

WRITING

ACROSS

THE CURRICULUM

Volume V, Number 1

December 1987

WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM is published twice during the academic year by the Writing Across the Curriculum Committee of the Southern College of Technology. Subscriptions are available upon request to interested individuals or institutions; a donation of \$5.00 is requested. Copies of back issues are available for \$2.50 per issue.

WAC will consider for publication those essays, interviews, reviews, and conference reports which are concerned with the theory or practice of using writing skills as a teaching/learning technique in any educational discipline. It will also consider for publication any fictional or non-fictional materials written by either teachers or students which demonstrate the exemplary use of writing skills within any discipline of the curriculum.

Please send submission, including brief biographical background and recent photo, to the Editor.

SOUTHERN COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY

EDITOR: Robert C. Wess
Humanities and Social Sciences

ASSOCIATE EDITOR: Kristine F. Anderson
Developmental Studies

EDITORIAL STAFF:
Dorothy S. Ingram Library
Susan R. Morrow Humanities and Social Sciences

CONTENTS

Volume V, Number 1 December 1987

PAGE

EDITOR'S CORNER

Robert C. Wess 2

ARTICLES

The Triadic Journal: The Purposes and Processes of Journal Writing Across the College Curriculum
Linda Stanley and David Shimkin 2

Computerized Writing Across the Curriculum
Richard B. Larsen 5

Using Journals to Help Students Learn Literature
H. Fil Dowling, Jr. 6

Plato, Prose, and Poetry: Reading Philosophic Masters—On Language—And Teaching Literacy Today
Joseph L. Papay 9

SPEAKERS' PROGRAM REPORT

Hearing is Believing: Out of the Mouths of the Pros
Dorothy S. Ingram 12

EDITOR'S CORNER



By Robert C. Wess

We are pleased to offer our readers the Fall Issue, Volume Five, of *Writing Across the Curriculum*. The response to the first four volumes has been beyond our expectations; the range of interest in cross-disciplinary writing has only expanded during the last four years. It is our continuing commitment to provide readers with informative essays which are not only interesting but also significant in their focus, not merely theoretical but practical for the classroom as well.

This present issue, we think, illustrates both theory and application. Perhaps the most general essay here is the first, "The Triadic Journal: The Purposes and Processes of Journal Writing Across the College Curriculum," by Linda Stanley and David Shimkin. This essay, with its discussion of discursive and expressive journal writing, offers a broad range of potential applications. In the second essay, Richard B. Larsen presents a theoretical base for linking cross-disciplinary courses through "Computerized Writing Across the Curriculum." The remaining two essays are discipline specific. H. Fil Dowling, Jr., describes his "Using Journals to Help Students Learn Literature," thereby reminding English teachers that they, too, are responsible for using writing in the English curriculum. Joseph L. Papay's essay presents a fresh approach to philosophy by describing how all four linguistic skills—speaking, listening, reading and writing—can be practiced in the philosophy classroom.

Concluding this issue is a brief report by Dorothy S. Ingram on Southern Tech's successful lunchtime speakers' program, which provides a vital link between the on-campus writing across the curriculum program and the industrial, business use of writing in the outside community.

Robert C. Wess teaches composition and literature at the Southern College of Technology.

CALL FOR PAPERS

INTERFACE '88, the Twelfth Annual Humanities and Technology Conference, will be held October 20-21, 1988, at the Northwest Atlanta Hilton Hotel in Marietta, Georgia (metro Atlanta). Papers, panels, and presentations that examine the interaction of the humanities and technology and science are invited. One-page, single-spaced abstracts should reach Rex Recoulley or Susan Morrow (Humanities and Social Sciences Department, Southern College of Technology, Marietta, Georgia 30060) by May 1, 1988.

THE TRIADIC JOURNAL: The Purposes and Processes of Journal Writing Across the College Curriculum



By Linda Stanley and David Shimkin

The uses to which journal writing lends itself are many, both in composition classes and in classes across the curriculum. We in English assign the journal to help students know and express their personal responses to the world, to develop so-called "expressive" habits of writing as suggested by James Britton or "conscientization" as Ann Berthoff describes it. We also ask them to use their journal as a source of ideas for more formal pieces of writing, following the lead of Ken Macrorie and Peter Elbow who advocate the free writing that usually goes on in a journal as an important prewriting exercise.

In the literature, however, it appears that it is in courses across the curriculum that faculty are utilizing the journal most assiduously. In Toby Fulwiler's *The Journal Book*, discipline instructors describe how they assign the journal as a place to collect and think about data, to pose and solve problems, to internalize abstract concepts, to think about the broad issues of a field and connect them to their students' lives.

It is clear that in some ways the uses that writing students make of their journals overlap with the uses that discipline students make. In both cases, for example, the student may trace his/her intellectual and emotional growth and so come to a greater understanding of him/herself. Even when the journal is put to more discipline-specific uses, we would argue that its capacity for accomplishing multiple learning purposes can be tapped more often than it perhaps is. For example, the discipline teacher who asks students to keep lecture or reading notes in a journal, notes about which the student then writes, drawing generalizations or posing questions for class discussion, does so in order to initiate students into particular modes of thinking characteristic of particular academic disciplines, to teach students to think and write like biologists in biology class, historians in history class, etc. It may be theoretically inconsistent to suggest that at the same time they are learning the discursive structures of a particular academic discipline, they are also learning the expressive process of "conscientization" defined by Berthoff as looking and re-looking, listening and re-listening. But we would argue it is just such inconsistencies that writing instructors should embrace, in order to give their students a complete and well-rounded introduction into the complexities of the writing process.

Triadic Theory

What we are proposing is that the journal can serve a multiplicity of what may seem in theory conflicting

pedagogical objectives, both in writing classes and in other classes across the curriculum. The journal can take a variety of formats as far as content and form. Some reasons for assigning the journal are reflected in any format; some are given greater emphasis in one or another format. But the relative freedom the journal offers from any tightly defined structure gives it a protean character, a capacity not only to evolve, during the course of a semester, into any number of these formats but also, at any single moment, to mirror one format in another.

To illustrate, we focus on five possible roles the student journal writer may adopt: as Writer, as Reader, as Listener, as Creator (making sense of observations), and as Self-Creator (ruminating on personal experience). The inter-relationships between these roles and the activities they involve can be pictured in the following way: Imagine two equilateral triangles, each with the apex downward. Label each apex "Writer" and label the upper corners of one triangle "Self-Creator" and "Creator," the upper corners of the other triangle "Reader" and "Listener." If these two triangles are then placed so that they share one apex and their "upper" bases cross at right angles, and then they are left free to rotate on the apex, they represent both the multiple range of purposes journal writing can accomplish and the ways in which those purposes divide from, come together with, and mirror one another. The three dimensional quality of the diagram will suggest, we hope, the capacity of the journal form itself to bring multiple dimensions of the writing process into a living whole, to permit different objectives we may have for our students to play off one another in ways that reflect the realities of a process that theory seems never quite able to fully capture.

Triadic Practice

We have experimented with ways of assigning the journal so that it receives the full potential of the composition triangle in the English classroom and the WAC triangle in the discipline classroom. In this macrocosmic sense—the accretion of all these individual uses—the triadic purposes are served. We have also experimented with the triadic journal in the microcosmic sense of shaping it to fulfill all its many purposes in one student's journal.

