A COMPOSITION PROGRAM FOR ACCELERATED
HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

When a high school student of low ability asks why he must suffer the agony of a composition class, his teacher may have a difficult time finding answers that are both truthful and persuasive. After this student leaves high school, he will probably have little need ever again to employ formal written English. He can buy a printed card that will express a thought far more effectively than he could hope to express it with his own words. If he can fill out forms and endorse checks, he probably can satisfy the writing requirements of a job. He knows of people who have amassed fortunes even though they did not finish high school. In short, he knows so many negative arguments that he is unlikely to be persuaded. Lacking motivation, he is also unlikely to improve his writing significantly despite a teacher's efforts.

Unfortunately, many students capable of high achievement use the same negative arguments without being challenged convincingly. Too many of them complete high school without having realized that a composition course can be interesting and stimulating as well as beneficial. They sit through boring classes, occasionally writing an autobiography or describing "My Summer Vacation." Perhaps they make excellent grades without real effort. After they leave high school, they speak and
write about the ineffectiveness of composition teaching, about how their time was wasted.

A composition class that does not improve writing is indeed a waste of time. Superior students need the extra challenges that are usually available only in an accelerated class. Here, too, is where a dedicated teacher can know the satisfaction of success. The teacher of an accelerated composition class has a truly unique opportunity not only to improve students' writing but also to bestow various other benefits not normally considered part of the curriculum: heightened awareness, educated imagination, increased self-esteem, and improved critical judgment. Since so many aids are available to help the teacher in the actual process of writing, this study will concentrate on the various ways in which these other benefits can be integrated into a composition class for accelerated students. In addition to (or perhaps because of) these extra benefits, this writer believes that such a program will aid in solving the problems of motivation and student morale. Since the emphasis is largely removed from the mechanics of writing and placed on such other values as heightened self-awareness and increased critical skills, it is possible that self-expression can be improved without stifling the students' natural creative urge.

Considerable emphasis in this study is also placed on the psychological benefit to the student of various kinds of writing programs. In this connection, however, the teacher
must be very much aware of the limits of his ability as a psychotherapist. These writing assignments may reveal students who require professional mental therapy. The teacher should report such students to the school psychologist, counselor, or principal, and should not try to provide such aid himself. Nevertheless, there can be a definite psychic value to the student in simply putting his usually hidden and secret thoughts and observations on paper; the teacher can and should offer this kind of aid to the student.

Students have a psychological need for writing skill; regardless of their claims to the contrary, they desire to master the language. (6, p. 223). Poor writers often develop feelings of self-consciousness or inferiority that make them dislike having to write anything that others are to read. In view of the importance of writing, this antipathy, if aroused frequently, can assume such significant proportions that it can cause one to avoid writing whenever escape is possible. Thus many students dread not only formal composition in English classes but also essay tests and research reports in other classes. They may even be too self-conscious to write letters to their friends.

On the other hand, a student who writes well and has confidence in his writing ability has a ready outlet for his thoughts and does not hesitate to use this valuable tool. He disposes of the required writing without apprehension. If he experiences a creative impulse, he has the means to exploit it.
When he wishes to record some event, whether for himself or for someone else, he need not call for help. He has a particular kind of independence which, especially in the case of a college student, can serve him as well as the ability to swim can serve a boatman. Either activity, writing or swimming, can be a matter of pleasure, but it can also serve as a means of rescue.

If the ability to write could serve in no other way than as a means of rescue, the teaching of composition would still be well justified. For the accelerated student, however, a more aesthetic comparison is appropriate. This type of writer is comparable to a composer of music or a painter. Each "deals in the act of relating parts to the whole which we identify in the term composition" (3, p. 104). One who writes intends for someone to read what he has written, even if the reader is only himself. Therefore, it is important that the teacher remember a fact so basic that all concerned may overlook it: What is written today is written not for readers of the past but for readers of the present and the future. Unfortunately, critics are correct when they say: "Yet some of our instruction in composition suggests that our students are writing to be read yesterday" (3, p. 105).

This antiquated type of instruction may be the best that is generally available; the obstacles to good composition are formidable indeed. Perhaps even out-of-date teaching can do an acceptable job in an average class, where the real problem
is one of time and teacher load. But what are the responsibilities of the teacher of an accelerated class? If he is to be a credit to his profession, he will recognize a moral obligation to accomplish much more. True, he may feel almost overwhelmed by the difficulties posed by having too many students. Such obstacles as apathy and lack of understanding on the part of administrators may tend to numb him with discouragement. His destiny may be complete or substantial defeat. But for the sake of his own self-respect he must try.

