FRESHMAN COMPOSITION: STUDENT CENTEREDNESS AND THE DRAMA OF THE ENGLISH CLASS

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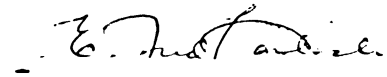

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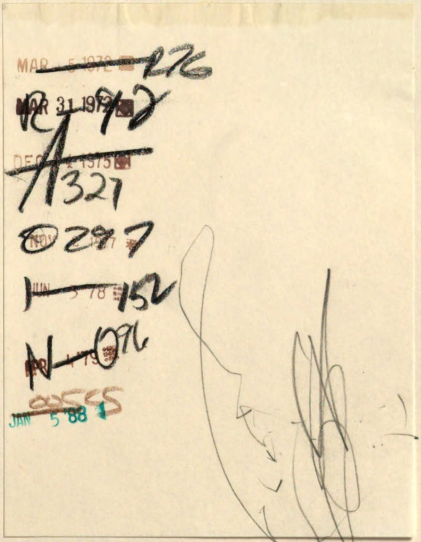

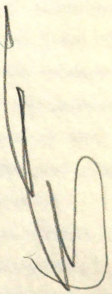

ABSTRACT

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AND THE DRAMA OF THE ENGLISH CLASS

By

Patrick Lawrence Courts

In an attempt to solve some of the many problems presently plaguing freshman composition courses in colleges and universities throughout the United States, this study brings together modern theories of language, learning, and psychology, and investigates the implications these theories have for freshman composition. A look at the history of the course, particularly in the context of the general rise of higher education in this country, reveals the many and varied influences which have caused problems, and sometimes great confusion, in freshman composition courses.

Higher education in America has been shaped and misshaped by social and political pressures, societal fads, economics, and educators. Many of the problems in higher education derive from the fact that colleges and universities too often reacted to changes in society instead of anticipating change and attempting to meet the needs of the future. In the midst of these larger problems, freshman

English entered the academic arena in the 1890's, and at that time was little more than a study of rhetoric. But as universities discovered that students were unable to write, they charged the high schools with failure, and the course soon became an English course designed to help students who had already mastered the fundamentals of writing and to eliminate students who had not. During the first half of the twentieth century freshman English, like higher education in general, reacted to many different influences: sometimes the course concentrated on the writing of business letters; sometimes it concentrated on the forms of discourse; other times it concentrated on linguistics; and many times it concentrated on introducing the student to literature. Unfortunately, the course almost never concentrated on the writing process--the actual production of written discourse, someone-talking-to-someone-about-something. Too often, instead of learning to write, the students were introduced to the study of grammar, rhetoric, or literary criticism.

In order to effectively change this situation and make the writing process the focus of the compositon course, we need a clearer understanding of how man learns and the place of language in the learning process. The theory is as follows: An individual perceives (hears, sees, feels, thinks, smells, tastes) something. He uses language first to explain this new perception to himself,

and second, to explain his perception to another individual who has perceived something similar. Because their perceptions have been slightly different, they interact in an attempt to come to some common understanding. Using language as best they can, they discuss their perceptions, come as close to agreement as possible, and categorize the perception in terms of their past experiences. The process may end here for the moment, or the process of categorizing may lead to new conclusions and new perceptions. At a more sophisticated level, the dialogue and interaction may be entirely interior--that is, an individual may 'talk to himself' by comparing one perception with another to see how they match up logically.

Language, then, is social in the sense that we use it constantly to communicate with our fellow human beings, but this social use is preceded by a private use of language which allows us to shape and order our perceptions of reality. It is an integral part of the learning process (of thinking) because it is one of the most common and important tools we have for examining and sharing our perceptions of ourselves and of our experiences (our thoughts). Consequently, the main activity in the freshman composition course is <u>languaging</u>, using the written and spoken language in as many different ways and for as many different purposes as possible.

With all this in mind, the teacher might view the English classroom as a theatre in which a human drama is enacted, the drama of learning. In a student-centered setting, this drama depends on the motivation, talents, desires, needs, and backgrounds of the students, and it encompasses a wide range of activities: oral improvisation, non-verbal improvisation, writing, talking, reading, editing, making collages, and always, thinking.

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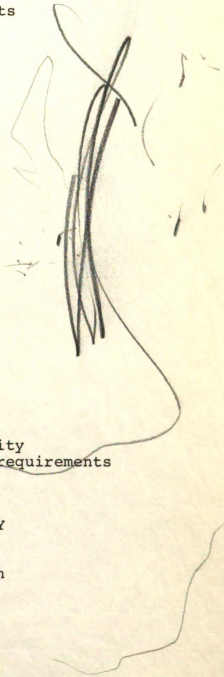

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Well what about English? What is English really? Do your really learn any thing in English class? How do you know what you are saying about English is so true?

I don't believe in everything people tell me. Like they say English is good if you don't speak good English your dumb. Not in my book because you can understand a plane old everyday speaker as well as you can understand a high class person like a man in law (a judge). When you get a letter from a friend you dont see all kinds of things on it like little marks saying so and so said this and that you just know what there telling you.

So I don't see why some people get all worked up over English!

(Written by a ninth grader)

One of the English courses some people get all worked up over is freshman composition. Ever since colleges began offering freshman English courses in the 1880's, teachers and students alike have been complaining about the courses. And though almost everyone considers freshman composition an important course (indeed, many universities require all students to take it), almost everyone has a different idea about what the teacher and students should do in such a course. In 1955, Robert Gorrell described this confusion as follows:

> The demands on Freshman English have multiplied until the course is often expected to teach students not only to write but to use the library, to do elementary

> research, to take examinations, to take notes, to read, to spell, to appreciate literature, to speak, to listen, to develop a vocabulary, to think logically, to understand and appreciate a cultural heritage, and to become properly adjusted to an environment. And there is always in the background someone to suggest that a full year seems a long time to spend on all this: Could it not be managed in a semester so that we could get the major in science started earlier?[1]

By 1963, according to Albert Kitzhaber, the freshman composition course was so confused and troubled that the problems had become a crisis:

> Freshman English in the nation's colleges and universities is now so confused, so clearly in need of radical and sweeping reforms, that college English departments can continue to ignore the situation only at their increasing peril.[2]

Today, freshman composition courses continue to be confused and ineffective, often doing everything but teaching students to write. The subject matter and method of teaching these courses varies from school to school, and the teachers are often graduate assistants who have no training (or choice) in the teaching of composition.

Some teachers have their students concentrate on grammar and usage, assuming that a knowledge of the mechanical side of writing will allow the students to present their ideas and emotions clearly. Students in these courses do exercises in selecting correct verb forms, supplying correct punctuation in passages, marking the spot where a paragraph is needed, removing double negatives, and naming parts of speech. The teachers of these courses

operate under misconceptions about the way language operates, the way people learn language, and the purposes of language. They worship at the temple of that ill-defined and possibly indefinable god, correct English.

Because some teachers have felt that this last approach to the course is intellectually indefensible (that is, they feel it lacks content), they suggest that the course should focus on literature and the writing of literary criticism. But aside from the fact that literary criticism is only one kind of highly specialized writing, these courses fail to teach the students to write because the study of literature supercedes the writing process. As a result, the courses with this literary focus often become introductions to literature courses or courses which concentrated on transmitting the 'cultural heritage' to the student.

In another attempt to supply the freshman composition course with content ("They have to have something to write about"), the linguists suggested that the English language itself form the basic content of the course. The students could study the development of modern English; they could study phonetics, they could study traditional, structural, or transformational grammar. Such studies would afford the students solid, worthwhile information which they could organize into interesting essays about the development of modern English, phonetics, and traditional,

structural, or transformational grammar. Even more important, the teachers who support this approach also claim that this analytical knowledge of the language helps students in their writing. But like the literature course, this linguistic approach also fails because it emphasizes the study of language, not the creative production of language. Again, the subject matter takes precedence over the writing process.

One of the oldest, and still one of the most common, focal points for freshman composition is the study of rhetoric. In these courses students study rhetoric, its terms and their definitions. They do exercises in logic, organization, and persuasion. They practice writing well-formed introductions, middles, and conclusions. They write a few essays (often argumentative), and eventually they produce a research paper of some sort. The research paper is usually preceded by a well-made outline, properly collected three-by-five note cards filled with correct bibliographical notations, and a study of the form of the research paper. Unfortunately, like all the other approaches which would eventually grow out of this original approach to freshman composition, the emphasis on rhetoric (the forms of discourse, rather than the production of discourse) supercedes the writing.

Other variations of these basic approaches do, of course, exist. But in general, neither the teachers nor

the students are satisfied with freshman composition courses because students do not learn to write clearly, effectively, and creatively. In the past, these courses have taught literature, grammar, usage, rhetoric, but they have not taught writing. They have been more concerned with transmitting the cultural heritage and "fixing" the students' language (correct English) than they have with encouraging the student to explore his language and his experience in an attempt to find out the most effective ways to use the written language to communicate to a variety of audiences.

Obviously then, the goals and methods of freshman composition need to be examined and restated so that the course includes a more sophisticated notion of 'correct' English and so that it can move in some clearly defined direction which will help the students learn how to write in a personal style for themselves and in a public style for other audiences. To begin with, good, correct, or proper English is that variety of English which best communicates the idea and mood the speaker or writer wishes to communicate; if it works effectively, it is good. Bad English is that variety of English which fails to communicate effectively. And neither good nor bad English are defined by an arbitrary set of rules: they depend, instead, on a set of variables like the subject matter, the audience, and the writer's purpose.

At a recent linguistics conference, the psycholinguist, Kenneth Goodman, pointed out the irony brought about by confused attitudes toward language. He said that English teachers are not so much racists as they are elitists whose primary concern it is to defend the language from the people who use it. He also pointed out that a person's language is an important part of his whole, personal make-up, and if we reject that language because it is different from our own, we are in effect, rejecting that person because he is different from us. In addition, Goodman said that ignorant language attitudes can not only keep us from teaching our students to use the language effectively and interestingly, they may also cause emotional problems which will interfere with the whole learning process.

In the following pages I intend to place the problem of freshman composition in its historical perspective, first, by discussing the major events in the rise of higher education, and second, by looking specifically at the development of attitudes, methods, and theories in the teaching of college writing. Next I will offer a solution to the problem by first establishing a theory of learning deriving from the works of psychologists, educators, and linguists like Carl Rogers, John Dewey and Earl Kelley, Neil Postman and Charles Weingartner, and James Moffett. This presentation of learning theory lays the foundation for an overview of a freshman English course with the student's own language and experience as the focal point.

CHAPTER I

THE RISE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN AMERICA

After building homes, churches, and establishing a workable form of government, the elders of Massachusetts established the next most important institution, the college. In 1636 the General Court of the Massachusetts Bay Colony voted 400 pounds for the establishment of a college, and by 1642 Harvard College graduated nine students.[1] The purpose of this institution was "to advance Learning and perpetuate it to Posterity; dreading to leave an illiterate Ministery to the Churches, when [the] present Ministers shall lie in the Dust."[2] And not unlike the many colleges and Universities which would follow in the course of time, the founders of Harvard College established minimum requirements for admission:

> When any Schollar is able to understand Tully, or such like classical Latine Author extempore, and make and speake true Latine in Verse and Prose, suo ut aiunt Marte; And decline perfectly the Paradigm's of Nounes and Verbes in the Greek tongue: Let him then and not before be capable of admission into the Colledge.[3]

America had its first college.

As anyone might have expected, Harvard patterned itself after the English universities, revering Latin and Greek as the fundamental disciplines: Latin was the language of the church, of law, of medicine, and of the great medieval universities; and Greek was the "language of the new humanism," the language which brought "Homer and Hesiod, Greek lyrics and idylls, into the experience of the educated man."[4] And again like the English college, Harvard was more like a boarding school for boys from the proper families than a scholarly institution providing an atmosphere devoted to open inquiry and the pursuit of truth.[5]

The purpose of Harvard College was perfectly clear, "to advance Learning." But the meaning of Learning was not at all clear. This confusion caused Charles Chauncy, President of Harvard (1654-1671/2), to say: "I do much desire that the opposers of schools and universityes would speak plainly what they mean by Humane Learning, then we should easily come to some conclusion."[6] Unfortunately for Chauncy (and all educators to follow) no one ever did speak very "plainly" about Humane Learning, and to complicate matters, instead of simplifying the purposes of the colleges, the passage of time confused and multiplied the purposes. By 1762 colleges were expected to inculcate in the students religious faith, scholarship, gentlemanliness, and all around good character; colleges were expected to train teachers and teach things necessary for the managing of

temporal affairs; and colleges were expected to replace savagery and ignorance with grace and knowledge. Colleges, in short, were expected to do just about everything.[7]

An institution with such noble and far-reaching purposes as these would hardly seem liable to much criticism, but the colonial colleges suffered anyway. People charged that the colleges were stagnant islands, composed of useless and unrelated courses of study. And from this critical point of view, colleges did just about nothing, especially of what they were expected to.[8] Yet to no one's surprise, they persisted, and by the end of the 18th century Americans were going to college to get ahead in the world and not simply to register the family name in the colonial book of learning. If the colleges were doing nothing, they were doing it well, as Henry Adams would point out nearly a century later:

> Harvard College was probably less hurtful than any other university then in existence. It taught little, and that little ill, but it left the mind open, free from bias, ignorant of facts, but docile. The graduate had few strong prejudices. He knew little, but his mind remained supple, ready to receive knowledge.[9]

A college degree did not certify learning; it simply certified potential intelligence and often, docility.

But even the best of worlds must pass eventually, and so it was with the quiet calm that besieged the student in the colonial college. The American Revolution burst upon the colonial scene not only with powder, cannon and

rifle--it exploded into the new world with democracy and deism, state control and individual responsibility, a new respect for science, and a need for an educated citizenry to guide the new republic through the turbulent times ahead.[10] If faith and religious dogmatism could stultify a college curriculum, then a new faith could change and reform the colleges. The old faith was God and the Bible; the new faith was man and science.

In 1779 Thomas Jefferson was working at the University of Virginia to establish a professorship of anatomy, medicine, and chemistry, clearly emphasizing the faith in science and utilitarianism which would soon characterize American colleges.[11] By 1792 botany was an established course of study at Columbia; in 1795 John MacLean of Princeton became the first professor of chemistry in an American college; and though it would be more than a hundred years before the sciences became a truly respected part of the curriculum, the initial inroads had been made into the classical curriculum.

In 1795 the University of North Carolina began planning for a professorship in languages, including an emphasis on the study of English because of its immediate usefulness to the students.[12] And by 1827 the Amherst faculty was publicly decrying the classical tradition of education as useless and suggesting that students be encouraged to study French and Spanish for business purposes;

"English literature; agricultural chemistry, engineering, architecture, experimental and practical physics; American political and religious history, with an emphasis on the Puritan age; the American Constitution; and new fields of scientific knowledge." Such innovations were intended to completely omit Latin and Greek from the course of study, but not "moral and intellectual philosophy, rhetoric, and oratory."[13]

The colleges were asserting themselves as institutions for the betterment of society, not for the private advantage or indulgence of favored individuals.[14] People like James Marsh, president of the University of Vermont in 1826, were leading the fight for curricular reform by dropping Latin and Greek as entrance requirements; trying to abolish fixed curricula so that students could study what and when they wished, graduating whenever they could demonstrate mastery over a given body of material; and possibly most important, he proposed learning through open inquiry, suggesting that colleges do away with textbooks and barren classrooms and memory and recitation.[15]

Thomas Jefferson, continuing his work at the University of Virginia, eloquently describes the spirit and direction of reform in higher education:

> I am not fully informed of the practices at Harvard, but there is one from which we shall certainly vary, altho' it has been copied, I believe, by nearly every college and academy in the U.S. That is, the holding the students all to one prescribed course of reading,

> and disallowing vocations to which they are destined. We shall on the contrary allow them uncontrolled choice in the lectures they shall choose to attend, and require elementary qualification only, and sufficient age. Our institution will proceed on the principle of doing all the good it can without consulting its own pride or ambition; of letting every one come and listen to whatever he thinks may improve the condition of his mind. The rock which I most dread is the discipline of the institution, and it is that on which most of our public schools labor. The insubordination of our youth is now the greatest obstacle to their education. We may lessen the difficulty perhaps by avoiding too much government, by requiring no useless observance, none which shall merely multiply occasions for dissatisfaction, disobedience and revolt, by referring to the more discreet of themselves the minor discipline, the graver to civil magistrates, as in Edinburgh.[16]

In the final analysis, however, reformers like Marsh and Jefferson had relatively little influence in terms of widespread reform, and like so many educational reform movements, the reforms proposed at the beginning of the nineteenth century did little more than underline some serious issues in higher education.

Basically, the problems remained much the same; the mystery of human learning continued to confound higher education. The colleges continued to emphasize rote memory, precise recitation, skill development, and elementary material. Though science existed in many colleges, it was carefully hidden beneath a mass of classicism and ancient philosophies of truth and learning. Students were empty vessels waiting to be filled with a perfect mixture of classical learning, social grace, blind faith, admiration for all that was old and contempt for all that was

new.[17] A major development at this time, which supported and clearly exemplifies the reactionary position, is The Yale Report of 1828. This report emphasizes the study of the classics "to form the taste, and to discipline the mind, both in thought and diction, to the relish of what is elevated, chaste, and simple." And it further supports the study of the classics because "the study itself forms the most effectual discipline of the mental faculties. . . . Every faculty of the mind is employed; not only the memory, judgement and reasoning powers, but the taste and fancy are occupied and improved."[18]

But regardless of the Yale Report, a new era was dawning: it was an era born from another war, the Civil War, and an era that would see many changes in higher education. The historian Frederick Rudolph explains the impact and influence of the war as follows:

> The Civil War in many ways clarified the dimensions and the prospects of the American experiment. It swept away the pretensions of the southern plantation aristocracy and all the dreams that had sustained it. And if the Civil War destroyed the southern version of an agrarian way, it likewise hastened the day when the sway of the independent yeoman farmer would come to an end. The Civil War cemented the East and the great Middle West into a formidable alliance of resources--natural, human, industrial, financial. The shape of things to come was etched in the war-built factory towns of New England, in an ever expanding network of railroads, in the new fortunes and the gingerbread houses built on the hills overlooking the towns. The Civil War conquered space. It freed thousands of Americans from a village orientation. It suggested remarkable opportunities in markets created by railroads, in needs created by an expanding population.[19]

Needless to say, the colleges could not dismiss the new era too easily, and once again reform became popular. James B. Angell, President of the University of Michigan, pointed out in 1871 that the time was ripe for changes in education: "The public mind is now in a plastic, impressionable state, and every vigorous college nay, every capable worker, may help to shape its decisions upon education."[20]

Men like John Gilman of Johns Hopkins found their new purpose in pure science, "the world of the intellect." Along with Eliot of Harvard, Gilman asserted that it was the job of higher education to acquire, conserve, and distribute knowledge. They believed that universities must devote themselves to "a search for scientific truth" instead of simply revering outdated traditions and bending minds toward taste. The university was not a place for the finest minds in society to gather in the open pursuit of truth.[21]

But the Land Grant Act of 1862 added another dimension to the reform movement of the late nineteenth century. The whole notion of land grant colleges rejected the elitist attitude of the Yale Report which had suggested that it was the purpose of higher education to help the rich people "adorn society by their learning."[22] The growth of agricultural and technical colleges also created anew, and with more fervor than it had ever before existed,

the battle between those who saw no compromise between higher learning and the study of agriculture and the mechanic arts. As a result, some colleges and universities remained almost entirely classical, some agricultural, and some, following the Harvard elective system which had been instituted by President Eliot, offered a wide variety of courses and emphases. Needless to say, by the end of the nineteenth century, chaos was the only common denominator in the world of education, and one could only repeat, in great frustration, what Charles Chauncy had said in 1655: if someone would only "speak plainly" what he means by "Humane learning, then we should easily come to some conclusions." The plea would be answered to some extent in the twentieth century: that is, people would speak about humane learning, but everyone would speak at once, few would speak plainly, and even fewer would bother to listen.

The second half of the nineteenth century was also a time of conflicting theories and conjecture about man's nature. Social Darwinism, that strange, philosophical mutation that had evolved from the scientific theories of Darwin, gained strength in its belief that men were not created equal and the strongest not only do survive, but should survive. Herbert Spencer's impenetrable belief in Social Darwinism led him to a pragmatic, narrow view of education which said that education should prepare people for life, concentrate on concrete reality rather than vague

abstractions, teach good health habits, and accept play as an important part of a child's educational experience. Thus, because the mind develops according to evolutionary processes operating independently of human acts, "the best the teacher can do is provide the knowledge that will enable people to adapt more readily to the circumstances that surround them. Any changes in these circumstances must await the inexorable operations of evolutionary progress, and men had best not meddle."[23]

Spencer's views toward education are particularly important because they lay the philosophical groundwork for a philosophy of education that directly opposes the optimism of the progressive education movement which was soon to be born. In Spencer's view, because man had no control over social or societal evolution, education's primary function was to help man adapt to existing conditions and to learn to accept change as inevitable and uncontrollable. The progressive education movement, however (discussed at much greater length further on in this chapter), views education as a means of effecting societal reform and progress. Man was to be educated to change his world for the better. But regardless of these differences, Spencer was one of the first men to support philosophically the attitude that education had a duty to be relevant to the life of its students.

Unfortunately, while the quest for a good educational system and clear definitions of purpose became increasingly confused by the endless arguments between educators and philosophers, educational changes moved forward with little conscious direction. American colleges and universities were changing under the influence of German trained American Ph.D.s like James Morgan Hart and F. H. Hedge, who had blasted the low level of American higher education that emphasized discipline and recitation, but never the pursuit of truth and open inquiry. They claimed that higher education in America paid homage to the social graces but not to knowledge and scholarship. American graduates were polite imbeciles whose degree certified attendance at an institution of higher learning, but not learning. These men saw Harvard as little more than an advanced high school where neither the faculty nor the students engaged in truly scholarly pursuits.[24]

For a solution, these German-trained American scholars looked to the German universities, and as a result, American universities began to take on all the trappings of the German system: "The elective system, the graduate school, the Ph.D. degree, the graduate seminar, the lecture system, the concept of academic freedom, the ideal and even the methodology of research--all these and more we owe chiefly to the German university."[25] Scholarship was the order of the day;

teaching responsibility was limited to the necessity for a somewhat orderly lecture.

Possibly one of the most important developments during this period of change and confusion was that much of the intellectual community was rejecting the vulgarized notions of faculty psychology which had shackled American education for so long. (See "The Yale Report," p. 13, above.) As it was popularly stated, this psychology saw man's mind as an organ segmented into distinguishable 'faculties' or muscles which could be developed through exercise and drill, and it had significantly limited educational progress because it so completely supported memory-recitation drills as ways of teaching and learning.[26] By fragmenting the mind, it fragmented man and his education; by emphasizing the mind as muscle, it ignored man's creativity.

Though it would be many years before faculty psychology disappeared as a controlling force in American education, some influential men were attacking it. In 1883, G. Stanley Hall, a student of Wundt, the German experimental psychologist, established an American laboratory modeled on Wundt's, and in 1901 he was advancing the idea that the school, rather than forcing the student into its own prescribed mold, must adapt itself to the natural growth of the child.[27] One of Hall's students, John Dewey, became the foremost educational philosopher

in America and one of the main attackers of faculty psychology. Dewey's first book, Psychology (1886), laid the groundwork for many of the important reforms that began in the 1890's and continued throughout much of the twentieth century.[28] This book was the first of many tracts by Dewey, most of which develop his philosophy of pragmatism and instrumentalism, argue against the idea of knowledge being something fixed, and suggest that experience is the basis of all knowledge.