In our English classes, using a questionnaire that we distributed for several semesters as a guide, we manipulated journal assignments to see if we could assist students to fulfill all roles. In the Fall 1984 semester, we assigned the journal purely as a personal product. Students were to freewrite one page daily all semester on any topic. We then distributed the following questionnaire:

1. How has keeping a journal affected your perception of the following:
 - a. of yourself as a writer (Writer)
 - b. of the purpose/value/nature of writing (Writer)
2. What effect did keeping a journal have on
 - a. you personally (Self-creator)
 - b. your writing for school or work (Creator, Writer)
 - c. your thinking (about school, work, life in general) (Creator, Listener, Reader, Self-Creator)

At least half responded positively that the journal affected content and form of writing (1a—Writer), encouraged them to express themselves (1b—Writer), and had a positive personal effect (2a—Self-Creator). We were concerned, however, about the low percentages who felt the journal affected their writing and thinking about school

and work (2b and c—Creator, Listener, Reader, Self-Creator).

In the Spring of 1985, hoping to improve the percentages who felt the journal affected their writing and thinking generally, we asked our students to keep a journal for another class they were taking as well as keep a journal for English. They were also to write each day in their English journal, with assignments varying from a few on their perception of themselves as writers to anything they chose to write about.

Students' responses changed for all questions in the survey, with improvement in four instances and a loss in the other three. Half the students now believed that the journal had improved their writing generally and both their writing and thinking for school and work (1a—Writer and 2b and c—Creator, Listener, Reader). Sixty percent now felt the journal had had a personal effect (2a Self-creator). However, only a quarter stressed that it had had a specific effect on their perception of content or form (1a—Writer), and only 25% felt keeping a journal affected their perception of the purpose of writing (1b—Writer). The gain in students' perception that they had improved, while the considerable loss in their perception of how they had improved or the significance of their improvement, may be caused by forcing them to write with distinctly different purposes, thereby diminishing the consciousness of the writing process raised by keeping a unified journal.

In the Fall of 1985, we eliminated the journal entry for the other class but sought through both free writing and guided questions related to what they were learning in their other classes to not only maintain the high marks the Fall 1984 students had given to the effects of the journal on themselves personally and on their writing in English but also to maintain the percentages of the Spring 1985 class applauding the effects of the journal on writing and thinking for other courses. As we had hoped, the responses to the questionnaire reflected a balance between awareness of the writing process itself and the personal and professional usefulness of that process. Our experiment indicates that assigning journal writing that is for the most part private but that includes various directed assignments over the semester that encourage the student to look outward may achieve the sought-for utilization of the triadic purposes of the journal.

TABLE: ALL THREE SEMESTERS

QUESTION	FALL 1984	SPRING 1985	FALL 1985
1a Improved writing	25%	50%	88%
Affected: content form	67% 50%	25% 25%	75% 25%
1b Affected purpose of writing	50%	25%	88%
2a Personal effect of	50%	60%	60%
2b Effect on writing for school, work	25%	50%	63%
2c Effect on thinking	40%	67%	50%

Conclusion

We have also experimented with this microcosmic model in classes across the curriculum. The journal has been used for four years now in our WRIT (Writing and Reading in the Technologies) Project as a listening log or a reading log, and occasionally as a place for personal expression. The specific uses cited by Queensborough faculty for the journal—summary, review or clarification of coursework, reaction to course concepts, correcting of errors on tests, solving of reading problems, response to reading, recording of observations in labs and in clinical areas (nursing), and personal ruminations—reflect students playing the various roles of the triadic model: Listener, Reader, Writer, Creator, Self-creator. Thus we see the journal developing both the student's sense of belonging to a discursive order and his/her sense of expressing the self and what it brings to and takes from that discourse society.

WORKS CITED

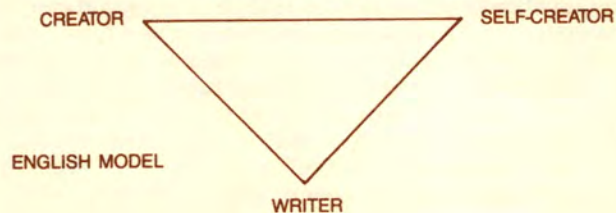
- Berthoff, Ann E. *Making of Meaning: Metaphors, Models, and Maxims for Writing Teachers*. New Jersey: Boynton/Cook, 1981.
- . "Recognition, Representation, and Revision." *Basic Writing* (Fall/Winter 1981), 19-32.
- Britton, James et al. *The Development of Writing Abilities* (11-18). London: Schools Council Publications, 1975.
- Elbow, Peter. *Writing Without Teachers*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1973.
- Fulwiler, Toby, ed. *The Journal Book*. Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Boynton/Cook, 1987.
- Macrorie, Ken. *Telling Writing*. 2nd ed. Rochelle Park, NJ.: Hayden, 1976.

APPENDIX ONE



Student	Right Side	Left Side	Instructor
READER	reading notes, quotations, images, comments	notes on notes, summaries, formulations, revisions, comments on comments	assigns readings, helps structure left-hand writing (compare one reading assignment to another, compare an early reaction to an assignment to a later reaction), offers comments and questions to guide student to a more complete understanding of a reading assignment
LISTENER	notes on major points and supportive details of lectures	responses to lectures: problems in understanding, questions, comments	clearly structures lectures, makes suggestions for left-hand writing (summarize a lecture, raise a question about a key point, raise or solve a problem), offers comments and questions to guide student to a better understanding of lecture material
WRITER	free writing to make act of writing more habitual and to develop a sense of voice, style, tone	revision of right-hand entries for precision and structure	gives exercises to help student develop a sense of personal style (re-write an entry that sounds false or seems unclear on rereading), comments on ideas and makes suggestions about how to develop them, assigns formal essays about material student has generated and thus helps student develop a sense of audience

APPENDIX TWO



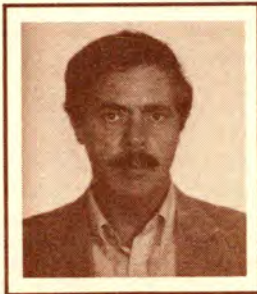
Student	Right Side	Left Side	Instructor
CREATOR	record of perceptions and ideas about them: observations, notes, lists, statements, critical responses, questions	relation of one perception to another, generalizations about the significance and meaning of the writer's perceptions	assigns places to visit, objects to observe, people to encounter; offers procedures for gathering and evaluating information; offers interpretation of and commentary on the writer's perceptions.
SELF-CREATOR	free writing about oneself, one's feelings, one's daily activities, one's thoughts		may make suggestions about exercises to try (write at the same time each day for several days, then note any differences in your attitude from day to day or any pattern of feelings that becomes apparent); may serve as a sympathetic reader
WRITER	free writing to make act of writing more habitual and to develop a sense of voice, style, tone	revision of right-hand entries for precision and structure	gives exercises to help student develop a sense of personal style (re-write an entry that sounds false or seems unclear on rereading), comments on ideas and makes suggestions about how to develop them, assigns formal essays about material student has generated and thus helps student develop a sense of audience (review a series of entries and explain one thing in general that it reveals about you)

Linda Stanley, Writing Program Administrator and Director of the WRIT (Writing and Reading in the Technologies) Project at Queensborough Community College, is working with the social studies departments of the Queens High Schools to advance writing in their courses.