In an average class, for instance, the teacher cannot realistically hope to go much beyond the goal of reducing the number of obvious errors; at best he can perhaps promote a fair degree of orderliness. But the teacher of an accelerated class should feel that at this point he has only begun. The director of a statewide composition study that involves nineteen Ohio school systems states the criteria quite clearly: "Correctness and orderliness are virtues we shall continue to encourage, but error-free and well-organized writing is but a beginning. We must work for improvement in quality" (1, p. 435).

In spite of administrative obstacles and too great a student load, this improvement in quality occurs readily in an accelerated class, especially if the teacher has in mind a truly worthy goal, such as is described in Kitzhaber's definition of learning to write:

And I would hope that when we speak of learning to write we can agree that we do not mean the
mastery of an empty skill learned in a vacuum and practiced in a void, but a vigorous effort to deal with writing as a serious intellectual activity that, like all human behavior, has social and ethical consequences (2, pp. 133-134).

The resulting development can be one of the most rewarding of all teaching experiences. These students tend to have a desire to express themselves in writing, but in all too many cases the writing process serves discouragingly well as a constricted birth canal from which few creations containing life emerge. These creations, in most cases, result only from great effort, accompanied by a disturbing type of pain.

Enabling teachers to ease this stricture is another of the tantalizing goals of this study. Instead of feeling distaste for the task of writing, accelerated students should know the satisfaction that accompanies free expression of the imagination. Therefore, the teaching suggestions that follow omit intentionally many common ideas usually considered successful in a composition program. Most of the methods included are carefully chosen from those that this writer has found successful. The order of the chapters is highly flexible: the teacher should be able to adapt his plans to take advantage of an opportunity whenever it presents itself.

The second chapter, "The Use of Television in the Composition Program," explores several possibilities that may improve not only composition but also critical judgment. The ubiquitous nature of television makes inclusion of this
chapter in the program almost mandatory. It appears as the initial chapter because of the uncertain timing of suitable programs. Though it may not be usable first, it should be kept in mind for use at a propitious time. By scanning the weekly television schedules, the teacher can locate possibly useful programs in time to make advance preparations.

Chapter III, "Imaginative Writing," begins with a unit devoted to keeping a journal. This activity, with its inherent freedom of expression, offers students an opportunity to experiment with new ideas and to organize old ones never before expressed satisfactorily. As Wallace Stegner says, a writer's mind is a container filled with ideas, many of which have sufficient value to be expressed in writing (\textit{4, p. 15}). The immediate problem is that the ideas are in such a state of disorganization that the writer cannot simply sit down and extract them automatically in the desired order. Instead, he must discover, sometimes by a tedious process, how they are related and what they mean (\textit{4, p. 15}).

The journal unit leads into further creative writing: poems, essays, short stories. Since creative writing is difficult to do well, the teacher may wish to postpone the assignment of required work until he feels that his students are prepared. They must be ready for the rather unusual experience of following the line that the writing develops, even if that line leads into uncharted territory. In other words, according to Stegner, one's best writing
does not follow closely an orderly arrangement of ideas set forth on note cards or in an outline: the writer instead must "submit himself to his materials--to the characters of his story, to the feeling of his poem, to the logic of his essay, to the facts of his article" (4, p. 15).

Chapter IV, "Matters of Style," reflects a continuing trend away from prescriptivism. It virtually rules out an over-zealous grammarian as the teacher of an accelerated composition class. Similarly, any authoritarian will have little chance of success. Since he probably will fail with talented but rebellious students, he is likely to produce writers who, with their contempt for rules and conventions, have something quite interesting to say but cannot communicate it and may "end up speaking striking nonsense, something that catches the attention but makes no sense" (4, p. 15).

To find the best balance, then, between freedom and conformity is a major goal of Chapter IV. Rules should be formulated as often as possible in a democratic discussion between teacher and students. Even rebellious students should cause no dismay. The teacher needs to realize that great development often results from a conflict between anarchy and conformity, challenge and acceptance. In the absence of challenge a teacher could paralyze and kill the language by forcing it into correctness (4, p. 16). Still, both teacher and students must realize that almost any rule has now or has had in the past some good reason for existence.
The value of linguistic freedom, for example, is not great enough to outweigh the danger of robbing the language of flexibility and subtlety (4, p. 17).