Another scholar in the battle against faculty psychology was William James, whose Principles of Psychology, published in 1890, discarded the older psychology and replaced it with a behaviorist outlook which "asked the teacher to help educate heroic individuals who would project daring visions of the future and work courageously to realize them."[29] In addition to men like Dewey, Hall, and James, Herbart contributed to the new theories of learning through his theory of apperception, which proposed that the teacher guide the student from familiar areas of study to material less familiar but still related to the child's previous experience and knowledge.[30]

And just as the reformers in psychology were rejecting faculty psychology, so also were the social reformers rejecting Social Darwinism. In 1872 William Graham Sumner, a follower of Spencer's, was supporting compulsory education only as a means of maintaining the

social order, and he was opposing the use of education as a lever for social reform.[31] Like most of Spencer's followers, he believed that education could not advance evolution, but only teach people to deal with the fact of evolution as best they can. But by 1883, men like Frank Lester Ward were arguing strongly against this interpretation of social evolution which so seriously limited the schools, and they were putting forth the theory that once the mind had evolved, the "relatively static phase of genetic evolution" was replaced with a "new dynamic phase." The mind could direct evolution "toward worthy social ends."[32] In short, Ward was suggesting that the schools devote themselves to education for social reform by teaching students how to help their fellow man and improve existing social institutions.

Another sociologist, Albion Small, took up Ward's banner of directive evolution and applied it more specifically to the school and society. He saw the schools as the most important reforming force in America and believed that their purpose was to teach men to be aware of their need for interdependence in a complex industrial world; to teach men to cooperate with one another; and to teach them to recognize the inevitability of change and the need for new social arrangements to accommodate the new generations of men and women. Needless to say, this vision is an important one because it differs so drastically

from the previously held attitudes about education: the founders of Harvard had envisioned a highly select system through which culture and, most important, religion could be safeguarded; Spencer's Social Darwinism changed much of this by suggesting that the schools needed to prepare man for existing societal conditions and give him the ability to adapt to evolutionary change. But Small spoke of actively reforming society and creating new social arrangements. The schools were being recast in a new role--the dynamic role of social reformation and progress.

And the need for reform was everywhere. The muckrakers saw it in industry, the social workers saw it in cities, and occasionally, the government saw it in what was fast becoming a gigantic, unwieldy bureaucracy. By the turn of the century, massive societal problems were multiplying at ever increasing rates as the industrial revolution rolled forward and immigrants in search of new and better lives crowded the cities looking for work. The need for reform was answered by a movement which would have lasting and serious effects on society and the schools--The Progressive Movement:

> Progressivism was Theodore Roosevelt as a police commissioner of New York, setting forth in a black cloak at midnight, in search of crime and delinquent police officers; it was Lincoln Steffens discovering the collapse of democracy in municipal government and describing it as "The Shame of the Cities"; it was Robert LaFollette fighting the lumber interests of "Wisconsin, as elsewhere good Progressives fought other interests of privilege: the railroads, the

> utility gang, the sugar trust, the farm-machinery trust, even the bicycle trust. Progressivism was a gigantic effort to deal with the discovery that the United States was a land of small farms and country stores no longer; an effort to deal with the discovery of the slum, the political machine, the immigrant, the monopoly, and the decline in ethical standards which was registered in poisoned toys, dishonest advertising, tainted meat, and toxic drugs. Progressivism was an expression of conscience--middle class conscience, if you will--in the presence of conditions that derived from the urbanization and industrialization of an essentially simple agrarian republic.[33]

For those who were aware of the industrial revolution, the schools seemed woefully inadequate and totally incapable of meeting the demands of the new machine society; colleges and universities were not only inadequate, in terms of the machine society, but they were often disdainful of it. Disgusted with the anti-utilitarian nature of American education, some educators responded by establishing vocational programs and creating national support for their efforts. In 1876 John Runkle instituted a School of Mechanic Arts at M.I.T. and Calvin M. Woodward followed suit with his own manual training program at Washington University. By 1910 the American Federation of Labor had endorsed vocational programs in the schools and universities, and in 1914 the government had established the Commission on National Aid to Vocational Education.[34]

At the same time that men like Runkle and Woodward were advancing utilitarian education, settlement workers like Jane Addams were emphasizing the responsibility of

education to the social and mental health of the students. Education must teach not only important facts, not only logic and rhetoric and mental discipline; it must teach men to live together in a community; it must give the individual a sense of belonging to that community and the ability to be productive in that community. The industrial revolution and the accompanying growth of the cities caused conditions which would be discussed so often in the twentieth century that they would become cliches: isolation, anonymity, existentialism, and the inability to communicate. Sociologists like Addams were concerned that the schools prepare men to deal with these conditions, avoid them when possible, and in general, dominate the machine world.[35]

Unfortunately, no one had, as yet, spoken plainly about matters of humane learning. And although the objectives of the sociologists and the vocational educators complemented each other nicely, they were also exceedingly complex objectives and not easily accomplished. For example, how do you train a man for a job that may not exist until tomorrow? And how do you teach men to live together happily and with a sense of interdependence? In addition, to further complicate the answers to these questions, thousands of immigrants were rushing to the cities during the 1890's. Not only were the cities confused and frightened by the overcrowding and resultant

unsanitary conditions, but they could not understand the culture or language of many of the foreign-speaking, foreign-acting people. The immigrants themselves were frightened and confused also, and in their understandable ignorance of the New World, were easy prey for the vultures of industry and trades.

Part of the problem during the early decades of the twentieth century, of course, was getting the melting pot to start melting, and one of the primary institutions responsible for the "Americanizing" of these foreigners was education. The process of Americanization generally meant divesting the immigrant of his old-country traditions and culture, and preparing him to participate in the great democratic experiment. To the teacher of history, it meant teaching the American Revolution, the Constitution of the United States, and all that was the great American dream. To the civics teacher, it meant teaching local laws and state constitutions and "how to be a good citizen." To the English teacher, however, it meant an even greater emphasis on correct English. But because there was no such thing as standard English (or possibly because there were too many standard Englishes), social biases and personal prejudices infused the teaching of English with absurdity, misinformation, and a kind of linguistic morality which still surrounds the myth of standard English. (Even more unfortunate was the

linguistic immorality which often resulted.)[37] The problem, of course, was emphasized by the fact that most teachers had been trained in colleges which had traditionally stressed correct English as something which actually existed.

And so it was, out of these different concerns of nationalism, sociology, and utilitarian education, and out of the spirit of progressivism that pervaded the United States at the turn of the century--out of these many different forces was born the progressive education movement. The movement begins with Joseph Mayer Rice's highly critical and controversial articles on American education which appeared in The Forum between October 1892 and June 1893. He charged that the schools were not educating the children and that school activities were totally irrelevant to the students' lives; he demanded that the schools prepare students to constructively change the social order.[39]

Progressive educators often espoused freedom, open inquiry, and reliance on experience in education. They stressed the relationship of the learning process to the natural growth of the child. And although many schools and educators attempted to implement progressive theories of education, they often became very confused. Everyone seemed to have his own theory of progressive education and his own set of social ills for education to solve: for each cause there was a program and for each program

there was an administrator and staff. Furthermore, for some teachers progressive education conjured up a "Bohemian school where children run wild in orgies of naturalistic freedom"; they did not understand that the main thrust of the progressive education movement was social responsibility and social reform through improved education.[40] Chauncy's plea for plain speaking about matters of humane learning remained unanswered.

With the exception of teachers colleges, particularly Columbia, colleges and universities managed to avoid the confusion by avoiding progressive education and holding an even keel in a sea of lectures and scholarship and discipline and tests. They held fast to their German-oriented methods and curricula. Like knights of Arthur's round table, they saw themselves as the staunch guards and purveyors of truth, as the most important weapon against the forces of savagery and ignorance. And with some legitimacy, people like Gilman and Eliot felt that in order to be devoted to the search for truth, the colleges must necessarily ignore social approval and disapproval.[41] To apply truth was the job of technologists, not the responsibility of the scientist-philosopher. Again, like the knights of the round table, they could not see that the search for the Grail held its own dangers.

Another important development around the turn of the century is what might be termed the beginning of the age of tests and measurements. The new faith in testing was articulated by E. L. Thorndike who believed that if something existed, it could be scientifically measured.[42] This kind of behaviorist attitude was reflected in the colleges and universities which, in their attempt to make the acquisition, conservation, and distribution of knowledge and truth most effective, felt the need to establish uniform requirements for admission. High school teachers supported admission exams with clearly stated areas of examination because it would be easier for them to prepare students for such exams.[43] The colleges and universities agreed, though for different reasons. They knew the search for truth to be a noble quest and were unwilling to trust so arduous and demanding a task to someone who was academically unqualified. They could train their apprentice knights properly and trust them with the quest only if these apprentices were truly capable.

Out of these fine concerns to determine academic potential, and nurtured by President Eliot of Harvard, grew the College Board examinations. Colleges first administered these exams in June 1901, and by 1910 "twenty-five leading eastern colleges and universities" were using the College Boards to determine the qualifications of applicants. These exams not only represented a more

highly organized system of higher education; they also represented a major step in the indirect control of the elementary and high schools by the colleges. Not only did the colleges train the teachers for the schools, but now they indirectly controlled the subject matter because teachers would begin to teach material and skills necessary for success on the exams. In short, a few poorly constructed exams could mean a very poor educational system even at the lower levels.[44]

The need for standard entrance requirements was, of course, a real one, but the standards were too often stated in terms of a particular set of skills or in terms of a particular set of novels to be duly studied along with memorized critical comments, all to be regurgitated on the entrance exam. Instead of attempting to define and evaluate a student's level of performance and future learning potential, the exams measured the student's ability to memorize.[45] As a result, most high school students studied the same novels and memorized the same critical comments. The study of English was anything but the study of human experience, and the concerns of the progressive education movement--individualized curricula, learning through experience--were often sacrificed on the altar of standardization.

One result of this increasing devotion to tests and measurements was an attempt to redefine education in terms of things easily measured. For example, The

National Education Association Department of Superintendence appointed a Committee on Economy of Time in Education in 1911. This Committee made four major reports between 1915-1919, which, in theory at least, directly opposed progressive education because it emphasized the students' ability to fit into the present society rather than their ability to change and reform society. The Committee reported that the purpose of education is for the student to acquire "those habits, skills, knowledges, ideas and prejudices which must be made the common property of all, that each may be an efficient member of a progressive, democratic society, possessing the power of self-support and self-direction, the capacity and disposition for cooperative effort, and, if possible, the ability to direct others in positions of responsibility requiring administrative capacity."[46]

This Committee also examined existing textbooks and curricula, found them sadly lacking, and proposed new textbooks and curricula which would derive from and be relevant to existing conditions in society. As a result, although the Committee was obviously reformist in nature, it was not so much concerned with a student's advancement in growth and knowledge as it was in his ability to fit into the existing society. Its conception of both the student and society was faulty because it emphasized stasis rather than change. Its basic attitude was far

more akin to that of Spencer's Social Darwinism than to that of Rice's progressive education.

But regardless of committees and other interferences, progressive education gained momentum through the efforts and publications of men like John Dewey and Alfred North Whitehead. Unfortunately, even when the movement was at its zenith in the 20's and 30's, it was always characterized by extraordinary differences between theory and practice. Theories seldom filtered down to the public schools without becoming somehow twisted and changed; if they did chance to get down to the schools, they were too often confused in their implementation. Many teachers used the progressive ideas of freedom and open inquiry as excuses to do less work. They might be found in their various teacher's lounges expounding on the progressive classrooms while their students were off somewhere participating in undirected and unrelated experiences. Other, more devoted teachers who sincerely attempted to use progressive ideas found themselves so confused and ill-prepared by their college studies as to be unable to organize experiences so that the children would operate inductively and enjoy the learning process.[47]

The situation finally became so serious that even John Dewey was forced to speak out against what progressive education had become. Dewey's complaints were based on the grounds that child-centered schools had become homes

for untrained teachers who were operating without any plans, when they functioned at all. He wanted to dis-associate himself from the word progressivism because it had become associated with caricatures of 'expressionistic' teachers and students and a chaotic educational system. He wanted educators to think in terms of Education itself and to stop concerning themselves with 'isms because "any movement that thinks and acts in terms of an 'ism becomes so involved in reaction against other 'isms that it is unwittingly controlled by them."[48]

As a result of this confusion between philosophy and practice, the Progressive Education Association was never as powerful as some progressive educators had hoped it might be. It issued decrees, made statements of philosophy, appointed committees for various tasks, and published a curriculum based on experience and natural growth of students. Prompted by a speech made by George S. Counts in 1932, the Progressive Education Association (PEA) appointed the first of a series of committees to promote the investigation of the contemporary problems facing society in the schools. For six years these committees confused themselves because they had agreed on no underlying philosophy of education. Finally, in 1938, the Committee on the Philosophy of Education made the following innocuous statement: "We come then finally to the conclusion that a reflective study of human nature, of natural forces, and of human experience, leads to the

conviction that growth is the richest reward for the individual when, in concert with all others, he brings his intelligence and good will to the shared task of creating the values for which his culture is to strive."[49] If such a statement had been made by such an organization before 1900, it might have lent support and power to the reformers of the progressive movement, but in 1938 to simply reaffirm that the schools have a duty to both the individual and society was weak and repetitive.

During the Second World War, higher education changed relatively little, but immediately following the war and continuing up to the present, many new developments occurred. It is of course impossible to present these developments in any detail in this short space, but some of the more important ones deserve mention. For example, higher education grew so large so quickly that it became almost impossible to administer effectively. In 1870, 50,000 men and women were attending institutions of higher learning in America. By 1960 this figure became 3,500,000, and it was expected to double by 1970. In 1876, students could choose from 311 colleges and universities; in 1960, they could choose from 2,026.[50]

Another development is the vast amounts of federal money that began to pour into the universities and colleges after the war. Federal money financed college educations for nearly 4 million veterans after 1945. By 1957 the federal government was paying 25 per cent of the

construction costs for most universities, and by 1960 nearly 20 per cent of the operating funds of colleges and universities was coming from the government: "Indeed, university research became a major enterprise of the federal government, which now bought (and therefore paid for) 70 per cent of all university research."[51]

But still, even though higher education had grown in leaps and bounds, and though it was receiving more money than ever before in its history, reform remained more a dream than a fact, even more difficult to effect now that higher education had become so large and complex. Interestingly enough, the concerns and problems following the war were really much the same as those problems with which educators had been dealing for many years. For example, a presidential commission, established by President Truman to re-examine the system of higher education in the United States, listed the following priorities for higher education:

> Education for a fuller realization of democracy in every phase of living.
> Education directly and explicitly for international understanding and cooperation.
> Education for the application of creative imagination and trained intelligence to the solution of social problems and to the administration of public affairs.[52]

With the exception of the second point about international understanding, things were much the same as before.

One of the major debates following the war was the argument over specialized education as opposed to general education. The same presidential commission as mentioned above felt that although specialized education had its place in higher education, particularly in the graduate schools, it had, in some cases, caused higher education to be little more than vocational training. As a result of this attitude, the commission suggested a greater emphasis on general education, which it defined as follows:

> General education should give to the student the values, attitudes, knowledge, and skills that will equip him to live rightly and well in a free society. It should enable him to identify, interpret, select, and build into his own life those components of his cultural heritage that contribute richly to understanding and appreciation of the world in which he lives. It should therefore embrace ethical values, scientific generalizations, and aesthetic conceptions, as well as an understanding of the purposes and character of the political, economic, and social institutions that men have devised.[53]

Once again, higher education was being identified with noble goals, and almost as quickly as the president's commission published its report, disagreement and confusion reigned. In an article called "Report of the President's Commission on Higher Education," Robert M. Hutchins, president of the University of Chicago and outspoken critic of higher education in America, greeted the Commission's report with the following condemnations:

> The Report of the President's Commission on Higher Education reflects the educational system with which it deals. It is big and booming. It is confused,

> confusing, and contradictory. It has something for everybody. It is generous, ignoble, bold, timid, naive, and optimistic. It is filled with the spirit of universal brotherhood and the sense of American superiority. It has great faith in money. It has great faith in courses. It is anti-humanistic and anti-intellectual. It is confident that vices can be turned into virtues by making them larger. Its heart is in the right place; its head does not work very well.
>
> Every cliche and every slogan of contemporary educational discussion appear once more. Much of the report reads like a Fourth-of-July oration in Pedaguese. It skirts the edge of illiteracy, and sometimes falls over the brink. And when the battle has ended, the field is strewn with the corpses of the straw men the Commission has slain.[54]

Again, with things this confused, the climate for reform was unfavorable. To be sure, schools like the University of California, Stanford, Duke, and the University of Wisconsin were attempting to deal with problems like quantity versus quality and liberal learning versus professional training. And a few institutions even attempted to define the ideal college: a college without lectures; with much reading and discussing; with no departments.[55] But generally speaking, higher education had grown too fast and with too little direction. Reform had little chance against men like President Pusey of Harvard, President Griswold of Yale, and President Goheen of Princeton who in the 1950's were restating the emphases of the Yale Report of 1828. They would not be rushed into new programs; they would continue to place their faith in the traditional.

CHAPTER II

THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH: AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

During August and September of 1966, a group of about fifty American and British educators, primarily English teachers, met at Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire. They came to participate in the Anglo-American Conference on the Teaching of English (more commonly known as the Dartmouth Seminar), and they hoped to come to some agreement on the questions of what English is and how it should be taught. Despite some discontent and much disagreement, the conference produced many new and exciting ideas about English. One of the more startling and most quoted statements coming out of this conference is Benjamin DeMott's description of English and the English class:

> [The English class is] the place wherein the chief matters of concern are particulars of humanness--individual human feeling, human response, and human time, as these can be known through the written expression (at many literary levels) of men living and dead, and as they can be discovered by student writers seeking through words to name and compose

> and grasp their own experience. English in sum is about my distinctness and the distinctness of other human beings. Its function . . . is to provide an arena in which the separate man, the single ego can strive at once to know the world through art, to know what if anything he uniquely is and what some brothers uniquely are.[1]

To completely understand the far-reaching implications of DeMott's statement and to see how much it departs from tradition, it is necessary to view the Dartmouth Conference in its historical perspective by examining the history of English teaching, with particular emphasis on the teaching of writing. In order to show the many and varied influences which operated in shaping and misshaping freshman English, this historical survey derives from many different sources. For example, reports issued by various commissions sometimes greatly affected the teaching of writing. Teachers' attitudes toward language and writing sometimes reflect confusion and ignorance. Course descriptions of freshman English courses indicate the typical kinds of experiences afforded the students. Textbooks indicate the lack of change in the content and method of these courses. Consequently, rather than being a comprehensive history of freshman English courses, this chapter draws from these different influences to suggest the nature of and the reasons for the confusion and diversity which characterize freshman English today.

Prior to 1850, English in the universities consisted of little more than formal instruction in oral rhetoric (elocution) and the recitation of rhetorical principles. What writing there was consisted of sermon writing and translations from Latin or Greek to English; the study of rhetoric, undertaken for its own sake, was not related to the act of writing or composing.[2] In a diary entry dated 1705/6, Cotton Mather indicates what was probably a prevailing attitude toward the nature of writing and how best to teach it:

> As soon as tis possible, I make the Children learn to write. And when they can write, I employ them in Writing out the most agreeable and profitable Things, that I can invent for them. In this way, I propose to fraight their minds with excellent Things, and have a deep Impression made upon their Minds by such Things.[3]

According to this point of view, writing is the physical skill needed to make the letters of the alphabet, and the children are vials waiting to be filled with a properly mixed potion of knowledge and wisdom. Writing in Mather's sense cannot be properly called an act of composition because the writer is not creating or composing. He is only reproducing received impressions and ideas. He is little more than a tool himself, transcribing someone else's words.

The assumptions implicit in Mather's remarks continued to characterize English teaching throughout most

of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In fact, the grammar schools of these periods differed from Mather only in the consistency with which they caused students to produce dull, innocuous discourses. In The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, Mark Twain describes the kind of writing produced by school children in the nineteenth-century grammar schools. The most common topics were "Friendship," "Memories of Other Days," "Religion in History," "Melancholy," and "Filial Love."

> [A] prevalent feature of these compositions was a nursed and petted melancholy; another was a wasteful and opulent gush of "fine language"; another was a tendency to lug in by the ears particularly prized words and phrases until they were worn entirely out; and a peculiarity that conspicuously marked and marred them was the inveterate and intolerable sermon that wagged its crippled tail at the end of each and every one of them.[4]

Beginning in the mid 1870's, the study of English --especially the study of literature--increased significantly, and by 1890, departments of English had become a commonplace in the universities.[5] Accompanying this emphasis on English literature was an emphasis on entrance exams, most of which relied heavily on matters of correctness in language. In 1882, for example, Harvard's entrance exam required students to write essays on works of literature. Before the student could gain entrance to the university, a group of readers had to agree that his writing indicated correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation;

legible handwriting; good expression; and proper paragraph division. The readers did not concern themselves with the quality or originality of the students' ideas.[6]

Because of Harvard's excellent reputation and influence, high school teachers began teaching toward the college entrance exam, emphasizing correctness and rules, preparing students to write on isolated topics which were likely to appear on the exams. And although many students crammed dutifully for the exams and passed, they were unable to perform adequately when writing on other subjects, thus causing themselves and their teachers much difficulty:

> In the 1890's the whole situation came to a boil. A great many students were still failing the various entrance examinations in English, or passing them with low grades, and the colleges of the country were having to devote more and more labor to freshman composition instruction.[7]

In short, almost as soon as colleges began offering courses in freshman composition, they began having difficulty teaching them. The problem grew so quickly that in 1891 the Board of Overseers of Harvard College appointed Charles Francis Adams, E. L. Godkin, and Josiah Quincy to study the problem. Out of this Committee on Composition and Rhetoric came the famous Harvard Reports of 1892, 1895, and 1897.[8] In one of these reports the Committee smothered the lower schools with blame: that students could not write was the fault of the elementary

and high schools which had no business bothering the universities with such mundane matters as basic writing skills. The Committee said:

> It is obviously absurd that the College--the institution of higher education should be called upon to turn aside from its proper functions, and devote its means and the time of its instructors to the task of imparting elementary instruction which should be given even in ordinary grammar schools, much more in those higher academic institutions intended to prepare select youth for a university course.[9]

These reports quickly set the pattern for what would become a recurring debate in American education: the colleges and universities blame the high schools and elementary schools for inadequately preparing students in the fundamentals of English, and the elementary and high schools in turn blame the colleges and universities for not preparing teachers who can teach the fundamentals of English. As a result of the charges and countercharges, and because of the "growing illiteracy of American boys," mentioned in the 1897 report, many high school teachers began using college rhetoric books in order to insure that their students would pass college entrance exams and then perform adequately in freshman composition courses. Thus, one of the major effects of the reports was that high school teachers increasingly emphasized the study of rhetorical principles, grammar, and mechanics.

In summary, although the Harvard Reports focused attention on the study of English and the need for better

teaching in the elementary and high schools, they also used the schools as scapegoats and significantly over-emphasized mechanical correctness in writing--an over-emphasis on superficiality that would dominate writing instruction for many years to come.[10] And within less than twenty years, English teachers were complaining about the implicit assumptions and limiting effects of these influential reports:

> The Harvard Reports were unsatisfactory in several respects. First, the committee appointed consisted not of experts, but merely of prominent citizens with a general interest in education. Second, the methods of procedure were unscientific, and the results, though suggestive, far from definitive. Third, the intent of the reports seemed to throw the burden of blame upon the preparatory schools, though, as the college had been admitting in large numbers boys whose training was thus shown to be grossly defective, it would logically appear that the fault, as well as the remedy, lay largely with the college authorities. The reports were useful, however, in stimulating the schools to renewed efforts in raising the college standard and in bringing about a more general discussion of the question. The most interesting point involved, in our opinion, was the alleged illiteracy of American youth as compared with those of other nations and with American youth of a generation or two ago. The question of illiteracy is the real kernel of the whole matter.[11]

But regardless of the fact that the reports were unscientific and possibly even the result of the personal biases of members of the committee, they were respected and believed by many educators. Higher education in America was used to having Harvard pave the way in matters such as this problem of language preparation, and many English teachers were understandably pleased to have the

problem of literacy so clearly defined and the blame so clearly placed on the preparatory schools. The problem, however, was that 'correct English' quickly became the sacred cow of university entrance exams and freshman writing courses.