David Shimkin, also of Queensborough Community College, City University of New York, has worked both with the Writing Program and the WRIT Project. He and Dr. Stanley have co-authored *Ways to Writing: Purpose, Task, and Process* (Macmillan, 1985).

GEORGIA-SOUTH CAROLINA
COLLEGE ENGLISH ASSOC.
ANNUAL CONFERENCE
VALDOSTA STATE COLLEGE
FEBRUARY 5-6, 1988

COMPUTERIZED WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM



By Richard B. Larsen

Background

No doubt about it: the idea of writing across the curriculum is taking hold at an increasing number of colleges and universities. It seems to be one effective way of counteracting the ongoing (if not worsening) literacy crisis among student writers influenced by entertainment and learning media that no longer employ the printed page. It is fortunate that the vast majority of educators still believe there is no substitute for books and other print materials, even if a number of us wonder about "the extent to which writing teachers . . . can teach writing 'across the curriculum' and, conversely, the extent to which professors in other disciplines . . . can teach writing" (Moore and Peterson 466). But we are willing to give interdisciplinary writing a try, committed as we are to the idea of (to use Janet Emig's famous phrase) writing as a mode of learning. That is, we believe that the educational process can be complete only when linkages among the various disciplines are explored in writing.

As this frontier comes more sharply into focus, fortuitously, so does another: the use of computers as facilitators of learning. The point at which their horizons blend was indistinct a few years ago, when, for instance, Morgan and Schwartz speculated that developments in microelectronics would enable "faculty in departments beyond English to give more informed attention to written assignments in their own disciplines." Moreover, these authors asserted—and the focus becomes clearer here—"Interactive computing programs will allow students to analyze and synthesize ideas on a variety of subjects" (3). Today computerized writing on campus is so commonplace it was only a matter of time before the relationship of this phenomenon to the advent of writing across the curriculum would be perceived and explored. In particular, file-sharing among students and professors has made possible a brave new world of interdisciplinary scholarship that now seems—at least theoretically—to be at the point of wide-scale realization.

Before the worth of any pedagogical idea can be institutionalized, however, it must be implemented, refined, and verified locally. What this article attempts to do is to delineate how writing across the curriculum and computerized composition can be made to work together to create learning experiences that are exciting for the student and, from the instructor's point of view, more thorough and effective. In other words, there is great promise in the wedding of these two approaches; or (to mix metaphors of war and marriage), in the battle against declining literacy, any light on the horizon can be taken as a dawn.

Discussion

As divergent as they may seem in their concerns, a natural science, a social science, and an English course have at least one thing in common. They share a need to have students clarify their understanding of course materials through the medium of written expression—as different as those expressions might be. One way in which such a process might occur is for instructors of these courses to share, concurrently, a mutual topic of learning. Take, as an example, the human brain. It might be dissected and analyzed in a biology course, with the students compiling and discussing laboratory data in short reports; at the same time, in a psychology course, those same students might be writing up their notes on theoretical models of regions of brain activity; and, in a technical communication course, they could then attempt to pull these two activities together into a formal report of some length and scope. That final report on the brain might serve all three courses by being the focal point of a semester's activities, and a major component in each student's grade.

While this scenario may not be all that unusual these days, computer facility-sharing and use of task-specific software to accomplish such projects are. I refer in particular to a centrally-located computer facility, such as a high-tech writing center, where students enrolled in these three courses would do much of the refinement of their coursework. Working at individual stations, they could import notes from the psychology class into observations made of the brain's structure (for instance, anatomical localization of cerebral function) and find ways by which to arrange disparate units of learning into fitted parts of a whole and thus satisfy the demands of their writing course. Sessions at the microcomputer become, in this fashion, exercises in master control, experiences through which students learn that there is a gestalt to their education and accessible means by which to discover it. Instructors who witness this discovery in a student are apt to appreciate more fully both writing across the curriculum and the application of computers to the learning process if they have not already learned to do so.

As for the software necessary for a complex job like this, each day brings new and more efficient programs to market. Of course, the memory demands of a computer inch ever upward as a result of RAMphogging programs and on-line memory-resident task-assistants; it would be imprudent for anyone planning complicated operations to settle for less than 512K nowadays. At the typical microcomputer workstation found in colleges today, students such as have been described above would need that size memory to run a full-featured word-processor and any accompanying peripheral programs. To perform optimally the task of pulling together information from a variety of sources into a cohesive whole, they need all the high-tech help they can get. In the real world of their careers, both the hardware and the software will be there, and it goes without saying that colleges should not settle for giving them less at their preparatory stages.

To give a concrete example of some basic applications, a student might begin by randomly outlining her report ideas with PC-Outline, shareware (i.e., software distributed at minimal cost) available from a variety of suppliers. She could quickly type in headings like "Survey of Brain-Region Literature" even as she planned her sub- and sub-sub-entries. A few strokes on the proper control keys and she could put the material into the hierarchical

sequence that is the point of outlining. Then she could patch the outline into her favorite word-processor—let's say Volkswriter 3. Working with this or a similar full-featured program, with its automatic saves and spelling-hyphenation feature, she could accomplish the realistic goal of letting "computers do the drudge work" while writers "free themselves for thinking" (Daiute 145). If she has followed through on keyboarding her short Biology lab-data reports and her Psychology course notes—in whatever order, since these programs arrange them to the user's preferences—into something like Instant Recall or Tornado Notes, she could call them up on-screen for inspection and possible inclusion in her report for Technical Communication. And, of course, when she finished drafting, she could have her software format the printout to her most exacting specifications. The final product, especially if it has one or two computer-generated graphics (a bar chart comparing data on various models, perhaps, created with PFS: Graph), should have a professional look to it.

Or the student might put the whole process together with an integrated package like Symphony or Framework. On one piece of software and a microcomputer with 512K RAM or more, she can enter her Biology lab figures on a spreadsheet for manipulation of comparative data; enter her file-type records from Psychology on a database; collect items from either of these for graphic presentation; and, meanwhile, arrange and type in draft-text with the program's wordprocessor on which she has already stored relevant short reports and notebook write-ups. When she is ready for printout, an entire range of formatting options is ready for her, again almost guaranteeing a professional-level report for Technical Communication—and ensuring, once more, that she is indeed integrating learning from a variety of sources, in a variety of work- and print-dependent ways.

And, after all, that's what writing across the curriculum is all about.

Conclusion

The charge has often been leveled, in past years, that it is easy, too easy, to see in the advent of microcomputers a panacea for the literacy problems that confront educators. Perhaps Lawrence Schwartz was being somewhat too sanguine when he claimed, a few years ago, that microcomputers would "end the so-called crisis in basic writing skills" (Schwartz 33). Yet evidence keeps mounting that use of microcomputers does have a variety of beneficial effects upon student writers, not the least of which is to make them interested in writing once again ("Gee, M'am, you mean I don't have to use pen and paper? I can sit at this TV screen and write?"). Furthermore, the sheer volume and excellence of the assistance-programs available nowadays is encouraging. Hardly a week goes by without another new wordworker's aid appearing on the market, everything from tech writer's Manual Maker software to Webster's On-line Thesaurus, not to mention grammar checkers and readability analyzers.