After rules of mechanics are established, the teacher still faces the problem of enforcement. In marking and evaluating papers the teacher must consider the effect of what he writes and says; the pleasant atmosphere so important in an accelerated class could be destroyed if he simply marks grammatical errors and allots grades. His students want comments on as many phases of each paper as practicable. Because comments are so important and because a relaxed atmosphere is so beneficial, the teacher should consider writing comments without grades on papers written during the first few weeks of the semester.

At this crucial stage the comments should emphasize praise as much as possible; accelerated students, like almost all others, respond more positively to praise than to criticism (6, p 83). Of course, the praise must be appropriate, relevant, and helpful, or it may become meaningless.

When the time comes for the first grading, the teacher should attempt to de-emphasize the importance of grades. One way is to assure students that low grades made early in the semester will not count against them, that their performance at the end of the semester will determine the final evaluation. Grading of any kind and at any time is important. To show his concern the teacher must grade carefully (5, p. 235).
The activities suggested in Chapter V, "Group Activities," give the teacher another chance to show that he respects his students as individuals. By temporarily assuming the role of evaluators, students gain another view of the composition process. As a result, the relationship between teacher and students should be further improved. When the use of accelerated students as lay readers is successful, other teachers and other students also benefit. These activities can be quite challenging and quite interesting to students.

Chapter VI, "The Research Paper," contains a fairly detailed guide for the writing of a paper over a period of about five weeks. The teacher should feel free to adapt any step to his own needs and to improvise wherever necessary. Contrary to a widely held belief, students need not follow any single rigid set of steps; various options are available to allow for a certain amount of individuality. Some of these options are explained in the course of the chapter. Undoubtedly, the teacher will think of others.

Opportunities for both the teacher and the students to capitalize on special effort are described in Chapter VII, "Literary Contests," which openly attempts to interest more teachers in coaching students for competition in interscholastic literary contests. This responsibility is too often neglected and too often "dumped" onto a teacher who is reluctant to take it. Since these contestants and their coaches
usually gain far less recognition than the members and coaches of an athletic team, literary competition is often not taken seriously enough by administrators. Fortunately, however, the situation has for some years been improving gradually. The number and value of scholarships available to winners has increased dramatically in recent years. The rewards for students, therefore, can be both tangible and intangible. A state winner of the ready writing contest may receive a four-year scholarship worth thousands of dollars. Even the losers will have had the benefit of extra individual attention and extra motivation.

Generally speaking, this entire study recommends a permissive atmosphere. Motivation in an accelerated class usually presents few problems. Since these students presumably can already write fairly well, the teacher has a great deal of freedom to choose activities that he believes will best serve his purposes. Lack of time will almost certainly rule out some of the suggestions in this study; the teacher should choose, therefore, as the opportunity or need arises and should modify or tailor each suggestion to fit his own unique needs and those of his students.
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CHAPTER II

THE USE OF TELEVISION IN THE COMPOSITION PROGRAM

In view of the importance of television, not only as entertainment but also as a form of education, its inclusion in an English program is quite natural and desirable. Research indicates that television is not really a "monster" at all and that instead of changing a child's attitudes, it reinforces those formed by such basic influences as the home and the church (3, p. 32). Accelerated students, even the most selective, can find many offerings well worth the viewing time. According to N. E. Hoopes, "so much that is worthwhile appears on TV, one is out of the mainstream unless he can talk with others about what he has been watching" (2, p. 196). And so the English teacher has another opportunity, if not a duty, to teach composition.

Although superior students often will automatically become critical judges of television's offerings, most can benefit from skillful guidance. They realize, for instance, that some programs give a realistic portrayal of society's troubles, offering sound social criticism, but even these students may not be fully aware that television often emphasizes negative aspects of today's culture to the extent that it perpetuates them (2, p. 197). One needs to learn for himself that much of what appears on the screen is false--especially the values.
Students need to know the true meaning of the often repeated statement that television has to appeal to the masses in order to sell products.

Deciding what to expect of students presents something of a problem. It is rarely realistic to expect all of them to watch one program. Other members of a student's family, for instance, may be unwilling to forego some favorite program, or for various reasons others may not be able to watch television at all at a particular time. One answer is to arrange for groups to gather in a few homes for "team watching" (3, p. 82), a method which could make it possible for almost all students to see one program which the teacher considers especially appropriate. For the few who still could not watch the program the teacher would probably have to make alternate assignments.

