not very much farther down, it can't illustrate well. If it is too far down, it may be too trivial, relatively, to be persuasive. (“My friend so-and-so joined the Peace Corps last year because he was restless” to illustrate “People have a strong need for exploration and adventure.”) The student must play up and down the abstraction ladder according to the situation, jumping farther down for illustrations, and then jumping back up occasionally for transitions or other restatements of the main idea.

As students explore these matters in discussion of their own first drafts, direct them to amend statement X, if they think it is exaggerated or “overgeneralized” or simply not true. What words, phrases, or clauses could be added that would make the statement truer in their view? Then: Do the examples fit? Are they specific enough, or are they themselves too general? Where did the author place his main assertion? Where did he place his examples? What determined the order of his paragraphs? If the order were changed, would it make any difference? Does each paragraph consist of an illustration, or are the paragraphs based on substatements? (So-called development is the breaking down of the main generalization into its variations or substatements.)

Some common faults are: letting an illustration run away into irrelevance (usually a narrative for its own sake); piling on examples that all show the same point; stringing the examples with weak transitions such as “Another example is...”; repeating the first paragraph as the last paragraph; and repeating the main generalization instead of developing it. Almost all of them stem from too simple a generalization.

Developing the main statement through qualification and variation would solve most of these faults. But bear in mind that a single or simple generalization does not necessarily invite development, and that illustrating it naturally tends toward a string-of-beads organization. That is, the sequence of documentation may not logically make a difference. But for the impact on a reader it may. With help from each other, authors can find a way of sequencing points artfully and with as much development as the main idea accommodates.

SUBJECT MATTER

The directions need not stipulate human behavior; people are simply the handiest subject to generalize about. Students can repeat this kind of writing with different subjects. Indeed, it is their interest in a certain subject that will engage students in generalization. Our discussion here is based on activity directions that merely suggest what writers do when they set out to assert and prove something. Students will produce such essays in many circumstances, depending on the purpose and audience of the project at hand.

The project might concern another course or subject area. Indeed, this sort of writing is precisely what's often required in school and college as an exam to

“cover the material” in a content course in the natural or social sciences. Our approach differs only in that *it stipulates the conceptual and compositional task instead of what the generalization is to be about*. By limiting documentation to certain kinds of scholarly or scientific sources such as certain texts, students can more specifically prepare for this kind of testing. But any experience writing this sort of essay will also prepare for this particular use of it. Ideally, students would assert some original generalizations by drawing on their own investigations and on those of professional researchers and scholars.

PARALLEL READING

Generalizations on contemporary issues and other matters abound in periodicals such as *Commentary*, *The Black Scholar*, *The New York Times Magazine*, *The Puerto Rican Journal*, *Harper's*, and the *Atlantic*. As for books, it's just a matter of students gravitating toward those on a subject of interest. Most books that are not narratives or mere catalogs are essays of this sort, but their greater length enables the authors to develop assertions into the complexities of documentation and argumentation of the next kind of essay.

■ COMBINING GENERALIZATIONS INTO A THEORY

We're using the term *theory* here in a somewhat double sense. The most important meaning is that the essays do not merely state generalizations but combine them in some syllogistic way. The secondary meaning is that sometimes the ideas are also speculative, that is, extrapolated somewhat far from fact. Both give greater play to logical argumentation all while drawing, perhaps, on large bodies of investigative findings.

PROCEDURE

In skeletal form, the main process underlying this final project can be demonstrated and carried out orally. This sort of essay is framed by one or more syllogisms.

Take several generalizations from sources such as your previous writing, scientific investigation, folk sayings, etc. and combine them so as to conclude a further statement not evident in the original ones. Illustrate or document the generalizations.

ORAL SYLLOGISMS. To prepare for this kind of advanced essay-writing, students can hold several small-group sessions on working out syllogisms, which are series of generalizations consisting of at least two premises and a conclusion. For example, they might look at syllogisms such as these and come up with their own, modeled on the same pattern:

All who are anxious to learn work hard.
Some of these girls are anxious to learn.
Some of these girls work hard.

Improbable stories are not easily believed.
None of his stories are probable.
None of his stories are easily believed.

They can begin with a single-statement generalization they've heard, read, or written in one of their own papers, come up with another one or two on the same subject and write them under the first one. Suppose they came up with these three premises (theories build on more than two premises) which were in fact the generalizations that one teenager combined into a theoretical essay:

Conforming is an unconscious part of growing up.

Conformity is necessary to society.

Conformity leads to harmful excesses such as intolerance and artificial behavior.

You or an activity card can then direct students to pretend for a moment that they all accept these propositions as true. Then they can cast them as a syllogism:

If it is true that

Conforming is an unconscious part of growing up,

And if it is true that

Conforming is necessary to society,

And if it is true that

Conformity leads to harmful excesses such as intolerance and artificial behavior,

Then it must also be true that

(Blank).

Further directions:

Fill in the blank. What's the fourth statement that you conclude from the first three? Propose several possibilities and discuss which seem to follow logically. Write these down too. Are several equally valid conclusions possible? Do you think that such and such a conclusion is a true statement? Narrow down the proposed conclusions to one that some of you think is false. Does it follow from the premises? If you think it does not, go to another conclusion that you consider false but admit is logically derived. Why, then, is it false? Now return to the three premises you pretended to accept earlier. Is one false that therefore falsifies the conclusion?