It would be foolish to brush these items off as frills and gee-gaws, the products of software manufacturers out to make a quick buck off people's fear of writing much as diet-aid manufacturers prey on abhorrence of fat. The acceptance of many of these programs has been extremely widespread out in the real world, and there are literally millions of on-the-job writers who have come to depend on them to get through each day's blizzard of words. The point I am trying to make—my bottom-line point—is that writing across the curriculum has the opportunity to

make a powerful ally of computer technology, one that will render the whole idea of inter-disciplinary learning more generally accessible, *feasible*, to both educators and students. This article will have served its purpose if it has made concerned people more keenly aware of the possibilities that lie ahead.

REFERENCES

- Daiute, Colette. "The Computer as Stylus and Audience." *College Composition and Communication* (May 1983), 134-145.
- Moore, Leslie, and Linda Peterson. "Convention as Connection: Linking the Composition Course to the English and College Curriculum." *College Composition and Communication* (December 1986), 466-477.
- Morgan, Bradford, and James Schwartz. "The Future of Word Processing in Academic Writing Programs." *Research in Word Processing Newsletter* (April 1984), 1-4.
- Schwartz, Lawrence. "Teaching Writing in the Age of Word Processing and Personal Computers." *Educational Technology*, (June 1983), 33-35.

A native New Yorker, Richard B. Larsen received the Ph.D. from Emory University in 1973. Currently he is an Associate Professor at Francis Marion College in Florence, SC. His work has appeared in *College English*, *Technical Communication*, and *College Composition and Communication*.

USING JOURNALS TO HELP STUDENTS LEARN LITERATURE



By H. Fil Dowling, Jr.

As coordinator of Towson State University's Advanced Writing Course Program (our writing across the curriculum program), I urge faculty in all subject disciplines to integrate "writing to learn" into their courses. But what about myself and other English faculty who teach literature? Do we show our own students how writing about literature can help them learn better—or do we stick stubbornly to the traditional term paper, book report, and critical essay, modes that students too often find exercises in tedium rather than means of learning?

I decided that an effective approach for English faculty who wish to promote "writing to learn" in literature classes would be to take the guide questions I have suggested to teachers for writing to learn in other disciplines, and apply them to literature. Here are the questions:

1. What are the goals of your course (and how do they reflect the underlying goals of your discipline)?
2. What specific skills do students need to achieve these goals? How can these skills be practiced in writing that students do?
3. Which skills need most emphasis because of their importance or because of the difficulty students have in mastering them?
4. How can teachers help students develop these key skills?

Applying these questions to a literature class, I considered the Survey of American Literature course that I teach frequently. Though I have several goals for this course, I decided my chief goal was to help students better understand, interpret, and respond to works of literature *on their own*. I feel that even in teaching a survey course, it is less important to “cover material” than to help students develop the power to comprehend and interpret for themselves what they read. That is what will make them better readers of literature in “real life” outside the classroom, which, in turn, may motivate them to be lifetime readers. Also, comprehension and interpretation of literature involve reading ability, analysis, and synthesis, all of which are key skills not only in literary studies but also in most other fields. Thus, by focusing on these skills, I could help students hone abilities that would be useful to them in courses across the college curriculum.

These skills of reading comprehension, analysis, and reaction can all be practiced in writing activities. I especially use class journals for this purpose. Students write a journal entry before each class, on topics I provide. Reading and discussion of these journal entries then forms a major part of the class sessions. In this way, students can compare their own understanding, interpretation, and reaction to what they read with those of other students. This not only adds to their own insight into the works read, but also uncovers methods other students have used to “get into literature” which they can then apply to their own future reading in the course.

Use of Journals

During most of my class periods, several students read aloud or summarize their journal entries, while I use the blackboard to jot down interesting or important points as they read. Discussion follows. Alternatively, students may share their journal entries in pairs or in small groups before the full class discussion. Having written a journal entry, students become *actively* involved in the search for fuller understanding and interpretation of what they have written about. As one of my students put it recently in her journal: “The journal questions focus in on the . . . important aspects of our reading. When we share our reactions from our journals, I become amazed at the ways we analyze literature and how we perceive what we read differently. We are guided to think analytically and to support our generalizations with examples . . . For the first time . . . I am interacting with the literature and learning to discover its meanings myself by analyzing objectively. It is really easy when the right questions are asked and my confidence has already quadrupled!”

The class journals also aid students in breaking apart the “observation-interpretation-reaction” sequence so they can practice developing skill in each. Even though, as readers of literature, we are simultaneously involved in trying to comprehend, interpret, and react to what we read, for pedagogical purposes it is useful for students to practice each skill separately as well as in combination. Since my students know their journal will not be graded as polished writing, they can let themselves go and freely follow their thoughts as they develop. Thus, they are truly “writing to learn”; or, as one student put it, “I feel the journal is a very good idea. I often find myself changing my mind about how I would interpret something while I’m actually writing the journal.”

Which of these three skills needs the most emphasis, and what sorts of journal topics best promote student learning of these skills? Without good comprehension of the literature they read, students will find interpreting

it frustrating and futile. Thus, both the skills of understanding and interpreting need much practice. Since reacting to literature is something we all do naturally, it needs less practice. However, student reactions to literature become considerably more sophisticated after they have comprehended and interpreted what they read. Thus, I place reaction at the end of a three-part sequence of understanding—interpreting—reacting.

When a student’s analysis of a poem or story is inadequate, it is often because the student lacks a basic understanding of that work. So I often give journal topics that help students understand what they read simply by making observations about it. Other topics help students begin to discern the more significant details in what they read. Every literary work contains numerous details, but some are more important in comprehending and interpreting that work than others. Journal topics can help students become discriminating observers, ones who look for related or patterned details in what they read. The next step is to frame journal topics that ask students to use those significant details to develop an interpretation or hypothesis about the literary work being read. In order to support this interpretation, the student must present examples in his or her journal entry; analyze those examples to show how they back up the hypothesis; and be alert to the context, both immediate and that of the whole work. Finally, students, building on their developed understanding and interpretation of the work, can react to it by responding to journal topics which ask them to connect the work in some way with their own life experiences and concerns.

Journal Topics

Below is a representative group of journal topics that I have used to help students “write to learn literature” in the manner I have just described. The list moves from topics of simple observation to those involving significant observations, interpretations, and reactions.

Observations

1. List some observations drawn from the *first two pages* of Howells’ story “Editha”—observations that all relate in some way to the *nature* and *personality* of the title character, Editha.

2. Make a list of *things* about Dickinson’s poem “They Shut Me Up In Prose” that makes it difficult to comprehend. Do this by *asking questions* of the poem. Those questions can be about words, about figures of speech, about grammar, about punctuation, or about sentence structure in the poem—anything that confuses or puzzles you. You can also question “poetic” elements like rhyme, meter, and stanza pattern.