One early approach is to have students watch several half-hour mysteries or westerns and then analyze them in writing. Most will soon begin to notice certain patterns, particularly in the western. By concentrating on how westerns differentiate between "good guys" and "bad guys" students can see patterns in how the characters dress, how their manners of speech differ, and how they treat women (4, p. 484). Then the teacher should try to demonstrate why the pattern appears so often. By comparing it with the patterns in short stories and three-act plays he can show that the writer of the television script is so pressed for time that he must rely on
time-saving devices. For example, if he presents an unshaven character in dark clothes, the audience will quickly accept him as a villain (4, p. 484).

After the students thoroughly analyze this type, they will understand that many popular programs are designed for the purpose of mesmerizing viewers' sensibilities (1, p. 197). To be truthful, however, the teacher should admit that such "escape" viewing has a useful place and that many well-educated people watch these programs, though they may be reluctant to have that fact widely known. The important consideration is to teach students to discern the differences between "popular" and "quality" viewing.

Another important type is the documentary. Many highly informative programs on the subject of race relations have been presented. The teacher may well ask students to analyze one of these programs from two points of view: that of a bigoted white man and that of a militant black man. Variations of these two views would also be interesting. The written analysis could take the form of straight description of what appears, or it could be a letter of praise or protest to the producer. Students in an accelerated class could gain special benefit from an assignment requiring them to write two papers from opposing points of view. Thus they might become more aware of the awesome significance of the fact that there usually are opposing points of view. Also, this assignment could help them realize that they should always be ready to examine their own attitudes and opinions.
Regular news programs offer further opportunities for the study of objectivity and bias in reporting. Again, the teacher might ask students to write evaluations from different points of view. Opportunities in the form of controversial subjects abound: campus disorders, politicians' claims and counterclaims, and overseas combat. An evaluation might simply explore the question of objective reporting, with a number of questions as a starting point. For instance, if two sides were represented in a program, which side did the reporter seem to take? Which side seemed to attract more sympathy? Did the reporter's own background seem to fit one side more closely than the other? Did the camera seem to emphasize or neglect any particular facet of the situation? Students should understand that even though a reporter and a cameraman might sincerely attempt to be objective, they must constantly select and reject subjects (3, p. 84).

A television unit should teach more than composition; unless it also teaches critical thinking, it is not worth the extra trouble (1, p. 843). To help guide his students in evaluating television programs, R. F. Blake has prepared a data sheet of four sections (1, p. 844). The first section contains spaces for the student to fill in such data as the name, date, channel, time, and type of the program. The next section requires a fifty-word summary. In the third section the student is to write bits of dialogue and short notations of what he thought significant. The fourth section asks for
a very short statement—one or two sentences—of the student's overall opinion of the program.

The data sheet is a useful tool for keeping information until the students get a chance to write. It lessens the problem of having to watch different programs on different nights. After a reasonable length of time, when everyone has had a chance to watch at least one program, the teacher may assign a critical essay. Using their data sheets to help them remember details, the students evaluate a program. Students' papers should include stated or implied answers to several questions appropriate to the type of program. For a western or a drama the questions may start with setting, conflict, coincidence, and characterization. The number and complexity of the questions will vary according to the ability of the class.

Family shows offer an opportunity for study of television's version of American life (3, p. 105). Students should be able to prepare rather detailed analyses describing the way in which each member of the family is depicted and then taking up larger issues, such as economic status and cultural identification (3, p. 106). Material possessions, or the lack of them, will indicate economic status, but cultural identification is likely to be more difficult. Students may explore the treatment of religion and politics and try to decide why most programs seem to avoid them so carefully.

Students should carefully analyze the values advocated by a program. The teacher may help by offering several questions
for consideration: How do the program's values compare with the community's? How does the program treat ambition? Does it seem to favor either conservatism or liberalism? Does loyalty seem important? To what extent are such programs true to life, to life's pain, for example? If the pain of life is reduced, is there justification for such distortion? In this analysis students may learn something of the use of subjectivity for subtle persuasion.