For example, in 1914 the University of Wisconsin explained how it was that 20 per cent of their students, admitted by the university at large, were not allowed to take the freshman English courses required of all students for graduation:

> every student entering the University is examined as to his ability to express himself in clear, correct, idiomatic English. . . . No student will be permitted to pursue the Freshman English course whose work shows serious weakness in spelling, punctuation, grammar, sentence construction, or division into paragraphs.[12]

In short, if the student is able to write correctly, he may continue to do so in freshman English; if he cannot write correctly the university refuses to teach him to do so, and the student must somehow educate himself in the rudiments of 'correct English.' The document then continues:

> When we say that a certain amount of proficiency is necessary, we mean a certain amount of proficiency in the rudiments of writing. Students whose writing is devoid of interest, originality, or any other literary merit, are qualified if their writing is satisfactory as to the rudiments.[13]

In determining admissions, then, the university refuses to concern itself with the literary merit of the student's work and cares only about his skills; he may have nothing to say to anyone, but as long as he says it correctly, he gains entrance to the university and its freshman English courses. And to make the situation even more ludicrous, the document lists some of the most serious 'language' errors the students make:

1) How can his cattle give milk with-out water?
2) Shylock has probably been planning on geting his revenge.
3) The avridge freshman reguards such an occurance with disapproval.[14]

Possibly the most damning comment that can be made about this document is that any one of these sentences would be enough to prevent a student from taking freshman English.

It is, of course, unjust to hold up Harvard and the University of Wisconsin as the sole perpetrators of some great shortcoming in American education. In fact, it is truer to say that the Harvard Reports simply said out loud what many professors of English had believed for a long time: college freshmen were poorly prepared in English and college teachers had no responsibility to teach students who did not measure up. Furthermore, neither the Harvard Reports nor the document from the University of Wisconsin originated a concern for correct English. Correct English had always been a revered

objective in the schools, deriving from the emphasis on correctness and drilling common to the teaching of Latin and Greek.

But these documents and others like them made 'correct English' the raison d'être for English teachers everywhere, particularly for those teachers who were involved with the teaching of writing. Even teachers who conceived of writing as something more than formal rhetoric or arbitrary usage rules, even these teachers were caught in the macabre web of good English. For example, one English teacher criticized higher education for failing "not only to satisfy the interests and desires of the pupils themselves, but to do its part as it should toward developing them into the type of men and women which our civilization demands and for which our public schools are established and supported." Yet in her next statement she seriously limits the responsibility that English teachers have to both society and to the individual when she says that it is the first duty of an English teacher "to teach correct English."[15]

As might be expected, English teachers took their charge seriously, and correct English, 'standard' grammar and usage, proper punctuation, and rhetorical principles ruled the early 1900's. Even those teachers of freshman English who used workshop or laboratory techniques[16] to teach writing, in an attempt to focus on the process of composing rather than only on the composition itself,

were working hard to keep their students from corrupting the language. And although some teachers were against treating English as a science because it "appeals not alone nor chiefly to the soberly intellectual, but to the aesthetic and the emotional in man,"[17] many teachers inevitably ended up defending the importance of English in terms of its usefulness in the business world: bad grammar would turn customers away.[18]

Many teachers felt that freshman English should "enable the ordinary man to set forth such ideas as he has (or such facts as he needs to present) in an orderly and effective fashion, without mistakes in construction, grammar, punctuation, and spelling."[19] Even innovators who stressed the important relationships between oral and written language could not keep themselves from emphasizing "good English" and having students memorize and recite "lines largely from the masters of prose and poetry, freighted with lofty inspiration, intense feeling, sublime beauty--not trash."[20] The concern was always with correct English--a thing--and never with the student, the creator of the thing. Literature was something dead people had written and live students had to memorize; freshmen compositions were something 'dead' students had to write, and no one wanted to read.

Rather than emphasize creativity, discovery, and student-centered approaches to the teaching of English,

scholars emphasized "mastery of the language as a means to the development of a trained mind and a strong character."[21] The teaching of writing often consisted of little more than exercises in spotting punctuation errors or grammatical errors; once the problem was spotted, it was the student's responsibility to supply the correct grammatical form or mark of punctuation. Teachers who felt "obligated by the traditional interpretation of the duty of the teacher of English," had their students make intricate charts listing all their errors in syntax, punctuation, spelling, and organization.[22] These same teachers continued to have students study professional essays and then write imitations of these essays because "imitation is the easiest way to learn anything; and in description and narration available models are plentiful. Imaginative students often evolve clever imitations. Occasionally someone creates something original. All of them read good if not excellent literature in the models; and those who have some taste for literature develop greater appreciation."[23] The increasing emphasis on oral language --an emphasis that sounds innovative and exciting in the abstract--often meant little more than the recitation of memorized speeches and concerned itself with the students' general appearance at least as much as it concerned itself with his general language development. (The appearance requirement was referred to as "Presence" and included

posture, brushed teeth, closely shorn and neatly combed hair, a smooth shave, etc.)[24]

Prior to 1930 the Harvard Reports and their implicit assumptions continued to dominate English teaching. And between 1930 and the end of the Second World War, any hope for change or reform rested primarily with the leaders of the progressive education movement. And although the progressive educators would find it difficult to change American education, and though sometimes the changes introduced by the progressives did not significantly improve conditions in the schools, and even though the progressives sometimes caused more problems than they solved, they at least introduced possibilities of excitement and life into a dying educational system.

One of the major hopes the progressives had for getting their theories into practice was through the state teachers colleges. Unfortunately, these institutions remained careful and conservative in matters of language, heavily emphasizing "the ability to speak and write good English."[25] They stressed expository and argumentative writing through theme construction and rigorous study of the sentence and the paragraph. And although they offered fewer formal grammar courses in 1925 than they had in 1900, they still considered the study of grammar necessary for good writing and included it in "constructive English" or "functional English composition."[26] These teachers

colleges taught writing not because it was fun, not because it fostered creativity and growth, but "on the ground of its being a tool needed in other studies."[27] And when writing was seen as something more than a tool needed in other studies, it was too often seen as something valuable in the training of the mind:

> From the argumentative essays the instructor can judge early in the course which students have keen and logical minds. . . . They grow mentally by writing this type of paper.[28]

Unfortunately, everyone had a different way to teach writing, and by the 1930's there were about as many different purposes included under the heading of freshman English as there were teachers of freshman English:

> Typical courses set out among other things to "enlarge the intellectual horizons of the students," "to inculcate desirable ethical attitudes," "to instil a sense of beauty," "to evoke appreciation of the world's great masterpieces of the pen and brush," "to bring out the latent talents of the individual," "to fan the spark of creative ability," or "to enrich the personality by providing cultural experiences"--though some descend so far in the direction of the practical as to aim at "preparing students for participation in community life by teaching them to prepare reports for clubs, to speak effectively, to be good listeners and to be courteous in discussion."[29]

But in this same article called "What is Wrong With Freshman Composition," the authors follow their unveiled attack on the confusion progressive educators had introduced into the teaching of composition with some added purposes and objectives for freshman composition--namely, teaching the

'useful' forms of writing like exposition and report writing. Thus, although they attack the progressives for descending too far in "the direction of the practical," they suggest the teaching of particular kinds of writing because they are useful.

To further complicate matters, the methods used in the teaching of freshman English varied as much as the statements of goals. Many teachers subscribed to the 'error-approach,' believing that their job was to eliminate errors in spelling, pronoun agreement, punctuation, organization, and usage;[30] students in these classes spent long hours correcting poorly written sample themes and working on drill exercises on correct usage. Other teachers worked almost entirely with in-class themes because they act as a "check on dishonest work outside."[31] These teachers were "convinced, both by theory and practice, that the best drill in Freshman composition in college comes from the themes that are written in class" because the "instructor is always more certain of the authenticity of a student's work when that work is done under supervision," and it gives "practice in organizing one's thoughts under pressure."[32]

In addition to the diversity and disagreement among individual teachers, programs within different colleges and universities also emphasize the prevailing confusion in freshman English. Some schools established clinics to

help students who had difficulty with their writing: students could bring their rough drafts to the clinics and receive help from the teachers who were available at the time. The problem with such a program generally derived from the fact such clinics were expensive to staff, and students often did not realize that their writing was bad until it had already been corrected by the teacher for whom they had originally written the piece. Furthermore, the use of the word clinic implied that student writing was generally 'sick' and that it demanded some kind of medication before being made available for general consumption.[33]

Some universities established committees to review student writing or set up exams to make sure that students whose writing was inadequate would receive the necessary help. Purdue, for example, established a "Committee on Standards in English" which reviewed students' writing and marked it either satisfactory, doubtful, or unsatisfactory. Students whose writing fell in the last two categories had to take special theme courses and perform satisfactorily before they could graduate:

> The Committee was instituted to do two things: put the fear of the lord into students' minds and pens, and, second, give some real help to the fairly small percentage who have passed Freshman and Sophomore courses in composition and escaped with bad writing.[34] [Italics added]

The University of Florida approached freshman English in a fairly typical manner by combining an emphasis on skills with an emphasis on popular culture. The English Department at this institution believed that the freshman English course "should serve two general functions: In the first place, such a course should be designed to help students get thought, and, in the second place, it should enable them to give or express thought."[35] In this program, students "get thought" by listening to lectures on "The American Scene," "Sports," "War and Peace," and "College Life and Problems":

> [The course stresses] topics of immediate value and lively interest to college students. . . . The lecture notes are examined frequently, and often brief written tests are administered to determine how well the student is mastering the ability to follow the spoken word and record the thoughts in proper relationships.[36]

Furthermore, in order to facilitate vocabulary learning, the students memorize a list of words "composed of the rarest of Thorndike's list of ten thousand words most commonly found in books and newspapers ordinarily read."[37] Thus, although the course emphasized the transmission of past culture and popular culture, it is best described as a skills approach: an approach which fragments English into listening skills, writing skills, vocabulary skills, thinking skills, and social skills."

The most popular approaches to the teaching of freshman English, then, were those which emphasized skill

development--searching for errors in sample themes and correcting them, putting six sample sentences in the correct order so that they form a well-organized paragraph, practicing listening or note taking--and those which emphasized the preservation and transmission of the cultural heritage through the rigorous study of famous literature, the memorization of famous poems or passages from poems, and writing through imitation of professional writers. But as might be expected, there were many who disagreed with these popular attitudes toward the teaching of freshman English.

As early as the 1890's, for example, Frank Norris and Jack London both left the University of California because of the emphasis on "unity and consecutiveness and mannerisms and style and syntactical perfection."[38] Others agreed with George Pierce Baker who charged that students in freshman English programs were being taught "'traveler's English'--English to be used for [their] immediate needs in the course and then forgotten."[39] This dissenting position is probably best summed up by Lewis Mumford who writes in a letter that freshman English often "relapses into unimportant, and even false, dogmas on the function of the topic sentence, the structure of the paragraph, etc., and by concentrating on the skeleton keeps students away from the flesh."[40]

Mumford's metaphor is a painfully appropriate description of what was happening in many freshman English courses prior to World War Two. Teachers and students everywhere, in schools and colleges and universities, were dissecting, diagramming, and analyzing sentences and paragraphs that had been preserved in textbooks for just such anatomical activities. The overemphasis on correctness in usage and grammar and punctuation was turning school English into a dead language. Fortunately, the end result of the confusion and dissension over what writing courses should be was an increased concern for the teaching of English in general and for the teaching of writing in particular.

In 1930, Ruth Weeks addressed the National Council of Teachers of English and suggested that English teachers think of themselves, their subject, and their students in new ways:

> In our classrooms we must set the stage and do the things which make emotion possible--set the stage quite theatrically (in the best sense of that term) and build up the effect quite consciously; and never, never, never break the spell by self-consciousness or condescension or visibly didactic aim. One must be something of an artist and actor; one must plan and perfect and polish his technique, and believe in the beauty of such moments of feeling, and be capable oneself of such forgetfulness in the presence of beauty--capable of both feeling and expressing the refined emotion one wishes to arouse.[41]

She goes on to suggest that teachers should also attempt to be creative in the classroom; they should sing, write, draw, and interact with their students. But most important, English teachers must remember that laughter, fun, play, and honest human emotion belong in the classroom just as they are a natural part of the student's life outside the classroom: the deadly serious is often more deadly than serious.[42]

Other teachers whose concerns were similar to those of Ruth Weeks were putting forth the notion that English courses should be run more like workshops or laboratories in which students are allowed to use their native curiosity and intelligence to explore within a structured, student-centered framework. One of the most interesting discussions about these ideas comes from Howard Francis Seely, who said:

> a composition is the organized symbol of an experience. The act of composing is the act of relating things to other things, or ideas to other ideas or things and ideas to each other. To compose is to arrange, to organize, to rebuild material that is possessed so that new, different and more complete uses are possible and fuller meanings are developed.[43]

He then goes on point out that composition includes many media and is truly synonymous with "creation."[44] Obviously, then, if people write to clarify "experiences and their meanings" for themselves, then the English teacher's preoccupation with "lifeless exhibits of punctuation marks,

capital letters, indentations, types of sentences, and forms of discourse" can only limit and possibly stop creativity and the process of composition.[45] And although Seely's attitudes are somewhat extreme for their time, they are particularly significant because they so clearly suggest a restructuring of the traditional course --a restructuring which gives the student an opportunity to investigate his environment for himself and to then express his findings (or his confusion) through various forms of composition. In short, Seely was suggesting what would later become known as a student-centered or experiential approach to the teaching of English.

Unfortunately, some teachers interpreted ideas like Seely's in ways they were never intended. Somewhat reminiscent of the teachers who shared Herbert Spencer's educational attitudes, these teachers felt that an English course should center on the student in terms of his future role in society: decide what he needs to know to function well in society and teach him these things. Operating from this point of view, Ward S. Miller encourages more oral activities based on interviewing, etiquette, telephoning, plays, voice-speaking choruses, parliamentary procedure, oral reading, and conversation "because these play a larger part in life-experiences than written English."[46]

Such attitudes as these represented rather narrow conceptions of what was popularly referred to as an experiential approach to education. This erroneous point of view gained considerable support from progressive educators and is most clearly articulated in An Experience Curriculum in English (1935), a report of The Curriculum Commission of the National Council of Teachers of English, chaired by W. Wilbur Hatfield. The report says:

> The school of experience is the only one which will develop the flexibility and power of self-direction requisite for successful living in our age of swift industrial, social, and economic change. To inculcate authoritarian beliefs, fixed rules of conduct, unreasoned and therefore stubborn attitudes, is to set our youth in futile and fatal conflict with the forces of modern life. By meeting situations, modifying conditions and adapting themselves to the unchangeable, our boys and girls will learn to live in a dynamic and evolving world. Today, more than ever, the curriculum should consist of experiences.[47]

The Committee goes on to define experience as "meeting real situations" and says that to learn is "to modify one's future behavior, in psychological parlance, to acquire changed tendencies to act."[48]

These statements are, of course, in keeping with the progressive movement in education, and although the definition of learning is somewhat limited by its behavioral focus, it still sounds new and exciting at this theoretical level. But the curriculum itself defines what the Committee actually means and what kinds of experiences the Committee considers socially and

intellectually valuable for the individual student. For example, an objective in a speech class for grades 7-12 is "to leave a group gracefully, especially before the others are ready to break up." This would include learning "to say Goodnight or Goodbye rather than So long or I'll be seein' yuh."[49] (Note, also, the use of eye-dialect here--seein' yuh--to socially stigmatize the speaker.) Another speech objective is "to take part acceptably in a jocular conversation," which would include learning "to have a sufficient stock of jokes, anecdotes, limericks. To slip in an occasional pun or amusing comparison of something mentioned by another."[50]

The English teacher would teach students how to use the telephone ("When calling a friend, to converse briefly with another member of his family who answers"),[51] and writing activities would direct themselves toward the very pragmatic forms like "Social Letters," "Business Letters," "News Stories," "Reports," and "Opinions."[52] For example, the students would learn "to write informal and courteous notes of invitation and acceptance or regret,"[53] or "to write clear, concise, accurate, and complete order letters,"[54] or "to record minutes of a club meeting."[55]

Thus, in their zeal to improve an ineffective and outdated curriculum, this group of progressive educators changed an already fragmented English program into a more

fragmented one. Furthermore, their objectives and means of achieving those objectives clearly illustrate the growing diversity between the theories and practices of progressive educators. In theory, the student explores his world through relatively structured experiences in which he can give free reign to his own curiosity and interests. Rather than being fitted to society, he prepares himself to change it in desirable ways. The major objective is for the student to better understand himself and his relation to his environment; to learn to be able to manipulate what he has learned for the betterment of mankind, rather than simply warehouse facts, or in the case of the experience curriculum discussed above, warehouse 'practical' experiences.

But when the theories of the progressive educators were put into practice, they were too often perverted by narrowly defined objectives derived from rigid interpretations of what was practical or relevant. Instead of memorizing facts, students were memorizing <u>how to act</u> in certain situations. The emphasis had remained on imitation, skill practice, and reproduction, rather than moving forward to an emphasis on intelligent, creative responses to situations.

The diversity and confusion caused by this further fragmentation of the English curriculum remained firmly entrenched in the 1940's and 50's, and the colleges

reacted accordingly. In 1940 the "Report of the Language Committee of the School and College Conference on English" indicated a growing concern over all the non-English subjects and materials that had been introduced into the classroom and in many cases had become "studies pursued for their own sake . . . ," and complained about the tendency to use "pupil interest" to support deviations from the purer study of English.[56] The report also rejects student-centeredness or experience approaches and reasserts the need for a greater emphasis on rhetorical principles through expository and argumentative writing:

> The Conference believes that the writing of narratives, poems, or plays has a certain therapeutic or psychological value for the pupil; that such writing may act as a safety valve, may helpfully release and express energy which would chafe under a too exclusive regime of analyzing and reasoning. But the Conference believes that this therapeutic value is not a direct aim of education, that educationally as well as on other grounds the value of writing is to be measured by the result considered as a stage of progress toward a goal. If the composition finally produced does not exhibit form, design, order, intellectual coherence as well as expressiveness, the Conference does not see what progress is being made toward any rational educational goal.[57]

In short, the statement says that each attempt at writing should be complete and final, and it totally disregards the writing process, which includes chaos and confusion. It rejects the intellectual and social growth of the individual for form, design, and order.

In opposition to this reaffirmation of old approaches, another report, written by the Special Committee on the Secondary School Curriculum and called What the High Schools Ought to Teach, says that composition too often degenerates "into a series of formal exercises in the course of which pupils are drilled in the triviliaties of verbal expression."[58] And a few years later, this same attitude is carried somewhat further by a Report of the Modern Language Association Commission on Trends in Education called "The English Language in American Education." This report redefines "the goal of language mastery" as the "ability to act appropriately in new situations by thinking, speaking, listening, reading, or writing," and not as the study of grammar and rules of punctuation and usage.[59]

But regardless of definitions and redefinitions, of actions and reactions, of progressive and regressive influences--regardless of just about everything, English teaching at almost all levels of the educational system changed very little. Even though the pupil-centered programs of the progressive education movement had been "accepted as an ideal" by 1952, it was a seldom practiced ideal.[60]

Possibly the only way to emphasize exactly how little freshman English had changed during the first part of the twentieth century is to examine some of the textbooks used between 1850 and 1970. In a "Preface" written

in 1850 for his Elements in the Art of Rhetoric, Henry N. Day says that it is the purpose of his text (and therefore college rhetoric courses) to "make practical thinkers and writers--to put students of discourse on a course of training which if faithfully pursued shall secure to them a perpetual growth in power as thinkers and also as speakers and writers." Just as the student of arithmetic must study "the elemental principle of quantity and practice . . . the fundamental rules of computation," so also the student of language must ground himself in the process of "presenting thought" by making a "separate study of each process," before he can perfect "his skill in the handling of thought, in the shaping of it for the various objects of his discourse, and in the ultimate embodiment of it in fit and effective verbal expression." In order to achieve these ends, the author makes "copious exercises" available.[61]

Another textbook published in 1862 points out that the student must learn "to name things properly, and express his ideas in a correct and pleasing style, before he will be able to write a good composition." Typically, the author wants to deal with fragments rather than the whole composition, but what is most important here is the curious assumption that older students need to be taught "to name things properly."

One of the most important writers on the teaching of rhetoric is John F. Genung, who outlines the ideal course as follows: first, the students memorize rules "embodying the principles of rhetoric"; second, they correct sentences, a process which forces the student to "use his head" and employ the rules of rhetoric he has memorized. ("It being taken for granted that what has once been learned has become a permanent and usable possession.") Third, the student revises essays included in the book, and fourth, through imitative writing, he gains "many touches and turns of expression, many ways of handling thoughts, many practical ideas of style, which no rules or precepts alone could impart."[63]

All three of the above texts were written before 1900, but they differ little from textbooks written after 1930. One, for example, is a collection of exercises moving from "Parts of Speech" through "The Sentence" through "Preparation of Papers." Another more recent one (1950) emphasizes imitative writing because "our primary purpose should be to point out to the student how other authors have solved--or sometimes failed to solve--their particular problems in communication."[65] This same theory is reinforced and restated in 1965 in another textbook which says that "reading and analyzing fine models and acknowledged masterpieces is the surest way of acquiring ease and accuracy in writing."[66]

Many of the textbooks of the 1960's reflected a revival of interest in the study of rhetoric and its place in the freshman composition course; one of the most interesting results of this rhetoric revival was the creation of a "new rhetoric." The "old" rhetoric, typified by Genung's books, usually involved extensive study of invention ("'the investigation, analysis, and grasp of subject matter'"), disposition ("the concept of arrangement, of orderly planning, and movement of the whole idea), elocution or style ("the concept of expression in language, resulting, basically, from the choice of words and their arrangement or composition"), memory ("the speaker's mastery of all his material in sequential order"), and delivery or pronunciation (dealing with "vocal utterance and bodily action").[67] But the new rhetoric was something else. It was not new in the sense that it rejected the classical foundations of rhetoric; rather, it was new in the sense that it revived rhetoric as a means of investigating and criticizing written discourse. This rhetoric revival is most clearly exemplified in the writings of men like Wayne Booth, Richard L. Larson, Kenneth L. Pike, A. L. Becker, and Edward P. J. Corbett.

One of the most interesting and imaginative of the <u>new</u> rhetoricians is Francis Christensen, whose theories about the generative rhetoric of the sentence and the paragraph clearly indicate the directions in which rhetoric might travel in the search for the most

effective approach to discourse. Christensen's ideas about the generative rhetoric of the sentence and of the paragraph are based on four major principles. The first is the principle of addition: that is, writing involves the addition of modifiers to any given statement, the addition of information and qualification. Second, since modifiers must either precede or follow whatever it is they modify (a noun or clause or a whole sentence), good writing depends on the writer's consciousness of the principle of direction of modification or direction of movement. The third principle of this generative rhetoric is that of levels of generality: "The main clause is likely to be stated in general or abstract or plural terms. With the main clause stated, the forward movement of the sentence stops, the writer shifts down to a lower level of generality or abstraction or to singular terms, and goes back over the same ground at this lower level."[68] The fourth principle is texture, and the point here is that good writing has a dense texture--that is, its sentences and paragraphs are cumulative; they contain many additions--whereas poor writing is thin--it contains few additions.

At first glance all this may seem to deal only with that part of classical rhetoric called elocution or style, but it is intended to encompass the whole process of discourse. Christensen is suggesting that any given idea should generate additional ideas in the mind of the

writer; any generalization should generate additional particulars within that generalization. For good writing, the writer must be conscious of the direction in which these additions move (they must be logical), and the writer must make his writing dense (he must use as many additions as his topic calls for).

Although there are no examples of textbooks based solely on the new rhetoric, Ross Winterowd's Rhetoric and Writing[69] affords a good example of the typical rhetoric textbook of the 1960's. The text begins with a general discussion of the meaning of rhetoric ("Writing as a Moral Act"), and then moves into successive chapters on "Invention" (defining the problem, singling out the central idea, thinking about it logically, etc.), "Arrangement" (outlining, paragraphing, introductions, middles, and conclusions), and "Style" (words, correctness, the sentence, passive voice, sentence variety, and punctuation). The final chapter suggests writing exercises like the following: "Choose an issue about which you feel strongly, and argue in its behalf"; "Argue for or against an organization with which you are familiar"; "Apply Burke's Pentad in the analysis of a piece of discourse"; or "Analyze the rhetorical appeal in 'The Gettysburg Address.'"[69]

Of course, there have been departures from these rhetorical traditions, but not many. A few books like Henry Morgan's Here and Now are notable for their attempts

to present a series of readings, paintings, and cartoons organized in a manner which motivates the student to write first about himself and his private world, and second, moves the student out of his private world and asks him to write about himself and his relation to the world around him.[70] Another notable exception is The Harper Reader, edited by James H. Pickering and E. Fred Carlisle. The underlying organization of this book is similar to that of Here and Now, and it is a book designed for "writing classes where the teacher and students recognize that language cannot be sensibly fragmented, and where they think of writing as a pleasurable, imaginative, creative, and clarifying activity as well as an intellectual process."[71]

The very existence of books like Here and Now and The Harper Reader is an encouraging sign for the future, but the fact remains that these two books are exceptions. And although many of the texts currently being published for use in freshman English courses often resemble these two books, they too often consist of little more than exciting materials collected in a random way. Too often there is no logic to the organization of the materials other than thematic or topical, and thus the books do not share in the underlying assumptions of student-centeredness which so clearly influence Here and Now and The Harper Reader.