Significant Observations

3. List some observations about Section III of Crane’s story “The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky.” Try to choose observations that seem to you to be of some importance to the story (not to its plot).

4. List some observations about things in *Huck Finn*, Chapter 18, that you believe give insight into what the Grangerford family is like and how the reader ultimately feels about it. Try to list ten observations, choosing those you think are of the most importance.

Interpretations based on Observations

5. After you finish reading Freeman’s story “A New England Nun,” observe closely the last paragraph. What indications can you find in that paragraph that the perceptive reader will *approve of*, *disapprove of*, or *feel ambivalent about* the way of life that Louisa has chosen

to live at the end of the story? In your journal entry, present specific pieces of evidence (observations) from the paragraph that you feel are important to consider when responding to this question, and interpret that evidence to explain and support your hypothesis (your answer to the question).

6. Write a close analysis of the dialogue between Daisy Miller and Winterbourne on pp. 360-361 of our anthology, trying to uncover and reveal these two characters as they really *are*, rather than as they perceive each other or as other persons in the novel perceive them. Begin your entry by listing five or more significant observations from the passage—details that you feel are especially important for interpreting Daisy and Winterbourne perceptively. Try to pick details in which some of the individual words are full of significant meaning(s). Then analyze the passage, paying special attention to the key observations you have listed.

Reactions

7. After you finish reading Philip Roth's "Defender of the Faith" [a story involving anti-Semitism], write a personal reflection: Have *you* ever been a victim of prejudice? If so, what kind? Tell one instance of it and how it made you feel. If not, do you think you have ever shown or felt prejudiced against some person or group? Tell one instance of it and how you now feel about it when you look back on it.

8. After thinking about all the stories and poems about men and women we have been reading, from *Huck Finn* on, imagine that you suddenly woke up tomorrow as a member of the opposite sex. How would it affect what you did and what happened to you throughout the day? How would you feel about yourself as a member of the opposite sex? How would you feel about the change? (If you can connect any of the happenings and feelings you would undergo with things in any of the stories and poems we have read, do so.)

To help students see *how* responding to journal topics such as these helps them develop better skill in understanding and interpreting, it is useful for students to do process analysis of the techniques they use that work. They can begin doing so by responding in their journals to topics like this: "How or in what ways did you go about deciding whether Col. Sherburn in *Huck Finn* is presented as a positive or a negative character or partially as both?" Class discussion of student responses to such process analysis questions can be illuminating. For instance, when a recent class of mine pooled the best suggestions from their journals on this topic concerning *Huck Finn*, they came up with these five, listed here in order of increasing sophistication: 1) "decide which are the important details in the scenes involving Sherburn"; 2) "understand relevant plot matters, such as whether Boggs posed a real threat to Sherburn's life or not, before analyzing Sherburn"; 3) "contrast Sherburn's actions and qualities with those of the people he opposes in the small town of Bricksville"; 4) "connect and compare Colonel Sherburn with the only other colonel in the novel, Col. Grangerford"; and 5) "keep in mind that we hear about Sherburn from the narrator, Huck, because Twain doesn't always agree with Huck's viewpoint on a character."

Journal Illustrations

Let me give a sample of how my suggested understand-interpret-reaction process to help students learn about literature works in practice. Midway during the past semester, I asked my class to list in a journal entry the details they considered significant in the two-paragraph

description of Aunt Sally Phelps' farm that begins Chapter 32 of *Huckleberry Finn*. In class, we found that most of the students had selected the same observations as key details. Here are most of them: "it was Sunday-like"; "it seem[ed] so lonesome and like everybody's dead"; "you feel mournful because you feel like it's spirits whispering—spirits that's been dead"; "sickly grass-patches in the big yard, but mostly it was bare"; "big double log house for the white folks"; "three little nigger log cabins"; "hound asleep"; "about three shade trees away off in a corner"; "outside of the fence a garden"; "a spinning wheel wailing . . . the loneliest sound in the whole world."

The students then wrote journal entries in class, whose topic guided them to move from observation toward interpretation by looking for connections or relationships between some of these details. Then we compared results in class and interpreted the connections we had drawn. Some students had connected "Sunday-like," "like everybody's dead," "spirits that's been dead," and "hound asleep." These images of stillness, sleep, and death, the class interpreted, suggested that arriving at the Phelps' farm was a kind of death for Huck—a loss of his free life on the Mississippi River with Jim. Other images like "lonesome," "mournful," and "loneliest sound in the whole world" reflected the way this death-like farm environment made Huck feel. Further, the class interpreted, nature did not flourish on this farm as it had on the river. They drew this conclusion from related images like "sickly grass-patches," "mostly...bare," "about three shade trees," and "outside of the fence a garden" [my emphasis]. Finally, the class interpreted, from the connected details "big double log house for the white folks" and "three little nigger log cabins," that on the Phelps' farm, blacks were separate from the whites and economically inferior to them—neither of which had been true between Huck and Jim while they were on the river.

In sum, from these observations and interpretations, the class was able to discern how the description of the Phelps' farm reflected the extremely negative effect that it would have on Huck's and Jim's newfound freedom. We could then have continued with various types of reaction topics: for instance, have individual students experienced similarly negative feelings about a new environment, and why? Or, do students feel, as does Huck, that individual freedom is inevitably stifled in a social environment (like the Phelps' farm), or do some of them believe that people can retain their individuality despite the influence of society?

Conclusion

I have been pleased at the way in which students in my American literature survey courses have benefited from using journal writing to "learn" literature. Student comments applaud this benefit; these journal entries are typical:

I think writing these journal entries is a benefit to this class...I have a lot of trouble interpreting what the authors really mean, and this is an excellent way for me to force myself to sit down and really attempt an effort.

[Because of the journal,] I have an even greater reason to read the stories and get something out of them. By writing about the assigned readings (whether observations or interpretations), my understanding of what the writer is trying to say is increased. The feedback from the class...is also helpful...they help to broaden the way I look at a certain work.

I think the best thing [about] journal entries is not only [their] helping me to understand and interpret literature well, but also making me to think—to deeply think about the tales, the authors, the societies which the authors had, and also to develop and create my own thinking.

I feel confident that these students have been able to develop useful skills for understanding, interpreting, and reacting to literature—skills that have greatly increased their willingness to explore literature for themselves, to read it more closely and with more discernment, and to develop a merited confidence in their own interpretative insights.