The study of television should include commercials, the greatest efforts of all at persuasion. Their creators try to present each product in a manner that makes it seem indispensable to the "good life" (3, p. 107). Again a series of questions will help students write their analyses. Is the presentation in good taste? Does it imply unpleasant consequences if one fails to use the product? Does it imply social acceptance for one who uses it? Does it make use of a celebrity's personal appeal? A teacher should have no trouble adding questions that will help students analyze our society's values (3, p. 109).

The teacher's judgment will ultimately rule in the question of how much use to make of television. For students who understand the elements of fiction an in-depth study of quality drama could be profitable. Students might write papers comparing methods used in television and in short stories to establish the point of view, to set the mood, to portray character, and to present symbols. Expository writing could
explore television's place in American life and its effect on young people, with examples and illustrations readily available on the data sheets. Argumentation could advocate improvements that students think television should make. The opportunities are too numerous for a teacher to take advantage of them all. But if he ignores television, he may have trouble justifying his methods.
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CHAPTER III

IMAGINATIVE WRITING

Any comprehensive composition course in high school should include provisions for a journal, an activity which offers several rewards. First, it forces students to observe more closely than they otherwise would; in fact, some will pay more attention to their environment than ever before. Second, this activity causes them to analyze people around them. As the students examine attitudes and motives, many, especially the accelerated students, will turn to a healthy form of introspection in an effort to understand themselves.

Keeping a journal is for these students almost an ideal: a form of writing so interesting that they actually want to practice it. By observing intensively they heighten their awareness and educate their imaginations. Some of them—the number depends significantly on the teacher's efforts—will consciously reach Northrop Frye's third level of the mind and "compare what he [man] does with what he can imagine being done" (4, p. 22). These students, whose profound thoughts offer inspiration for some of the best writing, exercise "the power of constructing possible models of human experience" (4, p. 22). For those who need help in organization or in deciding questions of point of view, Dorothy Lambert, writing in the magazine Education, suggests fourteen ways for the student to
think of his journal (6, pp. 286-288). Paraphrased forms of these suggestions may be found in Appendix A.

Frequently, a bright student who wants to describe some feature or event will become acutely aware of his need for words presently beyond the reaches of his vocabulary. For the moment, he has no alternative but frustration. He may be able to do an acceptable job of description, but he will realize that some deficiency is causing his frustration. As Frye says, "We can't speak or think or comprehend even our own experience except within the limits of our own power over words..." (4, p. 102). The benefit of this frustration is that it provokes in the student a desire to locate more words, master them, and add them to his private collection.

When the teacher explains this assignment, he should emphasize the fact that material he receives will be strictly confidential. Of course, if he does not have the respect and trust of the students, his promise will have little meaning; his students will be unable to write as freely as they wish. But if the students have faith in the teacher, they will invite him to visit some of the innermost recesses of their minds. He will perceive hopes, fears, and plans whose existence he has not suspected. Ideally, he will be able to trace the growth of their imaginations as he follows the day-to-day entries.

Assignment of a journal is a natural outgrowth of the study of Thoreau's Walden. At this crucial point the teacher
sometimes makes the mistake of requiring that his students mimic Thoreau's style. He thus assures substantial defeat for one of the main purposes of a journal: uninhibited self-expression. Although Thoreau's ideas are valuable for consideration and inspiration, his style is important mainly as a relic, not as an appropriate model for today's writers. The teacher who insists on a particular type of journal should make sure that the students have an earlier chance to write one in a free style. These precautions are even more appropriate for a journal written in conjunction with the study of Defoe's *The Journal of the Plague Year*. It is of utmost importance that the students be free for a while to write as they please.

In fact, the teacher should also assure the students that he will consider only content in his evaluation. This unit is to be a representation of what the students actually think. They must, therefore, feel free of the usual requirements of form, such as proper subordination and balanced parallel constructions. Otherwise, writing can be as painful for a superior student as for a poor one; the superior student may be so critical of his own writing that he can find no satisfaction.

Once the student realizes that he is truly free to write what he pleases in any way he chooses, he begins to discover new pleasures in writing and unaccustomed uses for it. For example, he may be able to reduce some of his animosities by
writing about them. Here is where faith in the teacher is extremely important. The student may wish to criticize his friends or his other teachers. If the composition teacher feels that acceptance of such criticism is for him a breach of professional ethics, then he should make that fact clear to his students in the beginning. Before he declares any subject off-limits, however, he should consider the benefit to the student of this type of outlet.