Clearly then, unlike higher education in general, which underwent many changes following World War II, the teaching of freshman English changed very little. In 1947 English was still being compared to mathematics--a set of skills to be memorized, practiced, and reproduced. Actual teaching practices were still being directed toward correcting errors and bringing students up to some ill-defined standard. College teachers were seriously concerned about the "staggering incumbrances of grammatical and structural weaknesses" which shackled their college freshmen.[71] And others were equally concerned with the low standards in college composition courses which resulted from students who were poorly prepared at the high school level. Finally, the whole issue was further complicated by colleges which made it a practice to "accept as worthy and approved candidates all and sundry who have had the necessary fee in hand."[72]

Unfortunately for both the students and the teachers, most of these complaints evidenced a surprising ignorance on the part of the teachers about language in general--an ignorance which often guided curricula and methodology. One program, for example, emphasizing "a book of rhetoric and conscientious correction of themes," demands a thorough knowledge of grammar because "the student cannot be taught to write <u>correct</u> [my italics] English or clear and forceful English if he has no knowledge of

the basic word relationships in the sentence."[73] Aside from the fact that correct is a vague word in any discussion of language, the statement is quite true. The mistake comes in assuming that a native speaker of the language, someone who has been producing sentences which move far beyond "basic word relationships," does not possess this knowledge. Such programs as the one mentioned above continue to teach freshman composition as a step-by-step process in which students first study words, then sentences, then paragraphs, then essays. They continue to assume that this kind of building-block process, in which skills are piled on top of each other, will produce good writers, and they also continue to assume that there can be "no 'next step'" until the students "can habitually write complete sentences."[74] Quite simply, English teachers had not been reading the linguists.

By 1959 the confusion over "What is English?" "Why teach it?" and "How do you teach it?" was again clearly in evidence. Was English a study of cultural heritage, the best that had been thought and said, an in-depth study of sweetness and light? Or if not culture, was it anarchy? Or was it "ad hoc training in how to write a letter, how to give a radio speech, manners, dating, telephoning, vocational guidance?"[75] Some teachers were discriminating between students who wrote "to express themselves" and students who wrote "to

communicate." They wondered which the student should do, but they never clearly defined the difference.[76] And to complicate matters no one wanted to teach freshmen composition anyway.[77]

The Dartmouth Seminar was a concentrated attempt to solve some of these problems, and, if possible, clearly articulate some future directions for English teachers at all levels. Certainly the most important point made by this conference is that English is not just an uninvolved, academic examination of language and literature, nor is it a bastard subject made up of a series of misfit topics and unrelated activities. It is, in fact, people talking, writing, thinking, acting, interacting. It is human experience and the ways that experience is communicated. It is both a subject and a process.

In a book deriving from the Dartmouth Seminar, Growth Through English, John Dixon suggests that the "New English" must attempt to engage the whole person and involve him in a wide spectrum of activities that contribute to his total language growth. In more concrete terms, this means that instead of practicing sets of skills or correcting common language errors in hopes of some kind of transfer of learning, the English classroom should be the place for wide varieties of structured and unstructured activities involving formal and informal talking, writing of all kinds, improvisation and role

playing, reading, acting and reacting, and whatever else helps the students grow mentally, desire to communicate their experiences, and become conscious of the methods they employ to make their communications interesting and effective.

But before elaborating on this new English and its specific implications for the teacher of freshman English, it will be beneficial to examine its validity in terms of what we know about human learning. Though no one may ever answer Charles Chauncy's plea for someone to speak plainly about matters of human learning, the following chapter attempts to clearly present my own attitudes toward the subject and what I see to be the theoretical foundations of the new English.

CHAPTER III

EDUCATION: HOW AND WHY

> When the Philosophy of man (his nature, his goals, his potentialities, his fulfillment) changes, then everything changes. Not only the philosophhy of politics, of economics, of ethics and values, of interpersonal relations and of history itself change, but also the philosophy of education, the theory of how to help men become what they can and deeply need to become.
>
> We are now in the middle of such a change in the conception of man's capacities, potentialities and goals. A new vision is emerging of the possibilities of man and of his destiny, and its implications are many, not only for our conceptions of education, but also for science, politics, literature, economics, religion, and even our conceptions of the non-human world.[1]

By 1970, technological advances had raced science to its outer limits, and television, the focal point in many homes, had made it possible to watch current events as they actually happened. Political structures, religious structures, family structures--many long-accepted traditions, customs, and systems of belief were being seriously questioned by young and old alike. Civil disobedience had become a common means of effecting change, and the colleges and universities had become "a battlefield and a negotiating table in the ceaseless war between generations."[2]

It is in the midst of this change and occasional chaos that people everywhere are searching for ways to improve man's lot. As scientists strive to help man avoid destroying his world through overpopulation and pollution, they are faced with the need of better understanding the environment and discovering a safe means of controlling it. Likewise, as educators strive for more effective means of preparing man to live within his environment, they are faced with the need to better understand how it is that man learns, and (once that complex question is settled), what it is that man should learn. In his book Education for What is Real, Earl Kelley begins his quest for a better system of education by listing what he sees as the most damaging assumptions of traditional education:[3]

1. We assume that a child goes to school to acquire knowledge, and that knowledge is something which has existed for a long time and is handed down on authority.
2. We assume that subject matter taken on authority is educative in itself.
3. We assume that the best way to set out subject matter is in unassociated fragments or parcels.[4]
4. We assume that a fragment of parcel of subject matter is the same to the learner as to the teacher.
5. We assume that education is supplementary to and preparatory to life, not life itself.
6. We assume that since education is not present living, it has no social aspects.
7. We assume that the teacher can and should furnish the purpose needed for the acquiring of knowledge.
8. We assume that working on tasks devoid of purpose or interest is good discipline.
9. We assume that the answer to a problem is more important than the process.
10. We assume that it is more important to measure what has been learned than it is to learn.

From Kelley's point of view, these assumptions are not only damaging, they are false. Unfortunately, their acceptance has resulted in an educational system which is more concerned with measuring and fragmenting than it is with the mental health and growth of the students for whom it exists. Like Cotton Mather, too many educators still view students as empty vessels waiting to be filled. They have done little more than update the metaphor by looking upon students as computers waiting to be programmed with all the facts necessary to function and succeed in a technocracy. They have become more concerned with short-term skill development and observable behavioral changes than with long range growth and learning.[5]

This preoccupation with things instead of people and with behavior modification rather than learning has led to exactly what Alfred North Whitehead had cautioned against as early as 1929: i.e., the teaching of inert ideas, "ideas that are merely received into the mind without being utilised, or tested, or thrown into fresh combinations."[6] It led to a system of education which produces the student who, as Emerson says, is "a mere thinker, or still worse, the parrot of other men's thinking."[7]

In order to change this undesirable state of affairs, in order to produce "Man Thinking,"[8] educators need to change their conception of how man learns. One of the most exciting theories of how man learns, and a

theory which supports many of the ideas proposed at the Dartmouth Seminar, derives from a conglomerate of works by men like Jean Piaget, Lev Semenovich Vygotsky, John Dewey, Earl Kelley, Jerome Bruner, James Moffett, and Neil Postman and Charles Weingartner. The following description of this cognitive theory of learning focuses on the works of Bruner, Moffett, and Postman and Weingartner, and the relationships between their ideas.

Generally speaking, these men see learning in terms of healthy mental and intellectual growth, and they differ from progressive educators in the fact that they begin with the individual's needs, rather than society's needs. The underlying assumption is that the system which promotes efficient mental and intellectual growth in individuals ultimately creates the elements most necessary in a healthy, progressive society. Jerome Bruner defines this kind of growth as follows:

1. Growth is characterized by increasing independence of response from immediate nature of the stimulus.
2. Growth depends upon internalizing events into a "storage system" that corresponds to the environment.
3. Intellectual growth involves an increasing capacity to say to oneself and others, by means of words or symbols, what one has done or what one will do.
4. Intellectual development depends upon a systematic and contingent interaction between a tutor and a learner. . . .
5. Teaching is vastly facilitated by the medium of language, which ends by being not only the medium for exchange but the instrument that the learner can then use himself in bringing order into the environment.

6. Intellectual development is marked by increasing capacity to deal with several alternatives simultaneously, to tend to several sequences during the same period of time, and to allocate time and attention in a manner appropriate to these multiple demands.[9]

Put more simply, growth means an increased ability to work with abstractions; it depends on the ability to categorize; it involves interior monologue about exterior experience; it depends on controlled interaction between the learner and the teacher; it is closely related to language; and it is marked by the learner's increasing ability to see the various solutions to problems and their implications. Points 2, 3, 4, and 5 of Bruner's definition all spotlight the importance of language facility to the learner and the importance of the English teacher to the learner's total growth. This point is further emphasized in the work of men like Piaget and Vygotsky, who point out that the egocentric speech of the child either reflects or actually redirects activity when impediments are introduced. It also acts as a means of problem solving as the child works the problem out for himself. As the child grows older, he seems to internalize the egocentric speech and it becomes a part of the adult problem-solving process:[10]

> The inner speech of the adult represents his "thinking for himself" rather than social adaptation; i.e., it has the same function that egocentric speech has in the child. It also has the same structural characteristics: Out of context, it would be incomprehensible

> to others because it omits to "mention" what is obvious to the "speaker." These similarities lead us to assume that when egocentric speech disappears from view it does not simply atrophy but "goes underground," i.e., turns into inner speech. Our observation that at the age when this change is taking place children facing difficult situations resort now to egocentric speech, now to silent reflection, indicates that the two can be functionally equivalent. It is our hypothesis that the processes of inner speech develop and become stabilized approximately at the beginning of school age and that this causes the quick drop in egocentric speech observed at that stage.[11]

In his book Teaching the Universe of Discourse, James Moffett deals with these same problems of the relationship of language teaching to the processes of the individual's mental health and growth from a somewhat different point of view. Moffett uses the process of abstraction to describe growth or learning, and he begins by discussing the two major elements of abstraction. The first is "the ranging of the mind's materials in hierarchies of classes and sub-classes, superordinates and subordinates."[12] To exemplify what he means by hierarchies, Moffett compares international trade to bartering: that is, bartering is a sub-class of international trade. Or, bartering is more concrete than the higher abstraction of international trade because, unlike the complex and diverse activities which span much time and space in international trade, bartering has a specific referent in time and space. It can be observed.

The person who has no idea of the meaning of bartering or trading at its most elemental level is not

going to understand the more complex and abstract idea of international trade. An example of the difficulties which arise for the learner who comes across an idea for which he has no classes or sub-classes is clearly illustrated in Herman Melville's Moby Dick. Queequeg tells Ishmael about the time some ship owners lent him a wheelbarrow so that he might more easily transport his sea locker and other equipment to the inn at which he was staying:

> Not to seem ignorant about the thing--though in truth he was entirely so concerning the precise way in which to manage the barrow--Queequeg puts his chest upon it; lashes it fast; and then shoulders the barrow and marches up the wharf. "Why," said I [Ishmael], "Queequeg, you might have known better than that, one would think. Didn't the people laugh?"[13]

In short, if a person perceives something that has no place in any of his past experience, something about which he knows nothing, he either must begin a new class, or like Queequeg, attempt to force his new perception into a class to which it does not belong. It may be, then, that people often appear stupid only because they have forced a perception into the wrong class and then acted in terms of it.

The second element of abstraction is the process of selection: the process of

> constructing in one's mind an object out of the indivisible phenomenal world by singling out some environmental features and ignoring others. As Alfred Korzybski never tired of pointing out, we

> can never abstract all the features of our surroundings. First of all, our attention itself is selective; we notice what we need and want to notice and what we have learned to notice. Secondly, even of those things our attention settles on we can only register a few features, for two reasons: our receptors are limited, and our prior gestalts dictate what is significant and what is not.[14]

And once again, Queequeg illustrates the point. This time the story indicates the limitations past experience places upon the perceiver, and how the process of selection can cause considerable difficulty for the perceiver if he should select the wrong things because of what he needs, wants, or expects.

After Ishmael listens to Queequeg's story and reacts with undisguised incredulity at Queequeg's stupidity, the tattooed harpooner relates another story, this time about a very proper ship's Captain who came to the wedding feast in honor of Queequeg's ten-year-old sister. It was a tribal custom to fill a large calabash with coconut milk and place the gourd in the middle of the table. Grace is then said, and

> the High Priest opens the banquet by the immemorial ceremony of the island; that is, dipping his consecrated and consecrating fingers into the bowl before the blessed beverage circulates. Seeing himself placed next to the Priest, and noting the ceremony, and thinking himself--being Captain of a ship--as having plain precedence over a mere island King, especially in the King's own house--the Captain cooly proceeds to wash his hands in the punch bowl; --taking it I suppose for huge fingerglass. "Now," said Queequeg, "what you tink now?--Didn't our people laugh?"[15]

Unlike Queequeg in the wheelbarrow story, the Captain is not undergoing a totally new experience. There can be little doubt that he has attended other wedding ceremonies and observed ritual blessings of bread and wine in Christian religious services. He has classes in which to place the High Priest's ceremonial blessing. His problem is that he chooses to select only certain details and think in terms of Western customs. He sees what he wants and expects to see.

These processes, then, of ranging materials in hierarchies and classes and of selecting form the core of Moffett's definition of abstraction:

> A definition of abstraction, in sum, must center on a notion of selection; but this selection, as it operates through perception, memory, and generalization, implies some reorganization of features according to the nature of the apparatus doing the selecting and according to previous knowledge systems that have grown in the organism. A definiton must also include the notion of hierarchy and hierarchical integration--or orders of symbolization and stages of internal processing. The combining of propositions cannot take place until classes exist, and classes depend on the categorizing of experience, which presupposes memories or perceptions. Abstraction, by selecting and ranking the elements of experience, reduces reality to manageable summaries. To abstract is to trade a loss of reality for a gain in control.[16]

Furthermore, as regards Queequeg and the Captain, this attempt at control can backfire seriously if a hierarchical system is lacking or if the perceiver selects the wrong details.

A third view of learning, significantly similar to Bruner's and Moffett's, is that of Neil Postman and Charles Weingartner, who discuss how man learns in terms of a theory of perception. The theory discussed by Postman and Weingartner derives from experiments performed by Dr. Ames in 1938 and is described at length by these two writers as follows:

> [Ames] was born in 1880. He graduated from Harvard, practiced law, later studied art, and painted for a number of years. His interest in art led to an interest in physiological optics, and he obtained a research fellowship at Clark University which he held until World War I. After the war, Ames went to Dartmouth as a research professor, first in the Department of Physiological Optics, and then in the Dartmouth Eye Institute, which he established. He died in 1955, largely unknown to the people who could profit most by his work, namely teachers.
>
> Beginning in 1938, Ames created a series of "demonstrations" designed to study the nature of perception. His "laboratory" included oddly shaped rooms, chairs, windows and other objects which seemed to "distort" reality when perceived by ordinary people. Perhaps his most impressive "demonstration" is the trapezoidal window which revolved in a 360° circle. The perceiver, however, observes that the window turns 180°, stops, and then turns back 180°. Some of the people who were shown the "demonstrations" were not convinced that they had any significance and labeled them "optical illusions." But a few thought otherwise, including Albert Einstein, Dewey, Hadley Cantril, and Earl Kelley. Dewey believed that Ames had provided empirical evidence for the "transactionsl psychology" he and Arthur Bentley had formulated in Knowing and the Known. This term was used by them to minimize the mechanistic oversimplification caused by the use of the term "interaction." The sense of "transactional psychology" is that what human beings are and what they make their environment into is a product of a mutually simultaneous, highly complex, and continuing "bargaining" process between what is inside their skins and outside. Dewey believed that Ames had provided substantial understandings of the nature of that bargaining process.

> Cantril sensed that Ames' work had great significance for social psychology and developed the point in his book The "Why" of Man's Experience. Kelley saw at once the meanings of the demonstrations for education. In his book Education for What Is Real (with an introduction by Dewey), he describes Ames' experiments in detail, and suggests how these studies in perception, if understood and applied, would change the schooling process. In our judgment, it is the best "education" book written in the past 20 years and probably one of the least known. What is it that Ames seemed to prove? The first and most important fact uncovered by his perception studies is that we do not get our perceptions from the "things" around us. Our perceptions come from us. This does not mean that there is nothing outside of our skins. It does mean that whatever is "out there" can never be known except as it is filtered through a human nervous system. We can never get outside of our own skins. "Reality" is a perception, located somewhere behind the eyes.[17]

Continuing their own abstraction processes, then, Postman and Weingartner select and classify from Ames' experiments and Kelley's commentary on these experiments, and hypothesize the following six points about perception:[18]

1. Perception comes from within us.[19]

2. Our perceptions depend on our past experiences, needs, and abstraction systems: that is, we perceive what we expect, want, or assume.

3. "We are unlikely to alter our perceptions until and unless we are frustrated in our attempts to do something based on them. . . . The ability to learn can be seen as the ability to relinquish inappropriate perceptions and to develop new--more workable--ones."[20]

4. Individuals have unique perceptions of reality: "communication is possible only to the extent that two perceivers have similar purposes, assumptions, and experience. The process of becoming an effective social being is contingent upon seeing the other's point of view."[21]

5. Perception depends on the perceiver's systems of categories and classes.

6. "The meaning of perception is how it causes us to act."

These six points have far-reaching implications for all teachers, and points four and five have particular application to the teacher of English. First, if perception comes from within the individual, and second, if his past experiences, needs, and abstraction systems significantly control his perceptions, it is most likely that some people will perceive things quite differently from others, as Moffett indicates in his discussion of selection. And to state the obvious, if there is an objective, external reality, and if people disagree on the nature of that reality, someone's perceptions must be wrong, and something must be done to help one or both of the people alter his perception.

This need to alter someone's perceptions introduces an important step in the learning process, namely, that of motivating the individual to analyze his original perception, or as Postman and Weingartner suggest in their third point, helping the person to discover that he cannot act successfully on his original perception. In science this might mean simply allowing a student to experiment on the basis of whatever hypotheses he has formed to see whether or not they hold true in actual practice. If his experiments do not work as he plans, he must alter his

perceptions and categorize whatever new information he may discover. At any rate, his perception is far more real and immediate than if he is simply told that his experiment will not work. He learns from actual experience and is intimately involved with his learning process.

Though the problem is more complex in the case of English, the point is equally true for the student who writes something of great importance to himself and finds that he has not communicated the emotion or experience he has intended. The obstacle, here, is a lack of common understanding and the motivation to alter the piece of writing derives from man's natural desire to communicate with other men. If the student is given the chance, he will find out through a discussion with his peers what it was that caused his writing to fail and how he might change the paper so that it will accomplish what he intends.

And of course, for both of these hypothetical students there is a further dimension, because once they have discovered the technical information (how the experiment works and how to best communicate the personal experience in writing), they can discuss the experiment or personal experience with other students and gain even more precise perceptions of the implications of their experiences. This step of discussion and interaction is extremely important because it is the only way of

overcoming the fact that perceptions are unique to the individual. The science student is forced to generalize his information[22] after he has thought it through, so that the other perceivers or students can understand what he is talking about. Likewise, once the writer has found a common ground on which he can base his act of communication (this common ground includes a mutual language and then mutually accepted metaphors, connotations, inferences, etc.), he and his fellow perceivers can further investigate what it is that has been communicated.

The fifth point mentioned by Postman and Weingartner, that perception depends on the learner's system of categories and classes, is identical to points made by Moffett in his discussion of abstraction. And just as Queequeg's stories illustrated Moffet's ideas, they also illustrate Postman and Weingartner's sixth point: that perception finds meaning in action. Neither Queequeg's perception of the wheelbarrow nor the Captain's perception of the punch bowl have any external meaning until they act upon those perceptions. When they do act, they immediately find that their perceptions are radically different from those around them. In terms of his own perception, neither man was wrong. But in terms of those around him, each man appears ridiculous.

Finally then, by selecting, categorizing, and combining the ideas of Bruner, Moffett, and Postman and

Weingartner, I propose the following description of the learning process. An individual perceives (hears, sees, feels, thinks, smells, tastes) something. He may use language first to explain this new perception to himself, and second, to explain his perception to another individual who has perceived something similar. Because their perceptions have been slightly different, they interact in an attempt to come to some common understanding. Using language as best they can, they discuss their perceptions, come as close to agreement as possible, and categorize the perception in terms of their past experiences. The process may end here for the moment, or the process of categorizing may lead to new conclusions and new perceptions. At a more sophisticated level, the dialogue and interaction may be entirely interior--that is, an individual may 'talk to himself' by comparing one perception with another to see how they match up logically.

If this is applied to the teacher and classroom situations, it means that teachers must pay more heed to individual differences; they must allow students to make mistakes so that the students will not be afraid to ask how to use a wheelbarrow; and they must encourage them to discuss their perceptions before they act in terms of them. In short, the classroom must open up and become human--to do less is to miseducate.

Unfortunately, many teachers think of teaching and learning as separate processes, and it is this kind of misconception which allows them to become immersed in their subjects, motivated to teach their subject for its own sake, as though it had a purpose and a life totally independent of the teacher and the learner:

> There are thousands of teachers who teach "subjects" such as Shakespeare or the Industrial Revolution, or geometry because they are inclined to enjoy talking about such matters. In fact that is why they became teachers. It is also why their students fail to become competent learners. There are thousands of teachers who define a "bad" student as any student who doesn't respond to what has been prescribed for him. There are still thousands more who teach one thing or another under the supposition that the "subject" will do something for their students which, in fact, it does not do, and never did, and, indeed, which most evidence indicates, does just the opposite. And so on.[23]

Such a system teaches students that passivity is good, that memory is golden, that authority prescribes truth, that questions always have answers, and that English differs from history, which differs from music, which differs from art.[24] Such a system does not respect the individual's emotions, "the subjective happenings inside oneself," because it does not have time for the student.

Such a system rejects the natural curiosity and motivation of the learner, a curiosity and motivation so clearly stated in Whitman's "Beginning My Studies":

> Beginning my studies the first step pleas'd me so much,
> The mere fact consciousness, these forms, the power of motion,
> The least insect or animal, the senses, eyesight, love
> The first step I say awed me and pleas'd me so much,
> I have hardly gone and hardly wish'd to go any farther,
> But stop and loiter all the time to sing it in ecstatic songs.[25]

And it also rejects the advice Whitman gives the student in "To a Pupil":

> Go, dear friend, if need be give up all else, and commence to-day to inure yourself to pluck, reality, self-esteem, definiteness, elevatedness,
> Rest not till you rivet and publish yourself of your own Personality.[26]

Quite the contrary, then, from the present system of education, these lines from Whitman suggest that students should have time to explore and experience and discover; they should have time to stop and loiter; and if they have a song, they should be given a chance to sing it. Education must allow the learner to discover his self, and as Whitman says, to publish that self once it is discovered. The subject matter of education is human experience, and the purpose of education is to promote a better understanding of man's experience in an attempt to facilitate mental health and intellectual growth. The ultimate goal of education must be to produce the fully-functioning person.