Suggested Readings

- Bartholomae, David, and Anthony Petrosky. *Facts, Artifacts, and Counter-facts: Theory and Method for a Reading and Writing Course*. Upper Montclair, NJ: Boynton/Cook Publishers, 1986.
- Cooper, Jan, Rick Evans, and Elizabeth Robertson. *Teaching College Students to Read Analytically*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1985. 58 pp. [See especially Chapter 4, "Reading Literature Analytically."]
- Dowling, H.F., Jr. "Towson State University's Approach to Improving Writing across the Curriculum". *College Composition and Communication*, 36 (May 1985), 240-242.
- Fulwiler, Toby, and Art Young, eds. *Language Connections: Writing and Reading across the Curriculum*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1982. 190 pp. [See especially Fulwiler's chapter on "Journal Writing across the Curriculum."]
- McCormick, Kathleen. "Theory in the Reader: Bleich, Holland, and Beyond." *College English*, 47 (Dec. 1985), 836-850. [A "reader-centered" approach to teaching literature which pays much more attention to the integrity of the text than more "reader-response" approaches.]
- Newkirk, Thomas, ed. *Only Connect: Uniting Reading and Writing*. Upper Montclair, NJ: Boynton/Cook Publishers, 1986. [See especially Gary Lindberg's chapter, "Coming to Words."]
- Petrosky, Anthony R. "From Story to Essay: Reading to Writing." *College Composition and Communication*, 33 (Feb. 1982), 19-36.
- Ponsot, Marie, and Rosemary Deen. *Beat Not the Poor Desk—Writing: What to Teach, How to Teach It and Why*. Montclair, NJ: Boynton/Cook, Inc., 1982. [See especially Chapter 5, "Working with Writing in Class," and Chapter 13 "Writing about Literature."]

APPENDIX

WRITING TO LEARN: STUDENT JOURNALS

Why and How to Keep a Class Journal

1. Writing regularly in a journal and receiving teacher response to that writing help establish student-teacher dialogue, give students a chance to explore their own thoughts and express their own feelings, and develop students' facility and fluidity of writing.

2. In this literature class, another very significant value of your journal writing will be to help develop the ability, on your own, to understand, interpret, and appreciate literature in depth.

3. Write in ink on *both* sides of 8½" x 11" lined, loose-leaf paper. (You may write in a spiral notebook and tear the pages out when collected.) Write one journal entry of a paragraph or so for each class period. If your entries seem too short, make them more specific: include more details and/or analyze details and examples to develop and support what you say.

4. In advance of each class, the teacher will suggest a topic for your next journal entry—usually on a ditto sheet. If you miss one or more classes and do not know what the next journal topic is, then pick one *specific* passage from the reading assigned for that day, and write down either some observations about that passage or an interpretation of that passage.

5. Every two or three weeks, without advance notice, the teacher will collect, write comments on, and give credit for the journals. *Bring all journal entries due since the last journal collection to every class until they are collected.* NO credit will be given for journal entries not handed in at the time journals are collected.

Journal Evaluation

1. The journal counts 20% of the final course grade. Since journal entries are intended to enhance your learning rather than to be polished writing, journals will be graded primarily on content.

2. The teacher will give one credit for each journal entry written. At semester's end, students who have missed no more than three normal entries throughout the semester will receive a "B" for the journal. Students missing four or more journal entries will receive a "C" or lower.

3. To encourage students to use the journal to improve their ability to understand and interpret literature, the instructor will give a "plus" to each journal entry whose *quality* of observations or analysis is noteworthy. Students who earn five "plusses" by semester's end will have their grade for the journal raised by one letter grade.

H. Fil Dowling, Jr., an Associate Professor of English, is Coordinator of the Advanced Writing Course Program at Towson State University.

PLATO, PROSE, AND POETRY READING PHILOSOPHIC MASTERS— ON LANGUAGE—AND TEACHING LITERACY TODAY

By Joseph L. Papay



[As] the painter's products stand before us as though they were alive, but if you question them, they maintain a most majestic silence, [so] it is [also] with written words: they seem to talk to you as though they were intelligent, but if you ask them anything about what they say, from a desire to be instructed, they go on telling you just the same thing forever [and are] unable to defend or help [them]sel[ves] (*Phaedrus* 275d-3) or "present the truth adequately." (276c)

Is this a contemporary description of the attitude of students today toward the written word in our classrooms and courses? Well, the description may fit, but the words are really those of Plato in his dialogue *The Phaedrus*, written over two thousand years ago. Quoting such a passage here constitutes an act full of ironies—and not just the irony that our very oral and often fairly voluble students wouldn't have *written* such a passage. There is also the irony that Plato put these written words in the mouth of a Socrates who seems never to have written any words at all. There is the further irony that Plato, who wrote so much, is here castigating writing *in writing*.

In this essay, I should like to have past and future confront each other: the past in the form of what great philosophy has had to say about writing (and literacy generally) and the future in the form of what this history can say for writing and literacy in the philosophy class—and in other college classes—today.

Part I: The Past

Let us first look at what Plato says about writing, not in a dialogue, but more clearly under his own name in his letters. In *Epistle VII* (341b to 344b), there is a long exposition of why the truth in philosophy cannot really be written down, during the course of which Plato writes this about his own philosophy: "I certainly have composed no work in regard to it, nor shall I ever do so in

future, for there is no way of putting it into words like other studies. Acquaintance with it must come rather after a long period of attendance on instruction in the subject itself and of close companionship, when, suddenly, like a blaze kindled by a leaping spark, it is generated in the soul and at once self-sustaining."

Returning to the Platonic dialogues proper, the *locus classicus* on the worth and disadvantages of the written word is the passage in the *Phaedrus* from which I was quoting at the beginning, which is preceded by the following words: "...writing...will implant forgetfulness in the souls [of men]; they will cease to exercise memory because they rely on what is written, calling things to remembrance no longer from within themselves, but by means of external marks. [Writing] is a recipe not for memory, but for reminder," (275a) The serious thinker/teacher will "write when he does write [only] by way of pastime, collecting a store of refreshment,...for his own memory, against the day when age oblivious comes,...and when other men resort to other pastimes, regaling themselves with drinking parties and suchlike, he will doubtless prefer to indulge in the recreation [i.e., writing] I refer to." (276d)

What we have just heard let us analyze and elaborate with every caution. The first point that we should be wary about is that Plato is here *writing* about the *pitfalls of writing*. And of course we should by no means assume that Plato himself was unaware of this anomaly. For instance, earlier in the *Phaedrus* itself (237a-241e), a point is made about how someone should prefer another person who does not love him in return over a person who does so love him. The respondent in the dialogue is much swayed by the eloquence with which this is stated, starting, as it does, in cool prose, but mounting, toward the end, into almost uncontrolled verse and poetry. But the dialogue cannot leave the issue thus, no matter how high-blown and carried away the discourse may seem to have become. Love, we are told, is a god and cannot without serious consequences be disparaged in this way. So, then, the other side of the matter is extolled—the divinity and sublimity of love.

In other words, Plato's philosophic approach to truth might be dubbed a "dialectical" one in a sense prefiguring, if not identified with, that of Hegel. That is, truth is not simple or single-minded. Truth is two-sided and, indeed, multifaceted. So, to the question, should thinkers—serious thinkers—write, the answer is, no—and yes. No, thinkers should not write but think, and there is something antithetical (Plato suggests) between thinking and writing, because writing distracts the mind from the search for truth, which is the function of the process of thinking. Writing diverts the mind from seeing truth to caring how to attempt to freeze its fluid living glimpses into permanent dead signals to remind oneself in the future, or to convey to a faceless audience of one or many other people, what one has once seen and the others have not yet seen. Since written words are "a recipe *not* for memory, but for reminder," writing must fail as a vehicle by which others attain a vision which they have not yet themselves experienced, for how can words remind one of a vision one has never had?