An accelerated student is often a reliable judge of his teachers. He knows when his education is suffering because of teacher incompetence or because of personality defects in a teacher. This student feels a strong need to tell someone besides fellow students what is happening. He can gain an appreciable measure of satisfaction by writing about his grievances to someone he respects. The journal gives him this opportunity if the teacher does not object.

For some personalities it will seem necessary to use most of the space in the journal for such negative comment as criticism of teachers and peers. Others, though, will concentrate on recording impressions that usually receive at most only fleeting attention or perfunctory treatment. A student will analyze a disagreement between two of his friends in an effort to determine why they behave as they do. Then he may formulate a general principle applicable to the ways insecure people attempt to preserve their pride or prove themselves. Perhaps he will recall that he sometimes behaves as
immaturely as they. Thoughtlessness and lack of consideration in others will also cause him to analyze his own behavior. He may even start an unusual line of thinking about his disagreements with his parents. Though he may not be able to make any significant change in his overt behavior, and though his basic ideas may not change at all, he may begin to understand to some degree his parents' point of view.

Not all the journals will make pleasant reading, however. A few, in fact, will disturb a sensitive teacher. Occasionally he will find himself in the midst of a small but real tragedy, such as the experience of a gentle, sensitive young girl whose father abandoned her and her mother three years earlier. He will suffer along with the love-starved child who lives in an institution, with neither a father nor a mother to fulfill emotional needs. To a male teacher some of the boys will reveal their deep-seated fears and maddening frustrations concerning sex; and almost certainly the teacher will find much evidence of feelings of inferiority, some justified and some unjustified. If he cares enough to get involved, he can find many opportunities to make subtle use of the information he gains, in order to reach students who need the type of help he can give. Sympathetic involvement will necessitate his playing a role as part-time counselor. If he has courage, he will welcome this challenge that often accompanies the teaching of composition.

In deciding how long to ask his students to keep the journal the teacher should keep in mind how much time is
available and how much benefit the students can gain. From experience this writer judges that two weeks is the optimum time allowance for accelerated students, some of whom then begin to consider the activity a burden. Flexibility, however, is desirable so that the teacher can encourage the more sensitive and imaginative ones who wish to continue. One suggestion is that he explain to them the value of a journal as a collection of ideas for creative writing.

Also important is the choice of the time period to use for keeping this journal. A few days of it, at least, should come during a time when nothing important is happening in the school or the town. As the students begin to listen and observe more carefully, they learn that even one of these apparently dull days is filled with interesting events. Many will independently formulate their own versions of Gehlmann's statement that "there are no uninteresting subjects--there are only uninterested people" (S, p. 143).

When the journal assignment is successful, it is likely to cause the teacher to make the mistake of believing that it will bring such results repeatedly in the same class. Unfortunately, it usually will not. A similar assignment after the passage of several weeks often succeeds, especially for those students who were unable to achieve the necessary sensation of freedom the first time. A third assignment, in this writer's experience, has usually produced disappointing results.
Instead, the teacher should allow his students to progress toward more sophisticated forms of creative writing. Their journals probably contain ideas for development into poems, essays, and works of prose fiction. Introspection, for example, often produces moving poetry. Heightened awareness can inspire a student to develop a simple journal entry into an essay of social commentary. An account of a conversation can grow into a drama or a short story. The opportunities are too many to be enumerated, too varied to be categorized.

Although keeping a journal is not a prerequisite to creative writing, it is a logical introduction. This close relationship is one reason for attempting a creative writing unit early in the semester. More valid, however, is the argument that this early attempt allows more time for students to collect and use ideas on their own initiative. Even though many teachers believe that students of average ability should not be assigned such activity, members of an accelerated class should have the opportunity and the encouragement to create.

In this activity, as in keeping a journal, the students make most of their own choices concerning subjects, forms, and materials. They should understand that the really important element of creative writing is meaning, the expression of what they think and feel. The expression should be natural, even if it violates rules of formal English and even if it is deficient in clarity. Skill in expository writing, usually the goal of formal composition, is not the object of this unit.
The real object, according to one college professor, should be self-knowledge, indicated by the students' proficiency in expressing their thoughts and feelings (2, p. 500).

By putting their ideas down on paper the students can crystallize thoughts that would otherwise come near enough to tease but elude attempts to capture them in word form. Sheridan Baker says that the action of writing enables one to grasp thoughts never before understood (1, p. 10). Realizing the importance of communication even in this relaxed atmosphere, the students usually will impose on themselves sufficient social discipline, avoiding the slang and jargon so prevalent in their speech. When they see their ideas on paper, they realize something of their own power with words. The importance of the resulting increase in self-esteem would be difficult to over-estimate.