First, as regards subject matter, Alfred North Whitehead has said that the proper subject for education is

> Life in all its manifestations. [But] instead of this single unity, we offer children--Algebra, from which nothing follows; Geometry, from which nothing follows; a Couple of Languages, never mastered; and lastly, most dreary of all, Literature, represented by plays of Shakespeare, with philological notes and short analyses of plot and character to be in substance committed to memory. Can such a list be said to represent Life, as it is known in the midst of the living of it? The best that can be said of it is, that it is a rapid table of contents which a deity might run over in his mind while he was thinking of creating a world, and had not yet determined how to put it together.[27]

And John Dewey seconds Whitehead in his belief that education needs

> an imaginative vision which sees that no prescribed and ready-made scheme can possibly determine the exact subject matter that will best promote the educative growth of every individual young person; that every individual sets a new problem; that he calls for at least a somewhat different emphasis in subject-matter presented. There is nothing more blindly obtuse than the convention which supposes that the matter actually contained in textbooks of arithmetic, history, geography, etc., is just what will further the educational development of all children.[28]

This new view sees education as a process and the student in a constant state of becoming. It sees knowledge as the product of experience. It recognizes that it must deal with the "insistent present" because the present includes the past and looks forward to the future, and it accepts and promotes the belief that ideas are important to the individual "here and now in the circumstances of his actual life."[29] It focuses on man's natural propensity for conversation, curiosity, construction, and expression.[30]

It agrees with Marshall McLuhan when he says that our new work is growing up, "mere instruction will not suffice."[31]

Second, if the subject matter of education is life, the purpose of education is to promote the mental health and growth of the individual.[32] Ideally, the goal of education is to produce the fully-functioning person: a person who relates to and accepts other people; a person who realizes his interdependence on others; a person who views life as a process of becoming, accepting and expecting change. The fully-functioning (or self-actualizing) person expects to make mistakes, but he profits from them. His values coincide with the common welfare, and he lives consistently in terms of them; "he has no need for subterfuge or deceit, because he is motivated by the value of facilitating self and others." And because he sees life as "discovery and adventure," he sees himself in a creative role, interacting with and discovering his world.[33] Finally, then, it is the job of education to provide experiences that facilitate and enhance the individual's process of becoming[34] because, "A truly healthy person is not something fixed and completed. He is a person whose process and activities go on in such a way that he will continue to be healthy."[35]

Of course, no one is pretending that mass production of fully-functioning students is possible; such a goal is as unattainable as it is noble (and paradoxical).

But progress toward the goal is certainly conceivable; in fact, it is necessary.

Many of the comments in this chapter should clearly indicate that the traditional, authoritarian method does not often facilitate fully-functioning people because it too often meets only the needs of the teacher and seriously limits the "expanding personalities" of the students.[36] Individuals are unique ("self consists, in part at least of the accumulated experiential background or backlog, of the individual"), and the experiences which further the growth of one individual are not necessarily good for another individual.[37]

It should also be clear that the learner must be genuinely motivated to learn, and he should have some part in directing his own learning experiences. First, the fully-functioning person must be actively involved in shaping his destiny; he must direct his growth at least as much as it is directed by others: "Perhaps there is no one quality more important for the developing self than this feeling of involvement in what is taking place."[38] Second, the individual will not learn unless he is motivated:

> There is no way to help a learner to be disciplined, active and thoroughly engaged unless he perceives a problem to be a problem or whatever is to-be-learned as worth learning, and unless he plays an active role in determining the process of solution. That is the plain, unvarnished truth, and if it sounds like warmed-over "progressive education," it is not any

> less true for it. . . . No one has ever said that children themselves are the only, or necessarily the best, source for articulating relevant areas of inquiry. What has been said is that, regardless of its source, unless an unquiry is perceived as relevant by the learner, no significant learning will take place. No one will learn anything he doesn't want to know.[39]

Finally, all this adds up to the glaringly obvious point that the authoritarian method must be replaced by the student-centered teaching, not as an ideal, but as a necessity. People learn to crawl, stand, walk, and run because they want to--the acts fulfill personal needs. They learn the complicated process of speech adequately by the age of five because they want to communicate. They love to explore and question and discover because it is exciting and fun. The student-centered courses not only take all this into account, they depend on these natural inclinations.

In summary, the student-centered course focuses on the needs and capabilities of individual students. It differs from the child-centered courses of the progressive education movement because it does not seek to fit the student into society; rather, it seeks only to facilitate the growth and learning of fully functioning individuals who will make their own decisions about society and their place in it. It demands that students be involved in the shaping of curricula--that they, in fact, are the center around which teachers and subject matter must revolve. It

demands that students assist in organizing educational experiences and that education actively deal with the problems of the individual student.[40] It demands that skills be emphasized only insofar as they aid in the completion of an act worth completing, and not as ends in themselves. And it demands that students be allowed to make mistakes and not be penalized, but instead encouraged to try again and learn from the error.

Student-centeredness demands honesty and mutual respect. It demands that the schools open their doors to human emotion, an element that has been kept outside too long. It demands that everyone stop worrying about covering, or getting through pages 35 to 50 on Monday and begin worrying about whether or not a student is learning anything--learning in the sense that he is becoming a better and fuller person more capable of relating to himself and those around him. Student centeredness demands that teachers begin to ask why of themselves and of their students, always encouraging productive, open inquiry.[42] And finally, student centeredness demands that teachers reject the notion that "certain facts and truths possess educational value in and of themselves," and face the fact that a steady "diet of predigested materials" causes only indigestion for the organism unprepared for the meal.[43]

CHAPTER IV

THE DRAMA OF THE ENGLISH CLASS

Before moving directly into the general overview of the goals, activities and sequencing of activities for freshman composition, this chapter explores the personal-growth model of English, the language attitudes underlying this student-centered approach, and the theories which support treating the classroom as a theatre and the learning process as a drama. Having set the stage in this manner, I will then explore the implications that all these points have for the freshman composition course.

A good beginning point for this investigation of the new English is John Dixon's book, Growth Through English, which describes the revolutionary ideas presented at the Dartmouth Seminar (The Anglo-American Conference on the Teaching of English) at Hanover, New Hampshire in 1966. The Seminar is important because it brought together some of the best English teachers and scholars from the United States and England; it is revolutionary because these men rejected older attitudes toward English

and redefined it as both a process (or set of activities) and as a field of study.

In his opening chapter, Dixon points out the three most clearly definable models of or attitudes toward English:

> The first centered on skills: it fitted an era when initial literacy was the prime demand. The second stressed the cultural heritage, the need for a civilizing and socially unifying content. The third (and current) model focuses on personal growth: on the need to re-examine the learning processes and the meaning to the individual of what he is doing in English lessons. Looking back over the history of our subject, we see the limitations in the earlier models and thus the need to reinterpret our conception of "skills" and "heritage."[1]

The major limitation of the skills model lies in "the vast terrain it chooses to ignore." For example, a skills approach to reading emphasizes accurate decoding of the written word; in writing, this approach emphasizes the 'correct' reproduction of the written language according to a set of arbitrary (but fixed) rules. And although accurate encoding and decoding are important for any student, this skills approach ignores the relationship set up between the reader and writer, the experience the reader has with his new set of perceptions, and the value judgments he inevitably makes. It also fails to deal with the writer's personal involvement with his subject (and therefore with his language and style of writing), with the writer's committment to both his material and his reader, and with the writer's attempt to understand,

organize, and articulate his own experience so that he can clearly and interestingly communicate whatever he has to say. This approach forgets that skills are a means to an end, and "whenever the so-called skill elements of language learning are divorced from the rest of English, the means becomes the end."[3]

The second model (cultural heritage) became popular as an attempt to return skills to their proper place as means to an end and engage the student in a study of all that is best in his heritage. The problem with such an approach was that it generally viewed culture as a given: that is, there was one good culture which contained certain good books, good paintings, good scores of music. It ignored "Culture as the pupil knows it, a network of attitudes to experience and personal evaluations that he develops in a living response to his family and neighbourhood."[4] Furthermore, because it looked only to the past, the cultural heritage approach reasserted for teachers of English that the written word was more noteworthy and more deserving of reverence than the spoken word:

> It confirmed the average teacher in his attention to the written word (the point of strength in his training) as against the spoken word (the pupils' strength). It confirmed him too in presenting experience (in fictions) to his pupils, rather than drawing from them their experience (of reality and the self).[5]

The third model focuses on personal growth and is the model which I believe to be the most valid. Instead of defining English as only a thing--skills or cultural heritage--it defines English as a set of activities the students engage in through language. The personal growth model sees the purpose of language as follows: "Recalling experience, getting it clear, giving it shape and making connections, speculating and building theories, celebrating (or exorcizing) particular moments of our lives."[6] In general terms, then, the "New" English (the personal growth model) is most concerned with promoting healthy mental growth by encouraging students to engage in normal language activities, by encouraging them to do language as opposed to simply studying it. This approach does not reject skills or cultural heritage, it simply attempts to incorporate them in a larger perspective.

Furthermore, the personal growth model is not fragmented. It does not see reading, writing, talking, and listening as separate entities. It realizes that to separate these activities into different 'subjects' or 'classes' is to impose an artificial fragmentation on the whole that is language activity. The New English accepts the necessity for a unifying approach which views language activity as a combination of reading, writing, talking, and acting; it stresses the relationships between these activities; and it uses these natural relationships to aid the students in their language growth:[7]

> The Seminar's decision to advocate a unitary rather than a fragmented approach to English has important consequences. If in the course of reading some poems with a class, the teacher sees possibilities for acting, or if in the accompanying talk pupils are so seized with the topic that they want to write, then a unitary approach permits the flow from a prepared activity to one relatively unforseen. Lessons become less preformulated. This is not to reject pre-planning and system: on the contrary, a teacher who is planning flexibility needs to consider beforehand many possible avenues that his pupils may discover in the course of a lesson, so that whichever catches their enthusiasm he is aware of its possibilities. The more active the part pupils are given, the more difficult to predict all that they will find and uncover: thus the need for flexible teaching strategy rather than rigid lesson plans, and for teachers confidently able to move with a class for instance from reading My Childhood to discussing old people they know or to acting encounters of youth and age.[8]

Thus, in a course based on the "new" English, languaging is the primary activity, and the purpose is for the student to learn and to articulate what he learns or whatever he and the teacher have attempted to learn. It is the teacher's job to motivate the students, to afford the opportunities to experience things which the students will want to talk and write about, to introduce the students to reading materials which will broaden their intellectual horizons, and to organize the students' activities in such a way that they will operate in an efficient, logical sequence. In short, it is the teacher's job to help the students teach each other:

> The main business of the English teacher is not instruction in any direct sense, nor even teaching in the sense which may be applicable in some other

> subjects. It is the provision of abundant opportunity for the child to use English under the conditions which will most conduce to improvement; opportunity, that is, to use his mother-tongue in each of its four modes (listening, speaking, reading and writing) and for all the varied purposes (practical, social, imaginative, creative) which make up its totality; opportunity moreover to use it under expert guidance and in situations which will develop ultimately his power to be self-critical about his own efforts.[9]

First and foremost, the study of English should promote the personal growth and mental health of the students by encouraging them to investigate, order, and express their own private world of self; by encouraging the free and open interchange of ideas about subjects of importance and interest; and by respecting their curiosity, affording them the opportunity to be wrong, and accepting their attempts at communication as attempts to give parts of themselves to their audience. But before a teacher can begin to implement methods for achieving such a far-reaching goal, he must have a clear understanding of language and how it functions.

English is a skill or a set of skills which aids people in talking, listening, reading, and writing. At the basic and most naive level of language skills, talking and writing involve encoding or the production of a symbol system, and listening and reading involve decoding or the receiving of a symbol system.[10] But English is not simple, and the production and reception of language include much more than the basic skills of encoding and decoding.

Language is the means man has devised to communicate with his fellow man, to order his experience and express it externally through a commonly accepted symbol system. It is, as Frank Whitehead says, a primary tool for "establishing, preserving and strengthening the bonds of relationship between people . . . a kind of 'social cement.'"[11] Yet, at the same time that language is social, it is also private, and as I suggested in the last chapter, it is an integral part of the thinking and learning process. James Dixon says:

> The fact is that in sharing experience with others man is using language to make that experience real to himself. The selections and shaping that language involves, the choices between alternative expressions so that the language shall fit the experience and bring it to life "as it really was"--these activities imply imaginative work. If we could observe all the occasions when a child uses language in this way, and put them together, we should have caught a glimpse of a representational world that the child has built up to fit reality as he knows it.[12]

[And]

> At the level of language we can say this: we make for ourselves a representational world, sense out to the full its ability to stand for experience as we meet it, come up against its limitations, and then shoulder--if we dare--the task of making it afresh, extending, reshaping it, and bringing into new relationships all the old elements. Learning to use language continues so long as we are open to new experience and ready to adapt and modify the linguistic representation (the world) we have made for experience.[13]

Language, then, is social in the sense that we use it constantly to communicate with our fellow human beings, but this social use is preceded by a private use of language which allows us to shape and order our perceptions of reality.[14] It is an integral part of the learning process (of 'thinking') because it is one of the most common and important tools we have for examining and sharing our perceptions of ourselves and of our experiences (our thoughts). As James Moffett says:

> I am convinced that a very large measure of what educators mean by "teaching students to think" is in reality making them conscious of abstracting but is, unfortunately, seldom viewed this way. A salutary approach is to conceive the task as learning how to re-think or un-think. If a student becomes aware of his abstractive process by discoursing progressively up the hierarchy, and by examining his discourses in collaboration with peers and a guiding adult, he has an opportunity to correct and adjust his cognition. Josh Billings once said that people's problems come not so much from their ignorance as from knowing so many things that are not so.[15]

Moffett, of course, views language as the means of becoming aware of the abstraction process and as the means of externalizing abstractions so that they can be discussed and modified if necessary. From such a point of view, learning is dependent on a series of events: an experience of some sort; an attempt to catalogue (think about) the experience; the imposition of order on the experience;[16] the outward representation of the experience through language; and the discussion and

possible modification of the original perception. Now, the process having come full circle, it may be repeated in terms of the new or modified perception. Recalling Moffett's discussion of the learning process may help here:

> A child frequently over-abstracts as well as under-abstracts: he cuts his world into a few simple categories that cover too much and discriminate too little, and that display no subordinate or superordinate relations among themselves. Or he makes a generalization that is too broad for the meager experience it is based on. He fails to qualify and quantify his statements. Judging only by the surface generality of his words and sentences, one would conclude that he was thinking at a high level of abstraction. But he may be understanding "international trade" as "barter," not as the complex of activities adults understand by the word. That is, he may use early many concepts that only later will take on the meaning adults give to them. And his concepts are all ranged in his mind on the same plane, awaiting the time when he will rank them hierarchically as super- and sub-classes of each other or laterally as coordinate classes. His generalizations will begin, however, to collide and conjoin, qualifying each other or building syllogistically on each other. This increasing interrelationship corresponds to the organism's continual reintegration of differentiated functions. So, as regards individual concepts and statements, growth is toward internal complexity and external relationship. In the sense that abstraction means hierarchical integration, the child does climb the ladder as he matures, but this integration necessarily depends on a downward thrust into discriminations, and subclasses. He is on a two-way street: sometimes he needs to trace his over-generalizations down to their inadequate sources and sometimes he needs to build new ideas from the ground up. He needs to place "pop fly" under "parabolic trajectory," to subordinate propositions as well as classes to each other, to derive higher abstractions from lower ones, and to utilize lower ones as instances of higher ones.[17]

Thus, recalling the theory of learning presented in the last chapter and including Moffett's point that "development of symbolic expression depends on nothing less than general mental growth,"[18] it becomes clear that growth in language ability, personal experience, and general intellectual growth are circularly dependent on each other. English is a symbol system, and "symbol systems are not primarily about themselves; they are about other subjects. When a student 'learns' one of these systems, he learns how to operate it. The main point is to think and talk about other things by means of this system."[19] The reason people bother to learn how to use the symbol system is so that they can shape, order, and communicate their experiences. And general mental growth depends on the shaping, ordering, and modification of perceptions (ideas, experiences) through language.

Furthermore, the teacher who accepts this theory of learning must necessarily question the general state of education and the methods of teaching English outlined in chapters one and two of this document. First, this questioning brings about a need for a statement of the purpose of higher education, and Ralph Waldo Emerson supplies an excellent one:

> [Colleges] can only highly serve us when they aim not to drill, but to create; when they gather from far every ray of various genius to their hospitable halls, and by the concentrated fires, set the hearts of their youth on flame.[20]

Second, the questioning should focus on the nature of the classroom and the activities which go on inside classrooms: what things facilitate learning? Again Emerson supplies an answer:

> Years are well spent in country labors; in town; in the insight into trades and manufactures; in frank intercourse with many men and women; in science; in art; to the one end of mastering in all their facts a language by which to illustrate and embody our perceptions. . . . This is the way to learn grammar. Colleges and books only copy the language which the field and the work-yard made.[21]

And third, this questioning should result in a clearly stated position on the subject of 'good' English, a position which relies on fact rather than linguistic biases. Robert C. Pooley supplies such a statement:

> Good English is that form of speech which is appropriate to the purpose of the speaker, true to the language as it is, and comfortable to speaker and listener. It is the product of custom neither cramped by rule nor freed from all restraint; it is never fixed, but changes with the organic life of the language.[22]

In other words, the freshman composition teacher (and all other teachers) must motivate his students by setting their hearts on flame, or at least providing some oxygen for the already existing (smoldering?) flame. This teacher must acknowledge the fact that classrooms need not always have four walls, and that it is not the teacher's job to hand down truth as it has been defined by past cultures. He must learn to see the classroom as

the place where students use his help and guidance to investigate the world of knowledge and ideas--as the place which promotes healthy, intellectual growth:

> The classroom is a place for taking on new roles, facing new situations--coming to terms in different ways with new elements of oneself and new levels of human experience.[23]

And finally, this composition teacher must be aware that such a classroom and such activities are never anti-intellectual; rather, they are truly intellectual because, as Alfred North Whitehead says, they preserve "the connection between knowledge and the zest of life, by uniting the young and the old in the imaginative consideration of learning."[24]

The teacher who accepts all this is now faced with the problem of achieving his ends, and, as might be expected, the solution to the problem lies in the kinds and sequence of activities in which the students participate. The teacher of freshman composition must turn his classroom into a place where students talk and listen and read and write; he must turn the classroom into a place where students encounter their selves, each other, and the world around them; and he must turn it into a place in which the students express these encounters through language. The teacher becomes a catalyst, helping the students to react to their perceptions. The products of

the reactions are personal and intellectual growth and increased language facility.

To be more specific about the kinds of activities which should go on in the freshman composition classroom, it will help to begin with a statement by James Moffett:

> The most natural assumption about teaching any symbol system should be that the student employ his time using that system in every realistic way that it can be used, not that he analyze it or study it as an object.[25]

Thus, students should not spend most of their time listening to lectures or reading about grammar and usage if the purpose of the course is to improve language facility. Instead of analyzing someone else's language, the students should be producing and analyzing their own language.

The course should logically begin with talk, the easiest and most natural production of language. Generally speaking, exploratory talk of some kind should precede most of the writing the students do, and this talk should actively involve everyone in the class.[26] During the early part of the course such talk might consist of little more than a casual, unstructured discussion in which members of the class introduce themselves and get to know the people with whom they will be sharing their ideas during the weeks to come. At other times, the talk might range from highly directed, formal discussions of readings to formal drama to improvisation in its most inclusive sense. In this regard, Dixon points out that,

> Talk enters into the whole range of human interaction, and drama builds, from that interaction and talk, images of human existence.
>
> Our vision of the place of drama and talk in English depends on a new vision of the classroom. When the dominant means of teaching is the lecturer (and some college and university teachers of English still earn this title), drama and talk are pushed into the background or ignored. In many universities and schools this is still the case today. But there is an alternative vision of teaching as the dialogue of tutor and student (and we may add, the dialogue of "students teaching each other"--Robson): it was an agreed concern at the Seminar to reassert that tradition from primary school to university--to put the round table (Muscatine) in place of the "disappearing dais."[27]

My own 'new vision' of the classroom focuses on the classroom as a theatre in which students enact the drama of human exploration and learning. This drama includes

> improvising talk appropriate to a vast range of situation and role; listening and responding in the fullest sense, while taking a role; discussing the approach to a theme, its possibilities, and finally the insights gained; writing scripts for one's own group; reading, learning and probing the meaning of a text--through private study, talk and enacting.[28]

Furthermore, if the teacher views the classroom as a theatre and the classroom activities as parts of a live, human drama, he makes the process of learning more concrete by making it dependent on the action of the learners (drama demands action).[29] Dixon points out that

> The taking on of dramatic roles, the dramatic encounter with new situations and with new possibilities of the self, is not something we teach children but something they bring to school for us to help

> them develop. Their play reminds us--if only we observe--that our verbally dominated college culture takes in only part of life and, carried into school, confuses and even repels children without our verbal confidence. To help pupils encounter life as it is, the complexity or relationships in a group and dynamic situation, there is nothing more direct and simple that we can offer them than drama.[30]

The content of the classroom drama--the action, conflicts, climaxes--must necessarily depend, to a great extent, on the actors and what background and experience they bring to the stage. Or to use James Moffett's words:

> The structure of the subject must be meshed with the structure of the student. A major failure of education has been to consider the logic of the one almost to the exclusion of the psychologic of the other. To paraphrase Earl Kelley, we build the right facilities, organize the best course of study, work out the finest methods, create the appropriate materials, and then, come September, the wrong students walk through the door.[31]

Thus, if the teacher of freshman composition wishes to teach the students who actually do walk through the door, he must be prepared to work with the language (dialects) different students bring to the classroom, and he must also be prepared to work with the topics and issues which the students see as central concerns to their own lives.

The drama of the classroom, then, depends on the motivations, talents, desires, needs, and backgrounds of the students. It encompasses a wide range of activities; it is characterized by spontaneity;[32] and it encourages personal growth and increased ability in all the modes of discourse: reading, listening, talking, and writing.

> Drama, in the Educational field, is concerned with experience, expression, and communication. Its primary focus is upon the growth and development of the individual, through the understanding of himself in relationships with other people--an imaginative recreation of aspects of human situations. It is a means of enquiry into the nature of man as a living and responding being.[33]

Furthermore, the use of drama or improvisation is particularly relevant to the teaching of writing because the wide range of activities which make up improvisation all motivate interaction and communication within a concrete, observable context. The students not only gain a better understanding of themselves, their roles, and whatever is the subject of the improvisation, they also have a common experience about which to write. If their writing does not clearly and concretely reflect the experience, the whole class can work together to sort out the perception problems from the simple mechanical problems. Revising and rewriting become acts of clarification.

On the other hand, as important as improvisation is in the learning process and in the teaching of composition, it is also very complex, and the teacher who wishes to use it in the classroom needs to understand what he is doing. Samuel Kahn, M.D., Ph.D. is an expert on improvisation. In Psychodrama Explained, he discusses improvisation from the point of view of a psychiatrist dealing with mental illness and from the point of view of a teacher dealing with people who are 'normal.' The

distinction is, of course, important for any teacher because teachers are not doctors; they should not assume that their students are sick; and they should not be trying to cure mental illness.

But teachers can assume that their students are healthy, and therefore subject to the same stresses and anxieties which beset most people. And they can also assume that it is an important part of their job to promote mental health, to help students understand and deal with their anxieties, to encourage students to become more verbal and increase their interaction with their fellow human beings, and to use writing to examine their own responses and understanding of their environment. In this regard, Kahn discusses two kinds of improvisation --psychodrama and sociodrama:

> In psychodrama the stress may deal with behavior, action, and ideas relating to my personal problems with my mother and my father, or with positive or negative emotions and attitudes relating to them. In sociodrama, the stress may relate to my ideas and fixations upon a definite political party view, or some religious views, or national attachments, which frequently dominate my attitude and behavior. Very frequently, both psychodrama and sociodrama are involved in the same person, who will perform upon the stage simultaneously exemplifying the results of psychodrama and sociodrama.[34]

Kahn also clearly establishes that these improvisational activities, particularly in their less intense forms, should not be confined to the realm of mental illness:

> A normal person who functions well both socially and emotionally may join such a [psychodrama-sociodrama] group as a means to deeper self-knowledge. . . . It is highly probable that [he] will obtain insights into [his] motivations and emotional functioning, that will enable [him] at the very least to find a direction in life and to increase [his] skill in human relationships.[35]

According to Kahn, the director of these activities should be either "a psychiatrist, a psychologist, or an educator."[36] The major qualifications for directing such improvisational activities with healthy students are common sense and sensitivity to the needs and problems of the students in the class. As long as the teacher remains fully aware that he is not a therapist and that situations might arise which he will be unqualified to handle, he will be able to direct these improvisations as learning situations rather than as therapeutic situations. If a situation begins to arise in which a given student seems to be unable to handle a discovery about himself, or in which the improvisation becomes too intense and seems to be unleashing forces with which the teacher feels he is unable to cope, the teacher should interrupt the improvisation, allow the participants to enter into a more impersonal and less threatening discussion of the issues at hand, and, if necessary, consider referring the student who was unable to handle the situation to a psycholgist or psychiatrist.[37]

However, these intense situations almost never occur because most students are healthy and fully capable of confronting their stresses and anxieties at a normal level of interaction. Moreover, the teacher should generally be able to spot beforehand the student who will not profit from such activities, and in a student-centered class, that student will be treated differently according to his own needs. Again, improvisations seldom become intense enough to threaten the participants because most students keep the activity in the perspective of a learning activity (or just plain fun).