Students continue to work backward and downward. That is, when an unacceptable premise has been identified, those who think it's false try to qualify and rephrase it. If others disagree with their changes, they decide what sort of evidence they would need to settle the matter. A group should do enough of these sessions to make clear the process of syllogizing and its continuity with their previous work in asserting and supporting individual generalizations.

Next they can write down and bring to their discussion groups other uncompleted syllogisms consisting of two or three premises about the same subject. The groups select one of these sets, amend the premises until they agree on them, and then discuss what conclusions might logically follow. Afterwards, a spokesperson for the group might describe what happened during the process and read the premises and conclusions to the class for feedback. Some premises will have been too unrelated to each other to conclude *anything* from, some will have yielded *several* tenable conclusions, and some will have yielded only one logical possibility.

WRITING. Next they combine and compose generalizations into a theoretical essay. For the first attempt, students might draw as many starting generalizations as

possible from their previous writing, reading, and discussion. The purpose of this is to let them continue to build their own thought structures on the foundation of their lower abstractions. Make it clear that syllogizing is to be the heart of the paper but that it doesn't imply any particular organization. Of course, not all statement relations are completely amenable to logic—especially in the murky area of human behavior. So the limits of logic become themselves a critical consideration.

ISSUES FOR THE WRITING WORKSHOP

The following compositional issues will probably arise for commentary during revision. Should the premises be announced all at once in the beginning or fed in at intervals? Should or can they be documented simultaneously, or will they have to be documented each in turn? In what order should they be taken up? Is the order indifferent, or can one generalization be developed in some way from another? Do some premises need more documenting than others? Should the conclusion(s) be suspended until the end for climactic effect or posted at the outset to make the thread of argument easier to follow? Of course, a very complex paper might contain subsidiary syllogisms and thus two or three secondary conclusions in addition to the main one.

Project or distribute for discussion at least one legible first draft from such an effort. Read it aloud as the group follows visually, and stop for comment en route. When the audience feels that something is unclear, help them to determine whether the difficulty is in:

- the syllogistic drawing of conclusions,
- the statement of single generalizations,
- or, farther down still, the concepts contained in a generalization (definition of a word, for example; but often the premises are themselves definitions).

Both these logical problems and the compositional problems described above should be touched on enough in discussion with you to enable students at least to identify them when they encounter them in the writing workshop groups. As usual, this raising of issues is achieved by asking the audience to propose solutions for the difficulties they encounter as readers, restating their diagnosis for them when necessary.

PARALLEL READING

It's in the nature of theory and of higher thinking in general that it occurs in a particular field, not as a form unto itself, so finding appropriate reading selections is a matter of looking in fields of interest. Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species* argues a theory on the basis of zoological information. Marshall McLuhan's *Understanding Media*, Karl Marx's *Capital*, Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics*, and Michael Polanyi's *Personal Knowledge* are influential books that emphasize theory.

Theoretical essay represents people putting things together for themselves in the most explicit and intellectual way. It turns their deductive powers to work on the generalizations that their inductive powers have previously distilled. In this way it caps the rational knowledge-making processes that have been crystallizing across the last three chapters. But this does not make it the goal of the curriculum.

It grows naturally out of a continuous process that goes on within people all the time whether or not they ever manifest it in speech or writing. Theoretical discourse is no more important than the other kinds we have surveyed, all of which create understanding, and some of which do it no less profoundly for doing it more artfully. The goal of the curriculum is to play freely over the whole universe of discourse.

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In addition to works cited in the text, such as those by Nancie Atwell, Lucy Calkins, and Donald Graves, we suggest the following readings, which are consistent with our student-centered approach.

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STUDENT-CENTERED LANGUAGE ARTS, K-12

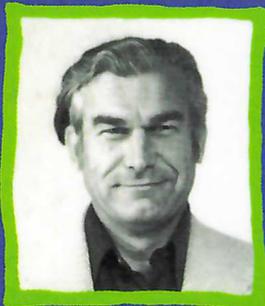
by James Moffett and Betty Jane Wagner

This is the fourth edition of James Moffett's seminal text, first published in 1968, which set forth the rationale and practices for the kind of individualized, interactive, integrative language learning environment that only today is coming into its own. It proposed whole language, collaborative learning, active learning, writing workshops, the process approach, student empowerment, portfolio assessment, and the substitution of children's literature for basal readers many years before these cornerstones of enlightened English language arts teaching became fashionable.

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JAMES MOFFETT is an internationally known speaker, writer, workshop leader, and consultant on language arts teaching and curriculum. He has been a classroom teacher, a research associate at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, and a visiting faculty member at other universities. In 1982 he was given the Distinguished Author Award by the California Association of Teachers of English. Among his books are *Teaching the Universe of Discourse*; *Active Voices I-IV*, a series of school texts comprising student writing across the curriculum; *Active Voice*, a related volume for teachers; and *Coming on Center: Essays in English Education*.



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