Just as the objectives of this type of writing differ from those of formal composition, so should the atmosphere of the classroom be different. Of extreme importance is the teacher's attitude, which can either stimulate or inhibit creativity. Because of the distinctively personal nature of creative writing, the amount of guidance and direction that the teacher can give will vary greatly among individual students. To be successful, he must remove the usual fears of judgment, censure, and rejection. Only when the students relax without these fears can they create. The teacher must exercise unusual caution in the use of negative comments,
carefully avoiding any remark that might appear to degrade a student's efforts. Probably, he should not assign formal grades at all to these papers. His comments should be constructive, posing alternatives and making suggestions without any authoritarian application of his own creative ideas (2, p. 501). Otherwise, the students will not produce their own creations.

In short, students are not likely to write creatively unless they believe they can do so. By establishing an atmosphere in which his students feel relaxed and accepted, the teacher can foster this necessary belief (2, p. 501). An inexhaustible supply of ideas can come from student journals and from interested daily observation. The teacher should provide individual help as students attempt to use the ideas. An article written for the English Journal by W. C. Dell offers a list of eighteen specific exercises to be considered as suggestions, not assignments. These suggestions are given in paraphrased form in Appendix B. From this list the students should feel free to choose, with their own needs and desires as the only criteria (2, p. 501).

If an accelerated class is to use its potential, creative writing should play an important part in its program. This type of writing, which represents the highest development of the skill, gives students a way of determining their deeper feelings and a method of expressing them. As they write, they gain understanding of themselves and of their universe. In
the words of a British educator, creative writing brings "articulation and coherence to our living experience" (3, p. 796).
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CHAPTER IV

MATTERS OF STYLE

Mechanics

Another of the advantages in teaching an accelerated class is the relative freedom from problems of mechanics. Few advanced writers will have enough trouble with subject-verb agreement or even with who and whom to require special help. They will have for some time been aware of most of the requirements of formal English and of the way it differs from colloquial expression, or, as Sheridan Baker says, of "the strangely automatic shift in vocabulary from the playground to the dinner table" (1, p. 3). However, in this class, as well as in a college honors class, some problems in mechanics are inevitable. Obviously, the teacher, if he is to accomplish his purpose, must have an excellent foundation in this area: his students will demand thorough explanations.

Explanations to these students should not present the major problem common in average classes: difficulty of communication when the teacher uses grammatical terminology. No more than a short review should be necessary. At this point, however, a teacher may fall into a quite understandable error. Having tried to make sense of the bewildering uproar over the new grammars, he may exaggerate the importance of grammar as he teaches composition. Warriner cautions
teachers against the error of trying to teach a complete course in one of the new grammars: such a course would, he says, take more time than any foreseeable benefit would justify (6, p. 8). In fact, a teacher zealous in the cause of a new grammar may have the mistaken idea that a thorough understanding of it is virtually the only prerequisite to good writing. This teacher, Warriner reminds, has neither evidence nor logic for support (6, p. 8).

Because of the relative maturity of advanced students the teacher should consider giving them a significant role in establishing rules of form. Having an open discussion with democratic decisions is an excellent way to build morale and increase students' awareness of the true values of rules. They almost invariably have more respect for self-imposed rules than for those set forth arbitrarily. The amount of freedom allowable is a matter for each teacher to decide. Even advanced students should not infer that all rules are optional. As the report of an Oregon language study states, pupils need "to realize that an expression is right only when it is effective and appropriate to the subject, the speaker's or writer's purpose, the experience of the listeners or readers, the occasion and the mood" (5, p. 362).

With a minimum of guidance students will decide for themselves that they must observe most conventions in order to have clear communication. When a radical idea, such as stringing words and sentence parts together in a stream-of-consciousness
style, seems to be winning approval, the teacher may avoid the unpleasantness of an edict by saying, "That's an idea worth trying in a short story." Or he may agree to accept an occasional essay written by no formal rules at all. Using one of these essays for an example, the teacher may be able to demonstrate that although most of the class members can understand its meaning, a general audience would have too much difficulty with it. Then the time will be right for further discussion, during which the teacher should explain that certain matters of form at present unforeseeable by students should have special attention.