But even if improvisations do sometimes create tense situations, the point is that education can no longer afford to ignore the emotional and psychological life of the student, and the kinds of learning brought about through these improvisational activities are too important to be disregarded because they are potentially intense situations. It is a simple fact of life that intellectual advances and scientific discoveries have always involved intense confrontations:

> Growth has not only rewards and pleasures but also many intrinsic pains, and always will have. Each step forward is a step into the unfamiliar and is possibly dangerous. It also means giving up something familiar and good and satisfying. It frequently means a parting and a separation, with consequent nostalgia, loneliness and mourning. It also often means giving up a simpler and easier and less effortful life, in exchange for a more demanding, more difficult life. Growth forward <u>is</u> <u>in</u>

spite of these losses and therefore requires courage and strength in the individual, as well as protection, permission and encouragement from the environment, especially for the child.[38]

CHAPTER V

THE FRESHMAN COMPOSITION COURSE

Now the question presents itself: What implications does all this have for the freshman composition course? The following statement of goals will help here: a student-centered English course for college freshmen should:

(1) promote the personal growth and mental health of the students by encouraging the free and open exchange of ideas about many different subjects, by encouraging them to investigate their own private world of self, and by respecting their curiosity and attempts at communication as attempts to give parts of themselves to their readership;

(2) help the students gain confidence in their ability to express themselves orally;

(3) improve their ability to communicate effectively, interestingly, and beautifully in writing;

(4) encourage them to establish a 'personal voice' in all their writing and to avoid a dull, monotonous style of writing;

(5) help the students investigate the relationships between oral composition, written composition, visual composition, and other forms of expression like film, collage, music, dance, and sculpture;

(6) give the student a positive experience with writing, literature, and other art forms so that he will enjoy the universe of discourse and continue to read, write, talk, and listen enthusiastically and effectively long after the course has ended; and finally,

(7) help the students view language as a means of organizing and expressing their experiences and perceptions in an attempt to better understand themselves and the world around them.

Aside from the more obvious points that mental health and an increased understanding and awareness of self help the learner to perceive things more clearly, improvisational activities give the learner an opportunity to examine his abstraction system, his past perceptions about himself, and his relationship to his environment. Improvisational activities also help individuals to relate better to their fellow human beings through language, both oral and written. Language is

put in its proper perspective as one of the most important tools we have for establishing interrelationships--the distinguishing mark of our humanness:

> Every man spends his entire life as a member of one or more sociological groups. He has no choice. The infant could not survive outside the family group, in isolation, and it has become more and more difficult for an adult to isolate himself--and indeed, even if it were possible, such an adult would be something less than human, being deprived of the opportunity to develop many of those qualities that particularly distinguish humanity. Man he would remain, perhaps even physically perfect man, but an imperfect human, nevertheless.[1]

Instead of language being treated as some artificial thing which is studied in English classes and about which rules have been made, it becomes a mark of humanness, a means of expressing one's self, the door which leads away from loneliness and isolation. Furthermore, improvisations not only emphasize language and its role in human relationships, but they also help students to gain confidence in their use of language and to become more aware of the need for communication through language:

> The setting and the techniques of psychodrama [and sociodrama] do much to open them [the participants] up, to free them. The physical motion that is encouraged by the director has a loosening effect on nearly everyone, and it is not uncommon to find even the most blocked individual becoming more verbal under the influence of the action.[2]

In addition to increased language facility, improvisational activities allow the students to discover for themselves that in any act of communication they must

always consider their audience and the effect their utterance will have upon a given audience. Even more importantly, they discover that language, oral or written, is someone-talking-to-someone-about-something. Language is man's way of giving his self:

> Man's deepest orientation is personal. He cannot give himself fully in an outpouring of love unless someone else is there, with at least the capability of giving self in return.[3]

Thus, because the students reveal their selves through improvisations, they come to realize that the sounds a man makes reveal his interior state, that sound is "an invasion of all the atmosphere which surrounds a being by that being's interior state, and in the case of man, it is an invasion by his own interior self-consciousness." A man speaking is a man drawing listeners into his interior, "drawing other interiors into the ambit of one's own being."[4] Because the students are able to see the reactions of their fellow students, and because they are able to discuss these reactions, they learn that language is never neutral; that it is always persuasive to some degree; and that it is always somewhat ambiguous:[5]

> Because I am imprisoned within the walls of my own sense and sensibility, I am an isolato on the Island of Me. . . . What kind of lines of communcation can I set up between this Island of Me and the rest of humanity? At best, imperfect means of sending my messages. . . . For no man can achieve total communication. That is, we never "say" everything we have to say. The highest degree of approximation possible is all that one can intend in language.[6]

It is the job of the freshman composition teacher, then, to help his students achieve "the highest degree of approximation possible," and to help them produce these communications in as clear and artistic a manner as is possible. The teacher might begin using improvisation to achieve this purpose by asking groups of students (three or four students in a group) to take on the roles of a mother, father, son and/or daughter; discuss some logical conflict situation for about five minutes (the son wants the car or has been staying out too late, the daughter is going out with the 'wrong king of boy') and the kinds of confrontations which often derive from such situations. The students might then improvise the situation they had discussed, but they would not explain anything to the rest of the class beforehand. The improvisation must speak for itself.

The class might then continue with other improvisations of this kind and not discuss any of the improvisations at that time, or it might immediately discuss any given improvisation. The discussion itself should deal with the responses of the characters involved in the improvisation, whether or not they acted as real parents and real sons and daughters actually act, whether or not they were stereotyped and why, and whether or not they know people who act like the people in the improvisation acted. The students who participated in the particular

improvisation under discussion might tell the rest of the class what it felt like for them to role play a parent or a persecuted son or daughter. They might discuss whether or not the experience gave them any further insight into themselves, or their relationships with their parents, or what kinds of parents they would like to be. Of course, just as all these topics might motivate interesting discussions, they are also possible writing topics.

Further possibilities for writing which would grow out of an activity such as this are as follows: students might analyze the motivations of the characters in the improvisations; they might write character sketches of the people in the improvisations. Or they might write narrative descriptions of the characters, possibly placing them in some different context from that of the improvisation. They could write a script for the characters and perform it as a more formal entry into drama. They could write physical descriptions of the characters in the improvisations (either literal descriptions of the people who played the parts, or fictional descriptions of what they think the characters might have looked like if they were real parents, sons, or daughters).

Some teachers, wishing to avoid psychodrama at the very beginning of the course, might ask the students to role play characters from a story they have read for class, or they might even go straight to sociodrama and

have the students role play famous personalities in the context of some current event (Jerry Rubin, J. Edgar Hoover, and Pope Paul in a discussion of what each man must do to help his fellow man). But for reasons which will be discussed later, I think that it is better to begin with improvisations which more closely approximate psychodrama and move from these to situations which demand that the students deal more with external events and more objective issues than their own personal experiences.

As the students move out of the realm of clearly defined psychodrama and into the realm of sociodrama, reading selections, films, collages, and other art forms can be of great use to spark improvisations in the sociodramatic sense, and also to spark looser kinds of improvisations like open discussion and interchange of ideas in response to a given work. A short story, for example can be treated in a variety of ways, depending on the primary purpose of the teacher and the learner, but a good beginning point is simply to get the reader to respond concretely to the selection. A student might begin by writing a personal response to a story in his private journal; or he might write a response which the rest of the class would see and discuss. If all the students had written such personal responses, the students could split into smaller groups and discuss what they had written, challenging and clarifying their statements, and

illuminating the meaning and art of the story for each other.

Activities such as the above achieve many purposes. Because the students are clarifying meaning and analyzing the art of the story, they are critics in truest sense of the word. Because they are discussing their own writing, they are beginning to learn where they have succeeded and failed in the act of communication. Because they have a chance to respond to the story, relate it to themselves, and share their responses with each other, they have a humanizing experience.

But as productive as this beginning point is, the experience need not step here. The students can now go on to role play parts of the story or characters in the story and discuss the role playing. They can make collages which they feel express the theme or dominant mood in the story. They can piece together pictures of heads, noses, eyes, ears, mouths, bodies, arms, legs, etc. to create a conglomerate picture of a given character in the story; and then they can attempt to describe in writing the character they have described in pictures. Or, if they wish, they might attempt to draw or paint or mould the character as they see him, and then try to write a description. And in each case, the activity which precedes the writing is itself an act of composition involving everything writing involves except words.

At another time, the students might write about how their attitudes toward the story changed or developed as they talked and wrote about it. They might write about the problems they encountered in trying to express the same idea through collage, painting, or clay, and then through language. They might even write about how much they disliked the whole activity. But most importantly, they will have some concrete response, and they will be motivated to communicate the response interestingly and clearly in writing.

The classroom, then, becomes a place where the students can have experiences, have an opportunity to talk and write about those experiences, and through the talking and writing learn where their perceptions differ from those of their peers. They are studying English because they are learning to manipulate the symbol system that makes up our language so that they can communicate with their fellow man in a clear and interesting way. Through improvisation in its broadest sense, the establishment of an 'open classroom' in which students feel free to bring up for discussion those issues which they find most important, the establishment of an atmosphere of honesty, sincerity, and respect within the classroom--all these things lead to the open exchange and free expression of ideas.

But this is not enough:

> The fact that a student's writing is honest and sincere does not necessarily mean that it will appeal to another reader, or that it is in any sense of the word, good writing. But this is only true as regards another reader. The writing may be very good to the writer--it is at this point that the writer must define his purpose.[7]

Quite simply, there is much more to writing than honesty and sincerity. And the fact that a student may have expressed himself clearly and interestingly in an improvisation or in a discussion about that improvisation, or the fact that his collage may have shown great sensitivity to a given story and provoked much discussion in class, does not necessarily mean that his writing will be either clear or interesting. The manipulation of vocabulary, sentence elements, organization, sentence openers, sentence variety, point of view; the ability to spot problems in any of these areas; the ability to change a piece of writing when it needs to be changed; the conscious regard of audience--all these elements are also necessary to the production of good writing.

Thus, assuming that the improvement of an individual student's writing ability is the final end of a freshman writing course, the process of writing must be the focal point of the drama of the classroom. More specifically, the classroom must become a workshop in which the students write, talk about their writing,

change their writing, read each other's writing out loud and silently, rewrite, and give editorial advice to other students in the class. Ideally, all their writing should be published (at least on ditto masters) and distributed to all members of the class so that they can read and comment on each other's work, and even more importantly, so that each individual writer is always aware of an audience --an audience that will have an opportunity to question, praise, criticize, and advise.

First and foremost, this practice of publishing all student writing takes some of the artificiality out of the classroom situation. Instead of the students writing for one person (the teacher) and for one reason (a passing grade in the course), they are writing for everyone in the class, and their purpose is to communicate their own ideas, attitudes, and emotions as effectively and beautifully as possible. In terms of the learning theory discussed in the last chapter, the students go through a series of experiences in order to clarify things for themselves, and then, they attempt to convey their new perceptions to the rest of the class through writing. The success or failure of the communication depends not only on the tools of writing--usage, punctuation--but also on the writer's ability to think clearly and present his ideas in an aesthetically pleasing manner.

When the writer knows that everything he writes is going to be read by an audience which will have an opportunity to discuss his writing and ask questions about it, he becomes more conscious of the demands of his readership. He realizes that he cannot rely only on his own frame of reference or isolated experience, but that he must consider the frames of reference of his readers and their possible limitations. He finds that when he writes in generalizations, his readership asks him to explain "what he really meant," to supply the details needed to make the writing something more than a boring generalization. He finds that when he writes in a stilted, overly-formal manner which lacks any sense of humanness in tone or voice, his audience will accuse him of not particularly caring about the subject, or of not particularly caring whether <u>they</u> care about the subject.

The writing becomes a real part of a classroom dialogue. It is connected to the oral language because it grows out of oral experiences and because the students respond to it orally. Furthermore, because the students are constantly discussing each other's writing and suggesting changes, they do not perceive writing as something frozen and unchangeable. They come to realize that good writing is constantly changing and that good writers are constantly revising. They learn that like any symbol system, it is imperfect in its communication: always

somewhat generalized and removed from whatever it is used to communicate. They learn, as Moffett says, that,

> Raw phenomena remain forever themselves, unspeakable, regardless of how much we abstract them. Not all abstraction, furthermore, is verbal. But if we keep these restrictions in mind, we may proceed safely.[8]

The writer also learns that simply because he believes that something is so, or simply because he feels a certain way, he is not necessarily right. Not only is he learning to write well, but he is also deeply involved in the process of understanding and clarifying his perceptions. Finally, in addition to the gains the students make as writers and thinkers, they also learn the mechanics of writing.

The mechanics of writing, of course, can be handled in a variety of ways; the most important point, however, in teaching mechanics is to avoid making it the focal point of the course. The mechanics of writing are important elements in the writing process, but they are always peripheral to the thing communicated. Before a piece of writing is rewritten, revised, or changed in any way, it should exist first as something <u>worth</u> rewriting, revising, or changing. And the teacher must remember that although students are not always capable of describing technical problems in formal, handbook terminology, they are often very good at finding sentences that are unclear,

organization problems, lack of sentence variety, and punctuation problems.

In some cases, of course, particularly early in the semester, the teacher must point out problems to the class, and possibly after suggesting changes in the writing, show them how he would revise the piece of writing. The students may need to be made aware of the possibilities for moving sentence elements around in a given sentence, or they may need to be shown how to combine elements from one sentence with another, or how to incorporate one sentence with another. The teacher may have to show them how sentence variety can add excitement and interest to a piece of writing, and how a lack of it can cause monotony. But in the end, showing and doing are two different things, and the showing stage must quickly pass into the doing stage.

In this "doing stage," the students might meet together in small groups of two and three to help each other on their writing, to point out the kinds of problems that the teacher has helped them to spot, and to help each other solve these problems. Even in these small groups, however, the group first decides whether or not the piece is worth writing, whether or not it is interesting to them as readers, and whether or not they clearly understand what it is the writer has intended them to understand. Only then can they profitably pursue the more mechanical matters of writing.

Through such an approach, the writing itself becomes an opportunity for experiencing ideas and emotions, and for the students to share responses to each other's perceptions. Because they are interacting closely, they gain respect for the feelings of their fellow classmates. Because they want to communicate to their readers, they begin to enjoy writing. Thus it is that such an approach to writing creates and fosters the only reasonable motivation for writing, the desire to communicate something of importance to oneself and/or to someone else: someone-talking-to-someone-about-something.

These, then, are the activities of the freshman writing course. Within the metaphorical framework of the classroom as theatre and the learning process as a drama directed and participated in by the teacher and the students, the freshman writing course becomes a place for sharing experiences and ideas through language--oral and written--and for healthy growing. But as might be expected, in order to foster such growth and facilitate better writing, these activities must occur in some reasonable sequence, for it is also the purpose of education to help learning to occur as efficiently as possible.

The sequencing of activities in the freshman course derives directly from the ideas discussed in chapters 3 and 4: the writer begins by examining his

own abstraction system, gains a sense of who he is, and then begins to move outward from this world of self to the external world which surrounds him. When a person writes something, he is attempting his first to set up a relationship between himself and whatever he is writing about so that he can present it in such a way that the reader will be able to relate to the subject under consideration. Consequently, if the writer's perception of his topic is unclear or differs considerably from the way other people generally perceive the topic, he must be aware that it is different and be able to deal with the rhetorical considerations necessary to communicate with an audience which is not familiar with his set of abstractions.

Thus, in order that the writer understands as well as possible his own perceptions and ways of abstracting, the freshman writing course begins by having the students write about themselves: <u>what</u> they think and feel about those matters which most closely touch their lives, and more importantly, <u>why</u> they think and feel these ways. The course begins by asking the students to begin to articulate their own perceptions of themselves and to present these perceptions to the group as a whole.

The students write about their relationships with their parents, their attitudes toward home, toward school, toward society. They attempt to articulate their values,

those things or ideas to which they feel some sort of loyalty or for which they feel some need. They are asked to consider what and where they were, are, and are going. In short, they try through classroom experiences, discussions, writing, and rewriting to gain a clearer understanding of who they are and why they are that way; they attempt to find out what their biases are and how they came to have those biases; and they come to realize how their personal makeup colors their own perceptions of themselves and those around them.

At this early point in the course, the students are discovering themselves; the most important part of the experience and of the writing is the content--what they discover. The teacher encourages them not to worry about mechanics, usage, and matters of style because at this point, the experience is the thing. They are involved in a search for personal voice; they are sincerely and honestly attempting to communicate their sense of themselves. Their information source is their selves and must necessarily remain unchallenged. For the time being, if they say something is so, then it is so. The major point is that the perception itself be articulated so that the class can respond in some way. And most commonly, as a result of the things the students write about themselves and through the responses the other students make to these discourses, the students begin to

understand that they are not alone in their emotions, attitudes, and confusion. They learn that other seemingly self-confident people are also somewhat frightened by the new world of higher education, that others are confused about their futures, do not always know what they believe in or what they want from the future. They learn that they are like their classmates and different from them at the same time; they gain a clearer concept of self and begin to see how they relate to the world around them and why they relate the way they do. The classroom is transformed into a place for self discovery.

Once the students seem to be gaining a sense of who they are, and once the teacher can see that they have begun to experience a coming-together because of their shared discovery and motivations, the course moves into its second stage. In this part of the course the students are asked to begin to write and talk about things outside of them, and often outside of their own private world of self. They are asked to begin to relate to the world around them and express their responses to this world in talk and writing. The essential difference between this part of the course and the first part of the course is that they can no longer justify a response by simply saying, "this is how I feel." They must begin to respond more objectively because their information source, the thing they are writing about, has moved outside them.

If they describe a rectangular door as being round, they are obviously perceiving it quite differently than other people, and they must be ready, at the very least, to recognize that their perception is radically different from the actual existence of the door. They must begin to learn that the abstraction of raw phenomena and the generalization of the raw phenomena through language does not in any way alter the fact of the raw phenomena. There is an external reality to which they must remain true, or at least know that they have deviated from that reality and be ready to accept the consequences which will occur when their readers respond to the perception.

As one might expect, the transition between stage one (writing completely from and about personal experience) and stage two (beginning to write about a more removed external reality) is a difficult transition. One of the easier ways to achieve such a transition is through the use of character sketches. Because the students have been writing so much about themselves, they have, in fact, been character sketching themselves. Furthermore, like most human beings, they are usually interested in other people and enjoy writing about them. Thus, the only real change in writing character sketches of someone else rather than of themselves, is that their information source has changed, and they must attempt to convey a true sense of the reality of whatever character they choose to sketch.

As before, the class activities remain much the same. The students can role play other characters, make collages which attempt to characterize other people, draw pictures of characters, and finally write about the characters and discuss their pieces of writing. But most important, they are now more removed from their topics in time and space. When they write about their own personal experience from an involved point of view, the teacher can expect little objectivity becuase they are too close to the experience itself. But when they begin to write about things outside themselves, they can step back from the experience, think about and discuss their perception, and take a more objective stance when they write.

Furthermore, as the class begins to move into more objective modes of writing, the discussions of the writing itself begin to change. Now the teacher can begin to introduce more mechanical matters into the discussion of the writing, though these will necessarily come up before this in any discussion of the class's writing. Matters like lack of detail, concreteness, or poor organization are likely to be part of discussions from the very beginning of the course, but matters like sentence variety, usage, and punctuation are often better left until this second stage, when the students have gained confidence in their abilities to express themselves and have become

interested in polishing their communications as much as possible.

Thus, although all the writing has been published all along and distributed to everyone in the class to read and discuss, up to this point there will have been few group discussions of how to rewrite or revise or change any given piece of writing, especially as regards particular sentences or paragraphs. But now, with character sketches and descriptions of works of art or places, the students can meet together in small groups or as a whole to discuss particular pieces of writing. The class becomes a writing workshop in which students explore the linguistic alternatives for writing a sentence or group of sentences, learn how to punctuate particular sentences, and work on other aspects of editing.

Up to this point, all the writing the students have done is relatively short, seldom more than one typed page. But this second stage of the course culminates in a longer paper in which the student attempts to put together his observations about himself and the world around him in an autobiographical paper or long personal essay. His task in such a paper is to express in writing some important point about himself: something he needs to clarify or something that he wants other people to read about because it is particularly interesting--hopefully both. Because the paper is longer than anything he has written before, the student is almost automatically going

to have difficulty organizing, and occasionally a student may feel that he has nothing to write about. Such matters are best handled in individual conferences between the student and the teacher. As always, the first matter for discussion is what the student is going to write about, and the second matter is how he is going to write about it.

Students who feel they have nothing to say about themselves generally believe that although they might have something to say, no one will be particularly interested in what it is. Usually through informal conversation and through a review of what the student wrote about himself earlier in the course, the teacher and student together can find a variety of topics and incidents that are worthy of elaboration and which would be interesting to write and read about. But a given student might continue to reject these possibilities, and in his case it simply means that the most interesting thing he can say about himself is that he has nothing very interesting to say about himself. Of course, most students who seriously contemplate such a topic usually find that they have much to say about themselves, though it may involve the important realization that they have been so uninvolved in life that nothing very interesting has ever happened to them.

But such cases are rare, and most students find that incidents which at the time seemed relatively unimportant can be made into exciting incidents which say much about the writer. They find that they have a fund

of interesting, traumatic, and humorous incidents from their early days in school, or from their relationships with parents or best friends. Some will choose to write about one isolated incident and let the reader assume that it in some way typifies the writer; others may choose to show some kind of change they have undergone between elementary school, high school, and college by recounting incidents from each of the three times in their lives; and still others may choose to write short stories with themselves as main characters. But no matter what they do, the project will usually excite them greatly and generate excellent writing from most of the students.

The writing of this longer, autobiographical piece ends the second stage of the course and begins the third stage. By this time the students have had adequate opportunities to investigate their own abstraction systems, and to some extent, to find out who and what they are. They have also at least considered where they are going. They have learned to write about themselves clearly and interestingly, and they have discovered a personal style or voice which best suits their personalities and most easily allows them to employ their strengths as writers. But for all their important gains, they have not had the opportunity yet to grapple with the problems inherent in thinking about and writing issue-oriented essays (arguing and persuading), expository essays (explaining things),

fiction, and criticism. These, then, are the concerns of the third stage.

In the first and second stages, almost all of the writing the students do is short, with the exception of the autobiographical paper, and they write nearly every night. But in this last stage of the course they begin to write substantially longer papers, and begin to work more formally with the process of writing, rewriting, and revising. The problems introduced by these differences between the first two stages and the last stage are varied and complex.

Students often believe that everything that came before this last stage was just a camouflage for the 'real' part of the course, and that what seemed to be a new and different approach to the teaching of writing, was little more than an artificial attempt to fool them into thinking that their own ideas are important. With some careful explanation and a little luck, the teacher may dispel these fears and doubts, but probably not enough to stop some of the students from dropping momentarily back into high-schoolese, or wordy, unimpressive gobbledygook.

The teacher's primary hope should be to convey to the students that although the writing they do in this last stage is somewhat different from the writing they have been doing, it is not substantially different. As writers, they must continue to present a personal voice, show the reader that a living, breathing person produced

the piece of writing. And they should also continue to search their personal experience for interesting anecdotes, examples, or proofs of given points. It is not the writing that has changed as much as it is the kinds of thinking involved in writing these more clearly defined pieces, and the organizational problems inherent in the longer paper.