Now, with the very question of how words could possibly remind someone of a vision he has never had, the dialectic turns the matter over on its other side: words, even written words, *do* succeed, *do* at least help, in giving others a vision. The evidence for this—the evidence that Plato did believe in the efficacy of written language—is the simple undeniable fact that Plato himself wrote so much—and wrote on the very topic of

writing and its (apparent) inefficacy. Sure, Plato has, as we have already seen, said in his own writings that writing is merely a pastime. But be not deceived by these words! If writing is but a mere pastime, it must, in Plato's estimation, have been a most important pastime, since it was one in which he engaged so abundantly. Recall, too, that it was the same Plato who, after castigating and censoring the poets so much in his *Republic*, nonetheless gave us, in that *same Republic*, as well as other dialogues, the *poetic* images and myths of the cave, of Er, of the charioteer and two steeds of the soul, and many more: such a philosopher who was so truly poetical would certainly countenance poets if only they be truly philosophic.

Part II: The Promise

It is high time that we turn these perspectives upon the problem of literacy in the college classroom today. As a philosopher, of sorts, I am concerned with language and its structure, use, efficacy, and shortcomings. But as a college teacher, I am also concerned with the particular use made of language by college students in their classes, especially their philosophy classes. I think such classes not only need to presuppose antecedent linguistic ability in students, but they can also exert an influence on furthering and developing this language ability.

The way a philosophy class fosters language skills is twofold: theoretically and practically. On the theoretical level, both general and specialized philosophy courses inevitably focus on the very nature of language and its distinction from, yet intimate relationship with, both thought and reality. The first part of this paper has shown how even such a primordial philosopher as Plato had to grapple with the fundamental nature of language or discourse and its relation to thought and truth.

Note that the Platonic references we reviewed can be used, in the classroom, to elaborate the differences between oral and written speech as well as the differences in active and passive versions of each (speaking/writing, on the one hand; listening/reading, on the other). Though students might see themselves, as students, chiefly in passive roles with respect to language (listening to teachers' lectures/reading textbooks and other course bibliography), all courses can require students also to participate in *active* functions of language: as discussants (questioners as well as answerers and proposers), as writers of tests, and especially as authors of course papers and other assignments.

At this stage, theory has already passed over into practice. That is, the classroom—my philosophy classroom—not only makes language an object of speculative reflection, but also requires that students engage in the various functions of language to make their way through the course and absorb its content; a) obviously students must *listen*, and listen intently to difficult material; b) furthermore, they are forced to *read* works that are often exceedingly abstruse and then c) to *write* on what they have heard and read; and d) they are also invited and encouraged to *speak*.)

That I have had some success in affecting—for the better, I assume—the *writing* ability of my students is attested by the fact that when my wife and I taught in the same institution, some students we had in common would "complain" in her English class that there must be a conspiracy between the two of us because I insisted that they correct and rewrite their papers for me as she had them do for papers in her class.

However, I must confess that it is in the last category, student *speaking*, that I have personally had the least success of all so far, not because of positive measures taken

to inhibit speaking out, but rather because philosophic subject matter—or my manner of delivering it—seems largely quite intimidating to the intellectually humble and diffident students who appear to abound in our classes these days. On the other hand, I have occasionally had success even in this respect: just the other day, I was making the philosophic point of the Sophist Gorgias of Leontini that the ideas I had which I as a teacher was putting into words during my lecture were not necessarily the same ideas the students were getting out of—or putting into—those same words of mine as they were hearing them. I cited as conclusive evidence of this the fact that on tests, answers often come back which bear only the most oblique relation to what I thought I had said and meant. At this point, one of my students retorted that, by the same token, I could not be sure that I was getting from—or putting into—words students wrote in their test-answers the same ideas that the *students* originally had in writing those answers. The relevance of this student's response certainly proved that he at least was one student who had gotten my message.

To summarize the message of this paper for contemporary education, philosophy is one subject that can demand and enhance all four linguistic skills which students educated in college today should have acquired at least when they complete their degrees, if they don't have them when they enter: listening, speaking, reading, writing. A philosophy class affords not only an apt opportunity for students to practice these skills (which they would also do in many other classes), but also a distinctive instrument for enlightening that practice with insights gained from reflection upon the very nature and function of language in these four modes and the relation thereof to meaning, thought, knowledge, and truth.

PHILOSOPHIC TEXTS ON LANGUAGE

Parmenides of Elea, 28B2, “. . . non-being. . . cannot ever exist. . . for you can never think or speak of nothing.” 28B8, “. . . what does not exist is inexpressible and inthinkable. . . . Thinking and what is thought are the same, for no thought exists apart from nameable being.”

The Sophist Gorgias of Leontini, 82B3: “Nothing exists, neither being nor non-being; and even if something did exist, it could not be known [because true knowledge requires an identity between reality and (the) thought (of it), but such identity would make all ‘misstought’—error, ignorance, illusion, dreaming—impossible]; and even if something existed and could be known, it could not be communicated/expressed in language [because true communication requires identity between language/words and thoughts (and things), but such identity is contradicted by the fact that lying—a discrepancy between thought and speech—is possible and by the existence of multiple lingual descriptions (synonyms, whether in the same language or in different languages) for one and the same idea (and/or reality), and hence by the evidence conventionality of language *vis a vis* the universality of truth and reality].”

Plato's Cratylus, 430a: “But let us see, Cratylus, whether we cannot find a meeting point, for you would admit that the name is not the same with the thing named?” “I would.”

Plato's Cratylus, 432d: “But then how ridiculous would be the effect of names on things, if they were exactly the same with them! For they would be doubles of them, and no one would be able to determine which were the names and which were the realities [named by them].”

Plato's Cratylus, 493a-b: “Let us suppose that to any extent you please you can learn things through the medium of names, and suppose also that you can learn them from the things themselves. Which is likely to be the nobler and clearer way — to learn from the image whether the image and the reality of which the image is the expression have been rightly conceived, or to learn from the reality whether the reality and the image of it have been duly executed?” “I would say that we must learn from the reality.” “How real existence is to be studied or discovered is, I suspect, beyond you and me. But we

may admit so much, that the knowledge of things is not to be derived from names. No, they must be studied and investigated in themselves.”

Plato's Cratylus, 440b-c: “But is that which knows and that which is known exist ever, and the beautiful and the good and every other thing exist, then I do not think that they can resemble a process or flux, as we were just now supposing. Whether there is this eternal nature in things, or whether the truth is what Heraclitus and his followers and many others say, is a question hard to determine, and no man of sense will like to put himself or the education of his mind in the power of names. Neither will he so far trust names or the givers of names as to be confident in any knowledge which condemns himself and other beings to an unhealthy state of unreality. . . .”

Plato's Phaedrus, 275a: “And so it is that you, by reason of your tender regard for the writing that is your offspring, have declared the very opposite of its true effect. If men learn this, it will implant forgetfulness in their souls; they will cease to exercise memory because they rely on what is written, calling things to remembrance no longer from within themselves, but by means of external marks. What you have discovered is a recipe not for memory, but for reminder.”

Plato's Phaedrus, 275c-d: “Then anyone who leaves behind him a written manual, and likewise anyone who takes it over from him, on the supposition that such writing will provide something reliable and permanent, must be exceedingly simple-minded; he must really be ignorant of Ammon's utterance, if he imagines that written words can do anything more than remind one who knows that which the writing is concerned with.”