The student who was able to supply himself with all the information he needed during the earlier parts of the course, finds now that he must seek knowledge and facts outside himself in order to write interestingly and clearly on a given topic. If he wishes to write an expository essay on racism in America or campus violence or the problems of the traditional educational system, he cannot rely only on his own limited knowledge, or on the tidbits he has heard over evening news programs; he must learn to seek out facts, opinions, hunches, and ideas from all available sources. Without this search for knowledge, without an attempt to broaden his perspective on any given topic, the student's writing will be trite, boring, terribly biased, and probably, not worth the paper it is written on.

The problem, then, becomes one of helping the students to discover not just topics, but means of finding enough information on those topics to enable them to write interestingly and validly. Probably one of the most common ways of solving this particular problem in traditional

freshman courses is to make the students write a research paper: a process generally involving a topic of little interest to either the teacher or the student, the careful preparation and arrangement of note cards filled with quotations, drills on the proper punctuation of footnotes and bibliographic entries, and finally the production of a carefully organized, carefully written, boring piece of research that no one wants very much to read.

But if the traditional research paper is not the solution (and it is not), then what is the solution? The answer, of course, is that there are many solutions, and in a student-centered course, the teacher will find it relatively easy to employ several different approaches to the problem. Certainly one of the first and easiest avenues for relief is to have the students use one of the many available collections of prose, fiction, and poetry now on the market. Many of these texts are organized thematically and deal with the popular issues of the day; others offer an interesting mix of prose and poetry; but almost any of them could conceivably serve as a beginning point in the solution to the problem of information gathering.

In the end, however, if a reader is the only source of information, this is simply camouflaging the old research paper. The teacher removes the need to go to the library and removes the emphasis on correct

punctuation of footnotes and bibliographic entries, but he does not necessarily solve the problem of student interest (that is, the topics in the book may not be ones the students want to write on), nor does he recognize that any given theme or topic may only interest a few of the students in the class.

Something more is needed, and, as might be expected, the something more depends greatly on the students and their willingness to engage themselves in the learning process. The exciting possibilities open to a group of students who wish to find out information about a given topic are infinite, and though they do not by any means exclude traditional avenues of research, they do involve some new and interesting activities for the students.

To begin this third stage of the course, then, the students and the teacher must sit down together and decide first what kinds of things they would like to read and write about, and second, what other activities they might engage in to find out information about the topics. Interest groups usually begin to emerge almost immediately: some students want to investigate racism on campus, others want to investigate discrimination against students in local stores, some may even want to explore the attitudes of local government officials toward current student unrest. At the same time that the groups begin to emerge, some individuals may decide that they would like to write about fixing cars, riding motorcycles, or the educational

system of which they are a part. The most important thing is that the students begin to define their own areas of interest.

The next step is to decide how they can find out information about whatever project they may be interested in. Like anyone else, students know that there are many ways of finding information, and they all know that the library is one of the most easily available sources for information. But the teacher should also suggest the many other possibilities: opinion polls of students on the campus; interviews with fellow students, teachers, and administrators; phone calls to local officials; discussions with newspaper reporters; letters to congressman; and, of course, class discussion.

Because all of these activities take a fair amount of time, the teacher might be wise to make the paper growing out of this part of the course the last paper due in the semester. While the students were involved in their information getting activities, they could begin the equally important work of writing short stories, and of writing critical and expository essays growing out of class discussions and readings. Furthermore, both the teacher and the students should always be on the lookout for guest speakers who might stimulate the students and help solve the information problem.

Once again, activities in the class itself vary little from what has come before. Students might still begin by doing collages in response to readings, or improvisations generated by the readings; and more than ever, they would engage in small and large group discussions of each other's writing. The class time would usually be devoted to workshop activities during which times individuals could work on writing in process, talk over writing problems with each other or the teacher, have other's read their work and help edit it or respond critically, or meet with the other members of their information-gathering group to find out what is being done by the different members and what new or interesting information they have found. In addition to these workshop activities, those students who were interested in revising or rewriting pieces they had already finished could do so during these class periods.

The major point of all this, of course, is to re-establish the writing process as the focal point for the course and to remind each individual writer that at least part of his purpose must be to effectively communicate something to someone. During the first two stages of the course, the major (though not the sole) emphasis was on the individual student and the content of his communication. Now the emphasis becomes more balanced: it does not shift away from the writer and his content, but it does introduce an emphasis on rhetoric. Each writer

is faced with the problems of writing clearly, effectively, and objectively, but still with a personal voice, a personal and intellectual commitment to his material. And as any writer knows, the perfect mixture of a smooth and polished style, objective thinking, and personal commitment is a difficult one to produce in the right proportions.

Finally, as a reward for all the hard work and sweat--two natural elements of a writing workshop--the last paper is of a kind and on a topic of the student's choice. The teacher should encourage students to try things they have wanted to try, but have not had a chance to do. They should be encouraged to write fiction (or rewrite what they have already begun), poetry (possibly a series of related poems or a mixture of prose and poetry), a one-act play, a song--whatever they will enjoy. Preferably, the course should end with all the students acknowledging (at least silently, to themselves) that this kind of a course never ends, but like their writing, it is always just beginning.

CHAPTER VI

A DAY IN THE LIFE

For about three years now I have been intimately and intensely involved in a student-centered composition program,[1] and I have found it an exciting, though sometimes harrowing, experience. And although such a course is more difficult for both the students and the teacher, it is also infinitely more fun and more effective. It is more difficult for the student because the responsibility for learning is mostly his: list of facts dutifully memorized will not qualify as learning because the student must be prepared to manipulate his facts and communicate about them in some effective manner. Lengthy, technically correct papers about subjects of little interest to anyone (especially the student) are discouraged because the student is expected to enjoy his writing and to interest his reader. Students quickly and happily realize that if they neglect their own enjoyment and their reader's interest, the act of communication becomes perverted and senseless.

The student must also take part of the responsibility for planning activities and then seeing to it that

these activities function as learning devices. He must, in short, find those things which motivate him and then investigate them and write about them. The student must do the talking because he is the one exploring, learning, growing, and abstracting. And only the student (through discussions with the teacher and the rest of the class) can finally decide what things need to be explored; what ideas need to be investigated; what feelings need to be verbalized and written down.

But if all this is difficult for the student, think of how hard it is for the teacher who must learn to keep his mouth shut (one of my own most difficult lessons), who must realize that his pearls of wisdom (pearls though they may be) are meaningless to the student who is interested in something else. Think of how hard it must be for the teacher to try to structure a relatively unstructured program: lesson plans and units cannot be made up years ahead of time waiting only for some teacher to plug in a student; because the course is student-centered, detailed plans and procedures can only be finally decided on after the teacher has met the students and found out what it is they need and desire to learn. The teacher becomes, in fact, an explorer, elevated above his fellow explorers only inasmuch as his own perception, awareness, and sensitivity allow. Much of the terrain the group explores may already be commonplace to the explorer-teacher; he

knows some of the treacherous areas; he remembers dead-ends; and he also remembers areas of excitement and interest. He can use all of this knowledge to save his students from going on in unproductive directions or to guide them into areas alive with excitement and interest. But no explorer has seen it all, and it is this that blesses his exploration with richness and excitement. He, along with his students, must carefully plan new approaches to the yet unexplored--they must devise methods which will allow them not only to delve into the unknown or unexperienced, but also ways of choosing what to experience and how best to learn from their journey.

I realize that for some teachers the position of fellow explorer may seem a demeaning one, and that to abdicate the dais for a seat among the commoners is a big step. But to deal with students as human beings is a big step--especially when the teacher realizes that he is responsible for the intellectual and emotional growth of as many as twenty or thirty of these human beings over a period of many weeks. The most obvious point suggested by such a realization is that the teacher must be most careful about the values or subjective standards he imparts to those students. True, of course, that he cannot avoid imparting some of his own attitudes, but he must be aware that he is doing so and make his primary emphasis the student's ability to make decisions for himself, in

terms of his own place in the world, about attitudes and standards.

In my opinion, such a state of affairs in which the student makes his own decisions, in which he consciously begins to form attitudes and examine his values, can be achieved in only one way: the student must consciously examine his past, the influences of home and school which made him what he is, which have instilled the biases, etc. that direct so much of his thinking. A good student-centered writing course should afford the student the opportunity to think, talk, and write about the things which most concern him; and the teacher of such a course must consider the possibility that a well-polished finished product may be a long way off. The emphasis in the course must first be on the process of writing and thinking, and the finished product should evolve from that process.

Consequently, in the writing course I teach, the students begin by writing about themselves, and they may write in any form they wish. For approximately the first ten weeks the students write short pieces growing out of class discussion, readings, music, films, etc. During this time they try to discover what things have caused them to think the way they do, and how they can best express these things. I encourage them to experiment with different techniques like monologue, dialogue, simple narration, and mixtures of prose and poetry; and I hope that they will discover a 'personal voice,' those things

unique about themselves and their methods of writing that will best allow them to express themselves in writing. This part of the course culminates in a long personal essay in which the students try to explain one major point about themselves by merging style and subject matter as best they can. And thusfar the results have astounded me.

In the last ten weeks of the course, the students move towards a less egocentric base and begin to write about things outside of themselves. The writing often becomes involved in issues of immediate interest, but it also includes exposition, short fiction, and still an occasional personal essay: subjects range from birth control and women's liberation to the educational system and politics. The egocentric writing of the first ten weeks takes its place in anecdotes and examples, and the student's style or personal voice becomes a way of relating to and talking about the world around him.

The first difference I noticed in the results I got from this kind of writing course was that the students were not writing about vague abstractions as they had in other, more traditional writing courses I had taught. The reason, of course, was obvious--they do not consider themselves vague abstractions and will not write about themselves in that way. The short continuous writing exercises allow the student to experiment to his heart's content, and they allow the instructor to see the student

performing in many different ways so that his criticisms are not confined to the 'lack of sentence variety' or 'misused commas' type of comments. He can talk at length with a student about style, sentence variety, monologue, dialogue, fiction, images, etc.--and the student will understand because he has tried these things, and the concrete result is available for discussion. He is not working with writing the abstraction, but with his own writing. Students simply cannot revise writing the abstraction, and I think that if we were honest with ourselves, we would admit that it is not even a very interesting subject to discuss.

The second major difference resulting from this approach surprised me more than the first: students were voluntarily revising their work because they wanted to make their points clearer (either to themselves or to the teacher). They never seemed to tire of writing, and when they evaluated the course, I found that many of them were disturbed when an assignment was not given. They always have their journals, of course (the journals are voluntary and I only read them if a student asks me to), but they begin to demand a reader--"Why else write?" Because they begin to see their writing as an extension of themselves, and because once they begin extending themselves they wish to do it well, they do not hand in shoddy work; they do not write about subjects of no importance to them

(they will in fact ignore the assignment and do something else if they cannot enjoy the experience or learn something from it).

But as I said in the beginning of this discussion, a student-centered course such as this causes many difficulties for student and teacher alike. For example, it is my own feeling that good writing is inextricably connected with the oral language, and because I accepted this connection, I wanted my students to interact with one another in the classroom in improvisatory situations. I expected the kinds of writing that might grow out of such experiences to be many and varied: character descriptions of other students involved in the improvisation, personal essays about how it felt to role play, discussions of the ideas or conflicts arising within the group, etc.

Like any good teacher I explained my goals to the students and set about structuring the improvisations. First, the class agreed on a central situation in which each of the groups of three students might interact: the three people would be in some kind of an underground shelter just after a nuclear war. Second, each student was to choose some specific role he would play within that situation: doctor, lawyer, career woman, actor, mother-housewife, etc. Third, each group would begin the improvisation by responding to the statement, "I think we should all commit suicide because it is immoral to even

consider rebuilding the human race. Man would only destroy and cause pain again."

Although the reader of this may chuckle at the absurdity of the idea, I was naive enough to expect a good response--especially because the students were excited and they had chosen the situations and roles for themselves. The scene was set, the debacle about to begin.

Unfortunately, it had not occurred to any of us that the most likely response of someone in a bomb shelter just following a nuclear war would be unalterable silence --the people would be in a state of shock and certainly would not be interested in much discussion. It had also not occurred to me that a nuclear holocaust would destroy most of the topics that one might discuss: home, job, school, future, past, politics, etc. And finally, the worst of the obstacles, the students were inhibited about role-playing and did not know what teacher "meant" and "wanted" when he said <u>role-playing</u>. The point here is that what was meant to be a liberating experience in which students could freely interact with one another and discover rich possibilities for writing instead became a highly artificial experience which caused the students anxiety because they were afriad of "doing the wrong thing" in their improvisation. Naturally, the writing I received about this experience was as boring, confusing, and artificial as the experience itself.

So there I was--theory in hand and practice in shambles. But much could be learned from all this chaos, and I was unwilling to resort to a teacher-centered solution. First, the students should have had an opportunity to discuss the roles they play in everyday life and the societal roles they might play in the future. Second, if an artificial situation is going to be used for the improvisation, it should be as un-artificial as possible. Third, the situation and the interesting possibilities of roles within that situation should be explored in class. And fourth, the teacher must clearly establish that there is no right way to role play, that he does not expect some particular set of responses from the students, that in fact, the students cannot be wrong.

But student inhibition is a difficult thing to overcome, and I wanted to have my cake and eat it too. Instead of saying a great deal about the set of papers deriving from the improvisation experience, I apologized to the class for a bad idea and we moved on to a discussion of communication through media other than language. Each member of the class created a collage (the only stipulation being that the collage have some thematic meaning to the creator) and brought it to class. The class split up into groups of three and the individual students explained their collages to the other members of the group. The situation allowed for interaction, conflict over interpretation, and at its center was a concern over the

difficulty of using words to describe a media that is non-verbal precisely because the things which it communicates are essentially non-verbal.

Without knowing it then, the students had actively participated in a spontaneous improvisation, and what was more encouraging and satisfying, at the center of the experience was a conscious concern with verbal and non-verbal communication. The writing that grew out of the experience was varied and interesting: some students criticized the other collages almost as an art critic might, concerning themselves with questions of balance, depth, and appropriateness of given objects; others discussed the maker of the collage and how he exhibited himself in his own collage; and others discussed the themes exhibited in the collages. In short, good writing had been generated from an oral experience and the students had operated in an entirely student-centered situation.

From experiences such as this, I began to learn that my most effective way of functioning with this particular group of students was to act as planner, and to stay out of class experiences unless invited to participate. Consequently, we began doing extensive small-group work, relying almost entirely on this system to help students during the process of writing. (An important point here is that with another class of freshmen, small-group work was a complete failure, but they

participated in, enjoyed, and profitted from structured discussions with the whole class.)

The operation usually began with a class discussion of a reading, movie, or mutually interesting topic from the students' lives. The purpose of this first discussion was simply to allow students to discuss a wide range of attitudes on a given subject so that when they went into smaller groups the discussion would not be too limited. After the large-group discussion, the students broke into small, assigned groups and their charge was to continue the discussion and help one another find a good topic. Their assignment for the next class was to prepare a rough draft and be ready to discuss their idea and method of presentation in the small group. The job of the individual groups, of course, was constructive criticism of these rough drafts. Finally the essays were dittoed off and distributed to the whole class for oral and written criticism and discussion.

The advantages of such a method should be obvious: the responsibility is on the students; they cannot "hurt a person's grade" because the teacher does not hear their criticism; each writer has a group of readers other than the "teacher-reader"; the students are revising their writing and learning to criticize writing; and it is difficult for anyone to do very poorly on the final draft.

Once again I had a foolproof theory--and once again, something was wrong with the practice.

The small-groups lacked excitement. They were simply too quiet for much to be going on. From my hermitage in the corner of the room I could watch the half-shut eyes and the blank faces, the nodding heads and the generally listless atmosphere. Something was drastically wrong and I did not know what.

Fortunately, I got lucky and guessed. They did not want to be assigned to groups, and they did not want to be forced into small-group work. I remedied the situation by offering them a choice first of whether or not they wanted to do group work, and second, if they chose to do group work, they could work with any group of students they wished.

The results were astounding. My class became one of the noisiest I have ever been in. Students engaged in heated discussions over theme, content, style, and organization--and I found myself being invited into groups to help resolve conflicts or supply bits of information. The situation also made allowances for the students who are uncomfortable in small groups because they, like Bartleby, could "prefer" not to participate. And because of the situation, I could work privately with these Bartlebys without working hardships on either of us. (I should add that of my two asocial students, one was an excellent writer and the other at least adequate. Furthermore, once

they were convinced that they could avoid the group work, they began participating.)

Theory and practice had jelled into success. I had learned that by periodically removing myself from the discussion at hand, the students felt freer and expressed themselves more clearly and more interestingly. But the worst was yet to come.

For approximately fifteen weeks I had been uncomfortably aware of the racial tension in our class. Of the twenty students, two were black and had had relatively little experience with whites. Of the eighteen white students, most had come from small towns, and some had not been in the same room with a black before. Neither the blacks nor the whites considered themselves racially prejudiced--the truth was that they had never seriously considered the possibility before.

As a result of all this, any discussion having to do with race became a fiasco. When we discussed "Sonny's Blues" by James Baldwin, one of the blacks openly mocked the ignorance of the whites in the class about jazz, heroin, segregation, and degradation. When some of the white students began trying to understand, the black thought they were mocking him with their naive questions. In self-defense, the black retaliated with a subtle kind of intimidation which simply involves making any antagonist out to be a racist.

Obviously, the issue needed to be settled and the conflict had to be brought out into the open. But these were human psyches I was dealing with--and tender ones at that. Furthermore, my training is in English, not psychology or psychotherapy, and I felt unqualified to lead the class in a highly personal discussion of their individual attitudes toward the racial tension in the class. That the issue was important, though, could not be denied: discussions about varying unrelated topics ended quickly when a black and a white disagreed. Now they were all over-compensating and trying to avoid any possibility of conflict: as soon as any of them saw a conflict in the making, they clammed up. Needless to say, I had to do something about it because they were suddenly hesitant even when they were criticizing their own writing.

For no really good reason other than blind hope, I decided to try something new. (Things certainly could not get much worse.) I asked the class if any of them would be interested in taking over as teacher and structuring some kind of class experience that everyone might write about. Some of the students liked the idea and one of the black students volunteered to be the leader.

When it was time for the next class to meet, I found a note on my desk asking me to come to class ten minutes late. I waited with baited breath, and when I entered the classroom was politely told to find a seat

for myself. The class had formed a circle and the black student was sitting on a large desk slightly toward the middle of the circle. Act I had already begun.

The black student had apparently intended to "tell it like it is" about the racial situation, but his plans were challenged when some of the white students decided to also "tell it like it is." As anyone might expect, some egos were dented and some biases and prejudices brought out into the open. And of course, some feelings were temporarily hurt. But there was little I could do to control the discussion because I had been politely but clearly told that this was going to happen pretty much regardless of what I did.

Needless to say, I spent forty very tense minutes in class that day, and when everything was over I was unable to evaluate the significance of the discussion. I did not have to wait long, though, because that afternoon the students began coming in to talk to me about it. Through these personal conferences and some written responses to the incident, I learned how the incident had affected the students. Of those who responded, and most did, nearly every one had come to the same conclusion about himself. Almost every one of them realized that he or she was racially prejudiced in some way, and that it was their attempt to pretend these attitudes did not exist that had made things so tense. All they had to do

was recognize their prejudice, admit its irrational base, and learn how to overcome it in their actions.

When the next group of papers came in, I received some exciting, well written papers on racial prejudice and how it had operated in the students' high schools or home towns, papers comparing racial tension to the tension a person sometimes feels when in the presence of someone who is handicapped or in some way different, papers on interracial dating, etc. And at the center of each paper was the individual writing it and the discussion that motivated it.

Luckily, as had happened in the case of the collages and the group work, a tense situation had turned into a very healthy and relatively relaxed situation. Even more happily, it had resulted in some very good writing. But the point of all this, recounting these anecdotal experiences, is neither an attempt at self-praise nor a display of masochism. I think that there are several important lessons to be learned from these incidents, especially for the teacher who is planning on teaching a student-centered course.

Probably the most obvious point in all this is that teaching a student-centered course can be both frustrating and harrowing. On the other hand, it is also a good bit more exciting and satisfying. Directions and plans sometimes change from class to class, and the teacher must learn to live with this fundamental

insecurity and maybe even learn to like it. I thoroughly believe that if the teacher can learn to live with this, he will have the great satisfaction of truly being a part of a learning experience. And he will also have the pride and joy of seeing students do good work because they wish to and are interested.

Which brings me to the next important point, and probably the most important one to be found here: When things went badly, they were bad because I had taken all the responsibility and authority on myself. When things went well, they went well because the responsibility and authority rested primarily with the students, or at the very least, it was being shared between me and the students. And throughout my twenty weeks with this group of students, this lesson was constantly repeated: the less obvious my presence the better their work. Furthermore, the students were taking part in activities and producing writing because they enjoyed what they were doing and because they wanted to communicate it. They had a real desire to mold and shape their experiences.

So there it is. Students can be responsible and intelligent. They can and should participate in their own education. (I can hardly believe that this last sentence has to be written, but experience in the schools and the colleges tells me that it needs to be said.) And of course, the teacher must adjust, if necessary, to this

kind of learning experience. But before rejecting the idea out of hand, I urge you, the teachers, to at least give it a try. Who knows, someday you, too, may be fortunate enough to walk into class a few minutes late and be told by your students to find a seat for yourself.

FOOTNOTES

FOOTNOTES

Introduction

[1]Robert M. Gorrell, "Grammar in the Composition Course," College English, 16 (1955), 234.

[2]Albert R. Kitzhaber, Themes, Theories, and Therapy: The Teaching of Writing in College (New York, 1963), p. 26.

Chapter I

[1]New England's First Fruits (1643), in The Puritans, II, ed. Perry Miller and Thomas H. Johnson (New York, 1963), p. 700.

[2]Ibid., p. 701.

[3]Ibid., p. 702.

[4]Frederick Rudolph, The American College and University: A History (New York, 1962), p. 25.

[5]Rudolph, pp. 26-27.

[6]Charles Chauncy, "A Commencement Sermon," in The Puritans, II, p. 706.

[7]Rudolph, The American College and University: A History, p. 13.

[8]Rudolph, p. 23.

[9]Henry Adams, The Education of Henry Adams (Boston, 1961), p. 55.

[10]Rudolph, p. 40.

[11]Rudolph, p. 41.

[12]Rudolph, pp. 41-42.

[13]Rudolph, pp. 122-123.

[14]Rudolph, pp. 58-59.

[15]Rudolph, p. 121.

[16]Thomas Jefferson in a letter to Thomas Ticknor (1823), reprinted in Richard Hofstadter and Wilson Smith, American Higher Education: A Documentary History, II, pp. 266-267.

[17]Rudolph, p. 130.

[18]President Jeremiah Day and Professor James L. Kingsley, The Yale Report of 1828, reprinted in Hofstadter, American Higher Education: A Documentary History, I, pp. 288-289.

[19]Rudolph, p. 242.

[20]James Burrill Angell, Selected Addresses (New York, 1912), p. 7.

[21]Rudolph, pp. 272-274.

[22]The Yale Report of 1828, in Hofstadter, American Higher Education: A Documentary History, I, p. 288.

[23]Lawrence A. Cremin, The Transformation of the School: Progressivism in American Education (New York, 1961), pp. 91-94.

[24]Albert Raymond Kitzhaber, Rhetoric in American Colleges 1850-1900, Diss. University of Washington, 1953 (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1953), pp. 20-24.

[25]Kitzhaber, p. 27.

[26]Kitzhaber, p. 2.

[27]Cremin, pp. 101-103.

[28]Kitzhaber, p. 7.

[29]Cremin, p. 109.

[30]Kitzhaber, pp. 6-7.

[31]Cremin, p. 95.

[32]Cremin, pp. 96-97.

[33]Rudolph, The American College and University, p. 357.

[34]Cremin, pp. 25-32, 50-51.

[35]Cremin, pp. 59-65.

[36]Cremin, pp. 66-69.