Plato's Phaedrus, 275d-e: “The painter's products stand before us as though they were alive, but if you question them, they maintain a most majestic silence. It is the same with written words: they seem to talk to you as though they were intelligent, but if you ask them anything about what they say, from a desire to be instructed, they go on telling you just the same thing forever [and are] unable to defend or help [them]sel[ves]” or (276c) “present the truth adequately.”

Plato's Phaedrus, 276a: There is “another sort of discourse that is brother to the written speech, but of unquestioned legitimacy. . . the sort that goes together with knowledge, and is written in the soul of the learner, that can defend itself [and is] no dead discourse, but the living speech, the original of which the written discourse may fairly be called a kind of image.”

Plato's Phaedrus, 276d: The serious thinker/teacher will “write when he does write [only] by way of pastime, collecting a store of refreshment, . . . for his own memory, against the day when age oblivious comes, . . . and when other men resort to other pastimes, regaling themselves with drinking parties and suchlike, he will doubtless prefer to indulge in the recreation I refer to.”

Plato's Laws, 895d: “You will grant, I presume, that there are three points to be noted about anything?. . . I mean, for one, the reality of the thing, what it *is*; for another, the *definition* of this reality for another, its *name*. And thus you see there are two questions we can ask about everything which is. . . Sometimes a man propounds the definition by itself and asks for the corresponding name. . . .”

Plato's Epistle II, 314b: “it is a very great safeguard to learn by heart instead of writing. It is impossible for what is written not to be disclosed. That is the reason why I have never written anything about these things, and why there is not and will not be any written work of Plato's own. What are now called his are the work of Socrates embellished and modernized. Farewell and believe. Read this letter now at once many times and burn it.”

Plato's Epistle VII, 341b-d: “One statement at any rate I can make in regard to all who have written or who may write with a claim to knowledge of the subjects to which I devote myself—no matter how they pretend to have acquired it, whether from my instruction or from others or by their own discovery. Such writers can in my opinion have no real acquaintance with the subject. I certainly have composed no work in regard to it, nor shall I ever do so in the future, for there is no way of putting it into words like other studies. Acquaintance with it must come rather after a long period of attendance on instruction in the subject itself and of close companionship, when, suddenly, like a blaze kindled by a leaping spark, it is generated in the soul and at once self-sustaining.”

WAC NEWSLETTER
 Robert C. Wess, Editor
 Southern College of Technology
 Marietta, Georgia 30060



NON-PROFIT ORG.

U.S. POSTAGE

PAID

MARIETTA, GA
 PERMIT NO. 318

Plato's Epistle VII, 342a-d: "For everything that exists there are three classes of objects through which knowledge about it must come; the knowledge itself is a fourth, and we must put as a fifth entity the actual object of knowledge which is the true reality. We have the first, a name; second, a description; third, an image; and fourth, a knowledge of the object. Take a particular case if you want to understand the meaning of what I have just said; then apply the theory to every object in the same way. There is something for instance called a circle, the name of which is the very word I just uttered. In the second place there is a description of it which is composed of nouns and verbal expressions. For example the description of that which is named round and circumference and circle would run as follows; the thing which has everywhere equal distances between its extremities and its center. In the third place there is the class of

object which is drawn and erased and turned on the lathe and destroyed—processes which do not affect the real circle to which these other circles are all related, because it is different from them. In the fourth place there are knowledge and understanding and correct opinion concerning them, all of which we must set down as one thing more that is found not in sounds nor in shapes of bodies, but in minds, whereby it evidently differs in its nature from the real circle and from the aforementioned three. Of all these four, understanding approaches nearest in affinity and likeness to the fifth entity, while the others are more remote from it."

Joseph L. Papay is Professor of Philosophy at Saint Peter's College in Jersey City, New Jersey, where he has taught since 1952.

HEARING IS BELIEVING: OUT OF THE MOUTHS OF THE PROS



By Dorothy S. Ingram

Poor writing skills may be hazardous to your career! Everyone reading this newsletter knows that to be true; but how many of our students take such a warning to heart? Operating on the theory that these same words might have more weight if they came from the lips of One Who Knows or of One Who Has Been There, the Southern Tech WAC Committee launched an on-campus speaker series in the winter of 1984.

Held on campus during a weekday lunch hour, each of our six programs has drawn from one hundred to a hundred and fifty people. Each speaker has been a successful member of the industrial community who has spoken with authority on the absolute necessity of effective communication skills to the job search itself and to the successful career of the engineering technology graduate. Among our guests, whose talks have been published as edited transcripts in the *Newsletter*, have been such distinguished business leaders as Joseph Tulkoff, Director of Manufacturing Technology at Lockheed; B. George Saloom, Vice-President and Manager of Information Systems for the First Atlanta Corporation; and Southern Tech Alumni Earl Smith, owner of Smith Heating and Air Conditioning; Maurice Chapman, Director of Engineering and Telecommunications Services for Kennestone Regional Health Care System; Jack Phillips, Manager for Administration, Vulcan Materials Company Southern Division; and Russell Bell, Area Technical Manager for Advanced Micro Devices. Mr. Bell's

presentation will appear in our next *WAC* newsletter.

The format of each program has included a formal welcome by a Vice-President or an Academic Dean, an introduction by a member of the faculty, and a half-hour presentation by the guest speaker, with a question-and-answer session to close the hour. Students have attended for a variety of reasons: curiosity, career-related interests, strong encouragement by faculty, or extra course credit. A number of faculty have also attended each presentation, often out of interest in the speaker and his career, and often out of support for the *WAC* program. Personal styles of the speakers have varied, as has the use of audio visuals, anecdotes, and attention-grabbers; but the message has been the same: if you can't write, you may not get the job you want; and if you do get the job, you may not survive in the business world without good communication skills. Each of our speakers has jumped at the chance to deliver this message to students.

Publicity for the speaker is thorough and campus-wide, including articles in the student newspaper, fliers, announcements in faculty meetings, a letter sent out to all faculty, and any other vehicle (including personal invitations) that presents itself. The intention is that for whatever reason students and faculty attend, they will get the message.

And *do* they get the message? In a straw poll of English 101 students taken after Russell Bell's recent presentation, the following question was asked: "After hearing the lecture, do you really *believe* in the importance of writing and speaking skills for your career?" A few were incredulous. A few responded that they "already believed" or "had already decided. . .that communication and writing skills would be of vital importance. . .in the future." However, the majority of those polled indicated that their awareness of the importance of communication skills had been heightened. As one student put it, "[the lecture] made me realize that there is in one way or another a lot of writing involved in my field." Another went so far as to say, "Yes, I wish to pursue the same career as Mr. Bell; I am glad that I decided to come to Southern Tech instead of a trade school where English isn't emphasized." Still another honest soul commented, "Yes, I do believe that writing and speaking skills are very important for my future career. But this doesn't make me enjoy or want to go to English class."

In short, students might not *like* the message; but they do get it.

Dorothy S. Ingram is the Reference Librarian and an Associate Professor at Southern College of Technology. She serves as the Chair for On-Campus Activities for the WAC Committee.