[37]An example of this linguistic immorality is present in an article by Carroll Edgar Brown, "Foreign Language Errors of Chicago Children," English Journal (1931), pp. 469-474. Brown speaks of the great difficulty the "slow, sociable Chinese," have in learning English; he points out that Jewish children "make the greatest number of mistakes" in English; and "the temperamental, hard-working Polish" have difficulty with verbs and prepositions. On the other hand, we have the "thoroughly capable German" and "the grinning, fighting, likable Irish [who] have usually been here so long that it is hard to find characteristic mistakes." But most interesting of all are Brown's extraordinary remarks about Negroes: "Negroes should be included [in this study]. Any band teacher will affirm that the shape of the lip modifies the sound produced. The omission of endings and harder sounds is partly chargeable to the low altitude that reduced the volume and force of the air current passing through the vocal chords. Complete enunciation found in the high altitude states of the West seems unnatural. It

requires less effort to say, 'Fo'd,' than 'Ford.' 'Evah' is easier than 'ever.' 'Georgia' requires more forceful enunciation than 'Gawgia.' Pupils must make more effort to reduce their mistakes." p. 473.

That such misinformation exists is not surprising, but that it should appear in the English Journal under the guise of scholarship is an insult. It certainly supports Leonard Bloomfield's remark that "Our schools are conducted by persons who, from professors of education to teachers of classrooms, know nothing of the results of linguistic science." [See: Neil Postman and Charles Weingartner, Linguistics, A Revolution in Teaching (New York, 1966), p. 102].

[38]Cremin, p. viii. Cremin describes the movement as a "part of a vast humanitarian effort to apply the promise of American life--the ideal of government by, of, and for the people--to the puzzling new urban-industrial civilization that came into being during the latter half of the nineteenth century . . . : A many-sided effort to use the schools to improve the lives of the individuals."

[39]Cremin, pp. 5-8.

[40]Cremin, pp. 85-89.

[41]Rudolph, The American College and University, pp. 272-273.

[42]Edward L. Thorndike, Education: A First Book (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1912), pp. 212-219. Thorndike uses a "'composition-meter,' or scale for merit in English writing" which ranges from 0 to 100. The 'scale' is based on model compositions with which student writing can be compared so that it can be properly measured. According to Thorndike, "By using such scales, the absolute gain which any pupil made in any year could be measured in the same way as his gain in height, weight, wages or pulse-rate, and the results of different means and methods of teaching could be demonstrated with exactitude instead of being guessed at." p. 214.

[43]Rudolph, The American College and University, p. 436.

[44]Rudolph, p. 38.

[45]Adams Sherman Hill, "An Answer to the Cry for More English," in Adams Sherman Hill, L. B. R. Griggs, and B. S. Hurlbut, Twenty Years of School and College English (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1896), p. 9. Hill quotes from Harvard's 1879 entrance exam:

"Write a short composition upon one of the subjects given below.

Before beginning to write, consider what you have to say on the subject selected, and arrange your thoughts in logical order.

Aim at quality rather than quantity of work.

Carefully revise your composition, correcting all errors in punctuation, spelling, grammar, division by paragraphs, and expression, and making each sentence as clear and forcible as possible. If time permits, make a clean copy of the revised work.

I. The Character of Sir Richard Steele.
II. The Duke of Marlborough as portrayed by Thackeray.
III. The Style of 'Henry Esmond."
IV. Thackeray's account of the Pretender's visit to England.
V. Duelling in the Age of Queen Anne."

Hill goes on to point out that about half of the students (157 out of 316) failed, and nine-tenths of the failures were due to improper punctuation and capitals, bad spelling, and poor grammar.

[46]Cremin, p. 93.

[47]Cremin, p. 207.

[48]Cremin, pp. 234-237.

[49]Cremin, pp. 258-269.

[50]Rudolph, p. 486.

[51]Rudolph, p. 490.

[52]From Higher Education for Democracy: A Report of the President's Commission on Higher Education, I, Establishing the Goals (New York, 1947). Exerpted in Hofstadter, American Higher Education: A Documentary History, II, p. 975.

[53]Ibid., p. 989.

[54]Robert M. Hutchins, "Report of the President's Commission on Higher Education," Educational Record (April, 1948), pp. 107-122. Reprinted in part in Hofstadter, American Higher Education: A Documentary History, II, p. 990.

[55]C. L. Barber, et al., The New College Plan: A Proposal for a Major Departure in Higher Education. Prepared at the Request of the Presidents of Amherst College, Mount Holyoke College, Smith College, and the University of Massachusetts with the Assistance of a Grant from the Fund for the Advancement of Education (Amherst, 1958).

Chapter II

[1]Benjamin DeMott, "Reading, Writing, Reality, Unreality . . . ," in Response to Literature, ed. James R. Squire (Champaign, Illinois: NCTE, 1966), p. 36.

[2]Albert Raymond Kitzhaber, Rhetoric in American Colleges, Diss. (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, 1953), pp. 51-52.

[3]Cotton Mather, "Some Special Points, Relating To The Education Of My Children," in The Puritans, II, ed. Perry Miller and Thomas H. Johnson (New York, 1963), p. 725.

[4]Mark Twain, The Adventures of Tom Sawyer (New York, 1959), p. 137.

[5]Kitzhaber, p. 66.

[6]Kitzhaber, p. 57.

[7]Kitzhaber, pp. 70-71.

[8]The Harvard Reports are bound in Reports of the Visiting Committees of the Board of Overseers of Harvard College (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 1902).

Report XXVIII (1892) is "The Report of the Committee on Composition and Rhetoric," pp. 117-157.

Report XLIX (1895) comments on the poor quality of translation English allowed in the schools, pp. 275-287.

Report LXXI (1897) discusses "the growing illiteracy of American boys," pp. 401-424.

[9]Reports of the Visiting Committees of the Board of Overseers of Harvard College, no. XXVIII, 1892, p. 119.

[10]Kitzhaber, pp. 77-79.

[11]George R. Carpenter, Franklin T. Baker, and Fred N. Scott, The Teaching of English in the Elementary and the Secondary School (New York, 1914), pp. 284-285, footnote no. 2.

[12]Edwin C. Wooley, "Admission to Freshman English in the University," English Journal, 3 (1914), 240.

[13]Wooley.

[14]Wooley.

[15]Emma J. Breck, "A New Task for the English Teacher," English Journal, 1 (1912), pp. 66-67.

[16]The whole notion of workshop or laboratory teaching was theoretically supported by John Dewey, who said that it was wrong to think that all students are alike and that they will all benefit from the same experience. Teachers who agreed with these notions attempted to loosen their holds on the students and afford them choices of experiences. In the English class this meant small groups of students writing on different topics of particular interest to the people in the group; students reading and editing each other's writing; or individuals working alone and conferring with the teacher when necessary. Unfortunately, these workshops were seldom employed in the public schools; they were more commonly found in progressive, private schools.

See also, Edward L. Thorndike, Education: A First Book (New York, 1912), pp. 177-178. "The essence of the laboratory and experimental methods of teaching is to give as much care and ingenuity to providing instructive experiences of things as to providing instructive verbal accounts of them, to direct what the pupil does as well as what he hears and sees and says, and to teach him to extend, criticize and refine his ideas by appeals to fact as well as some accepted opinion."

See also, John Dewey, John Dewey on Education, Selected Writings (New York, 1964), pp. 5, 9.

W. D. Lewis, "The Aims of the English Course," English Journal (College Edition), 1 (1912), pp. 9-14.

[17]Calvin L. Lewis, "The Neglected Side of English," English Journal, 3 (1914), 285.

[18]Edwin M. Hopkins, "Can Good Composition Teaching Be Done Under Present Conditions?" English Journal, 1 (1912), 6-7.

[19]John Cunliffe, "College English Composition," English Journal, 1 (1912), 592. This is a reprint of an address presented to the Graduate English Club of Columbia University.

[20]Lewis, pp. 287-289.

[21]H. Robinson Shipherd, The Fine Art of Writing (New York, 1926), p. 7.

[22]Cora Dolbee, "What Can We Teach Freshmen?" English Journal (College Edition), 17 (1928), 226.

[23]Ibid.

[24]Albert Benjamin Cunningham, "Aims and Methods in Oral English," English Journal (College Edition), 17 (1928), 206.

[25]Ida A. Jewett, English in State Teachers Colleges: A Catalogue Study, Contributions to Education, no 826 (New York: Columbia University, 1927), pp. 46-47.

[26]Jewett, p. 28.

[27]Jewett, p. 162.

[28]Ralph L. Henry, "A College Course in Advanced Composition," English Journal (College Edition), 17 (1928), 142.

[29]C. W. and W. A. Kerby-Miller, "What is Wrong With Freshman Composition?" English Journal (College Edition), 26 (1937), 626.

[30]C. W. and W. A. Kerby-Miller, "A New Type of College Composition Course, II," English Journal (College Edition), 26 (1937), 806.

[31]W. L. Warner, "True Measures in College Composition," English Journal (College Edition), 19 (1930), 386-388.

[32]W. B. Gates, "Theme Writing Under Supervision," English Journal (College Edition), 19 (1930), 384-385.

[33]Stanton Millet and James L. Morton, "The Writing Laboratory at Indiana University," College English, 18 (1956), 38-39. The writing laboratory "offers informal supplementary help for the great middle class of composition students." Two of four instructors are available every afternoon and evening, Monday through Thursday. The students seek the advice and help of these instructors while they are in the process of writing. The writers of this article believe that the Laboratory was most effective because it dealt with the writer's own writing rather than some "vague and intangible" model.

[34]J. H. McKee, "Promoting Junior and Senior Morale in Writing," English Journal (College Edition), 26 (1937), 806.

[35]J. Hooper Wise, "Florida Plan for Comprehensive Freshman English," English Journal (College Edition), 26 (1937), 395.

[36]Hooper, p. 396.

[37]Ibid.

[38]Egbert S. Oliver, "Can Creative Writing Be Taught? Some Comments by Prominent American Authors," English Journal (College Edition), 26 (1937), 40.

[39]Earl L. Vance, "Integrating Freshman Composition," English Journal (College Edition), 26 (1937), 318.

[40]Oliver, p. 46.

[41]Ruth Mary Weeks, "Teaching the Whole Child," English Journal (College Edition), 20 (1931), 14. This is a reprint of the presidential address given at the twentieth annual meeting of the National Council of Teachers of English, November 28, 1930.

[42]Weeks, p. 15.

[43]Howard Francis Seely, "Composition as a Liberating Activity," English Journal (College Edition) 29 (1930), 107.

[44]Seely, p. 108.

[45]Seely, p. 109.

[46]Ward S. Miller, "Interviewing for English Classes," English Journal (College Edition), 26 (1937), 18.

[47]An Experience Curriculum in English: A Report of the Curriculum Commission of the National Council of Teachers of English, W. Wilbur Hatfield, Chairman (NCTE, 1935), p. 3.

[48]An Experience Curriculum in English, see footnote, p. 3.

[49]An Experience Curriculum in English, p. 160.

[50]An Experience Curriculum in English, p. 161.

[51]An Experience Curriculum in English, p. 163.

[52]An Experience Curriculum in English, p. xix.

[53]An Experience Curriculum in English, p. 208.

[54]An Experience Curriculum in English, p. 212.

[55]An Experience Curriculum in English, p. 221.

[56]"Report of the Language Committee of the School and College Conference on English, April, 1940," in George Winchester Stone, Jr., ed., Issues, Problems, and Approaches in the Teaching of English (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc.), p. 40.

[57]Ibid., p. 37.

[58]What the High Schools Ought to Teach, Special Committee on the Secondary School Curriculum (Washington, D.C., 1940), p. 28.

[59]"The English Language in American Education, a Report of the Modern Language Association Commission on Trends in Education, 1945," by Thomas A. Pollock, et al., in George Winchester Stone, Jr., ed., Issues, Problems, and Approaches in the Teaching of English (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc.), p. 126.

[60]Lucia B. Mirrielees, Teaching Composition and Literature in Junior and Senior High School (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1952), p. 3.

[61]Henry N. Day, "Preface" (based on the same author's "Elements of the Art of Rhetoric," 1850), The Art of Discourse: A System of Rhetoric (New York, 1870), pp. iv-v.

[62]M. E. Lilienthal and Robert Allyn, Things Taught: Systematic Instruction in Composition and Object Lessons (New York, 1862), p. 3.

[63]John F. Genung, "Preface" to Outlines of Rhetoric Embodied in Rules, Illustrative Examples, and a Progressive Course of Prose Composition (New York, 1893), pp. iii-vi.

[64]Members of the Department of Stephens College, "Index," Hurdles in English Composition, A Review of the Mechanics of English Composition (New York, 1933), pp. vii-x.

[65]Robert Doremus, Edgar W. Lacy, and George Bush Rodman, ed., Patterns in Writing (New York, 1950), p. v.

[66]A. J. M. Smith, ed., "Introduction," Essays for College Writing (New York, 1965), p. vii.

[67]Lester Thonssen and A. Craig Baird, "Cicero and Quintillian on Rhetoric," in The Province of Rhetoric, ed. Joseph Schwartz and John A. Rycenga (New York, 1965), pp. 139-141.

[68]Francis Christensen, "A Generative Rhetoric of the Sentence," in The Sentence and the Paragraph (Champaign: NCTE, 1963), pp. 1-3.

[69]W. Ross Winterowd, Rhetoric and Writing (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1965), pp. 342-350.

[70]Fred Morgan, Here and Now (New York, 1968).

[71]James H. Pickering and E. Fred Carlisle, ed., "Preface" to The Harper Reader, to be published in Spring, 1971.

[72]Margaret L. Montgomery, "Communications Work for Freshmen at Talladega College," College English, 9 (1947), pp. 99-100.

[73]Theodore J. Gates, "The First Instruction in Composition," College English, 3 (1941), pp. 66-68.

[74]Wallington E. Aiken and Phillips D. Carleton, "Freshman English at the University of Vermont," College English, 3 (1941), 282-283.

[75]Mirrielees, p. 91.

[76]"The Basic Issues in the Teaching of English," (from PMLA September Supplement, 1959) in George Winchester Stone, Jr., ed., Issues, Problems, and Approaches in the Teaching of English (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc).

[77]Ibid., p. 11.

[78]Ibid., p. 18.

Chapter III

[1]A. H. Maslow, "Some Basic Propositions of a Growth and Self-Actualization Psychology," in Perceiving Behaving Becoming (Washington, D.C., 1962), p. 34.

[2]Christopher Jencks and David Riesman, The Academic Revolution (New York, 1969), p. 28.

[3]Earl Kelley, Education For What Is Real (New York, 1947), pp. 15-22.

[4]An example of this fragmentation is present in Freedom and Discipline in English: Report of the Commission on English (New York: College Entrance Examination Board, 1965), p. 96. This Commission expresses the belief that assignments do not need to follow any kind of logical progression because any well thought-out exercise is good for the student.

[5]James Moffett, "Statement Against Adoption of PPBS By California Public Schools," a speech delivered at a meeting of The Southern California Council of Teachers of English, July 10, 1970. Moffett is commenting on the mechanistic, behavioral approach being introduced into the California schools by Richard Berg, Peat, Marwick, Mitchell, and Co. at the request of the state legislature. He says that these Planning, Programming, Budgeting Systems "could hardly be less relevant to the schools." p. 1. And later in the speech he says: "If the commitment to PPBS continues it is a safe prediction that in five years it will have driven in the final nails on the Public school systems wherever adopted--in their coffins, I mean. However much of a Godsend PPBS may look to an administrator, I can tell him confidently that neither the students nor the teachers will put up much longer with an institution that persists so doggedly in evading what really ails it --its own, much-exploited institutionalism. In five years there won't be enough kids in school even to warrant the kind of meeting you are having today. One thing schools can't do without is students, even though we have managed to hide their physical and spiritual absence for a long time. PPBS will make more efficient what we have been doing wrong all alone: It will help us account Better for an Education that is of no account." p. 2.

Moffett finishes by pointing out that "however efficient behavioral psychology proves to be in cost-accounting the production of automobiles, including the

Edsel, the imposition of industrial models on Educational efforts is neither efficient nor humane." p. 3.

[6]Alfred North Whitehead, "The Aims of Education," in The Aims of Education and Other Essays (New York, 1929), p. 2.

[7]Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The American Scholar," in Selections from Ralph Waldo Emerson, ed. Stephen E. Whicher (Boston, 1957), p. 65.

[8]Emerson, p. 65.

[9]Jerome Bruner, Toward a Theory of Instruction (Cambridge, 1966), pp. 5-6.

[10]Lev Semenovich Vygotsky, Thought and Language (Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1962), pp. 16-18.

[11]Vygotsky, p. 18.

[12]James Moffett, Teaching the Universe of Discourse (Boston, 1968), p. 18.

[13]Herman Melville, Moby Dick (New York, 1964), p. 92.

[14]Moffett, Teaching the Universe of Discourse, p. 20.

[15]Melville, pp. 92-93.

[16]Moffett, Teaching the Universe of Discourse, pp. 22-23.

[17]Neil Postman and Charles Weingartner, Teaching as a Subversive Activity (New York, 1969), pp. 88-90. See also, Earl Kelley, Education For What Is Real, Chapter 2, "The Hanover Institute Demonstrations in Perception."

[18]Postman and Weingartner, pp. 90-91.

[19]Kelley, Education For What Is Real, p. 28.

[20]See also John Dewey, Experience and Education (New York, 1956). Dewey says, "An experience is always what it is because of a transaction taking place between an individual and what, at the time, constitutes his environment." (p. 41.) He goes on to describe the environment as "whatever conditions interact with personal needs, desires, purposes, and capacities to create the experience which is had." (p. 42.)

See also Earl Kelley, Education For What Is Real: Kelley says that an individual's capacity for education depends on his ability to relinquish or revise past beliefs and build new "habit patterns" in light of his changing environment or his new perceptions. p. 52.

[21]See also, Earl Kelley and Marie I. Rasey, Education and the Nature of Man (New York, 1952), pp. 40-41: "Man's way of knowing, then, is through the phenomenon of perception, by which he becomes cognizant of his surroundings. This is subjective and not objective. Through his ability to remember, he is able to accumulate experience, and at least the conscious part of this storage is knowledge. Since perception and experience are subjective and personal, the residual knowledge also is subjective and personal. This fact gives him a world all his own, and makes his problem one of communication with others living in unique worlds, to the end that suffucient understanding will result that life will be more tenable."

[22]Vygotsky, p. 83: "A concept is more than the sum of certain associative bonds formed by memory, more than a mere mental habit; it is a complex and a genuine act of thought that cannot be taught by drilling but can be accomplished only when the child's mental development itself has reached the requisite level. At any age, a concept embodied in a word represents an act of generalization."

[23]Postman and Weingartner, p. 42.

[24]Postman and Weingartner, pp. 20-21.

[25]Walt Whitman, Complete Poetry and Selected Prose (Cambridge, 1959), p. 10.

[26]Whitman, p. 275.

[27]Alfred North Whitehead, p. 11.

[28]John Dewey, John Dewey on Education, Selected Writings, ed. Reginald D. Archambault (New York: Modern Library, 1964), p. 9.

[29]Alfred North Whitehead, p. 3.

[30]Lawrence A. Cremin, The Transformation of the School: Progressivism in American Education, pp. 117-119.

[31]Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore, The Medium is the Message (New York, 1967), p. 18.

[32]Dewey, Selected Writings, p. 4.

[33]Earl C. Kelley, "The Fully Functioning Self," in Perceiving Behaving Becoming (Washington, D.C.: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1962), pp. 18-20.

[34]Postman and Weingartner, pp. 83-84.

[35]Dewey, Selected Writings, p. 4.

[36]Kelley, "The Fully-Functioning Self," p. 13.

[37]Kelley, "The Fully-Functioning Self," p. 9.

[38]Kelley, "The Fully-Functioning Self," p. 17.

[39]Postman and Weingartner, p. 52.

[40]Herbert Kohl, The Open Classroom (New York, 1969), p. 56.

[41]Kohl, p. 81.

[42]Kohl, p. 78.

[43]John Dewey, Experience and Education (New York, 1956), p. 46.

Chapter IV

[1]John Dixon, Growth Through English, A Report Based on the Dartmouth Seminar, 1966 (London, 1967), pp. 1-2.

[2]Dixon, p. 2.

[3]Dixon, p. 2.

[4]Dixon, p. 3.

[5]Dixon, p. 3.

[6]Dixon, p. 7.

[7]Dixon, pp. 32-33.

[8]Dixon, p. 33.

[9]Frank Whitehead, The Disappearing Dais (London, 1966), p. 16.

[10]Frank Whitehead, p. 12.

[11]Frank Whitehead, p. 158.

[12]Dixon, p. 12.

[13]Dixon, p. 9.

[14]James Moffett, A Student-Centered Language Arts Curriculum, Grades K-13: A Handbook for Teachers (Boston, 1968), p. 28. "Though ultimately verbal, the 'writing assignments' are really external equivalents for processes of conceptualizing that go on inside us all the time, whether we verbalize or not. Above everything else, a course in one's native language should be about symbolizing experience at various abstraction levels and in various verbal modes."

[15]Dixon, p. 27.

[16]Dixon, p. 9. "It is in the nature of language to impose system and order, to offer us sets of choices from which we must choose one way or another of building our inner world."

[17]Dixon, p. 30.

[18]Dixon, p. 18.

[19]Dixon, p. 6.

[20]Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The American Scholar," in Selections from Ralph Waldo Emerson, ed. Stephen Whicher (Boston, 1957), p. 69.

[21]Emerson, pp. 71-72.

[22]Robert C. Pooley, "The Determination of Correct English," in Language into Literature, ed. James D. Barry and William U. McDonald (Chicago, 1965), p. 247.

[23]Dixon, p. 31.

[24]Alfred North Whitehead, The Aims of Education and Other Essays (New York, 1929), p. 139.

[25]James Moffett, Teaching the Universe of Discourse (Boston, 1968), p. 7.

[26]Dixon, p. 46.

[27]Dixon, p. 34.

[28]Dixon, pp. 42-43.

[29]Dixon, p. 43.

[30]Dixon, p. 38.

[31]Moffett, Teaching the Universe of Discourse, p. 13.

[32]Derek Bowskill, "Drama in Secondary Education: Some Underlying Principles," English in Education, 1, No. 3 (1967), 13. "(In my experience, discussion has not, as yet, ever brought about a creative act.) Creative dramatic work [spontaneous] is more valuable than theatre [recreative drama] in education because learning takes place only when the student is involved in a spontaneous act--is 'switched on.' . . . Living and learning are quintessentially spontaneous and are always marked by their imperfections and inaccuracies. When the students are involved spontaneously their drama will be real, with meaning, purpose and significance. When this happens, the spirits of teacher and students will have been permanently touched and scratched."

[33]John Hodgson, "Drama in the College of Education," English in Education, 1, No. 3 (1967), 17.

[34]Samuel Kahn, M.D., Ph.D., Psychodrama Explained (New York, 1964), p. 62.

[35]Kahn, p. 9.

[36]Kahn, p. 40.

[37]The most important point to mention here is that the improvisation is not causing the problem; it is simply creating a situation in which possible problems might exhibit themselves. Furthermore, since no teacher would wish to have a student conceal (or be unaware of) the fact that he was suffering from a serious physical illness, it follows logically that he should take the same attitude toward mental illness.

[38]A. H. Maslow, "Some Basic Propositions of a Growth and Self-Actualization Psychology," Perceiving Behaving Becoming (Washington, D.C., 1962), p. 42.

Chapter V

[1]Samuel Kahn, M.D., Ph.D. Psychodrama Explained, p. 7.

[2]Kahn, p. 14.

[3]Walter Ong, S.J., The Barbarian Within and Other Fugitive Essays and Studies (New York, 1962), p. 20.

[4]Ong, p. 28.

[5]Ross W. Winterowd, Rhetoric: A Synthesis (New York, 1968), pp. 1-8.

[6]Winterowd, p. 5.

[7]Frank Whitehead, p. 177.

[8]Moffett, Teaching the Universe of Discourse, p. 18.

Chapter VI

[1]The student-centered course referred to here is English 101-102, a course for Arts and Letters majors at Michigan State University. It has been developed during the past two years under the general direction of Dr. E. Fred Carlisle, Associate Chairman for Undergraduate Studies.

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