A logical early step that will benefit almost all writers is a concentrated effort to acquaint students with the practice and the value of choosing the best type of sentence for each given situation. Unless a writer is aware of the difference, he is likely to use too many loose sentences and not enough periodic. The natural flow of English is loose, because of the influence of French after the Norman Conquest (1, p. 92). However, German and Latin have also contributed to English, and from them our language inherits periodic characteristics, which enable one to construct a sentence in which "ideas hang in the air like girders until all interconnections are linked by the final word: 'John, the best student in the class, the tallest and most handsome, hit Joe!'" (1, p. 92). The best writers will learn to mix the two types for the best effect.

Next, the students should learn to cope with one of their potential enemies: the passive voice. It is an enemy not
because it is incorrect but because its frequent or injudicious use weakens sentences by making them dull. Of course, it is sometimes quite effective in simply achieving variety. Sometimes, also, a writer wishes to emphasize the receiver of an action. For instance, the sentence "Our huge oak tree, in which I had played as a child, was struck by lightning and destroyed" demands that the reader realize the importance of the oak tree. To change this sentence to the active voice would be to weaken it. In addition, the passive voice is almost necessary in some cases where the actor is unknown, as in "My dog was poisoned last week." Finally, convention calls for the passive voice in many unpleasant situations. In speaking of an interment, for example, one usually says something like "Mr. Jones was buried in Oakland Cemetery."

Actually, inexpert use of the passive voice will also result in wordiness, which may in turn make a composition unclear. This danger, along with the others, makes it important that students learn to avoid the passive in most instances. One effective way to make them conscious of the problem is to require them to write a short theme in which they use no passives at all. The teacher may need to repeat this assignment once or twice. Then he may assign another short theme in which the students are to include two or three effective passive sentences. They should mark these sentences and prepare to demonstrate that each would be less effective in the active voice. After about a week of such exercises the students should have little further trouble with the passive voice.
Most writers at any level can learn better use of compound and complex sentences. One problem is that the compound sentence is a natural way of thinking; it is also a lazy way because one need be only minimally aware of logical connections. In conversation people tend to string ideas together, connecting them with and. In one version of an old anecdote a child says, "And the farmer told the boys if they stole any more watermelons he would turn his pigs loose on them, and they would eat the boys up, and the boys did, and the farmer did, and the pigs did." Of course, the compound sentence, like the passive voice, has its place and may be the best choice for a certain expression. But even superior students will sometimes use too many compounds and will use them in some situations that demand complex sentences.

The complex sentence requires considerably more thought than the compound, which is so natural that it develops almost spontaneously (1, p. 99). Once again the teacher can effectively combat the problem by bringing students face-to-face with it. He can require them to write a short theme containing a given number of complex sentences but no compound. Then perhaps he can have them check all simple sentences to see whether some can be converted to subordinate clauses or phrases. As Baker says, "Complex sentences are at their best really simple sentences gloriously delayed and elaborated" (1, p. 100). It would be difficult to find a better illustration of what he means than the last stanza of William Cullen Bryant's poem
"Thanatopsis." The entire stanza is but a glorious elaboration of a simple sentence that might be stated, "Live this way":

So live, that when thy summons comes to join
The innumerable caravan, which moves
To that mysterious realm where each shall take
His chamber in the silent halls of death,
Thou go not, like the quarry slave at night,
Scourged to his dungeon, but, sustained and soothed
By an unfaltering trust, approach thy grave,
Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch
About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams.

Another natural tendency causes most writers to use, or attempt to use, parallel constructions. This trait, however, unlike the compound-sentence tendency, is highly desirable, needing only refinement to make it a definite asset to the writer. Proficiency in the use of parallel construction amounts to a prerequisite to good writing. Balanced elements hold sentences together, especially long sentences. Baker calls parallelisms "the masonry of syntax" (1, p. 105). Good literature often makes use of the technique. For example, in Book Six of W. H. D. Rouse's translation of Homer's Iliad a sentence describes Hector's attempts to rally the Trojans:

"He sprang from his chariot, and went about everywhere among the host, brandishing his spears, urging the men on to fight, and raising the dread cry of battle." This sentence is useful for demonstrating to students a combination of parallels, containing compound verbs on the primary level and compound verbal modifiers on the secondary level. Other types of poetry also use parallels often. In "Renascence" Edna St. Vincent Millay expresses a wish felt during her "death" experience. She uses
a series of three infinitive phrases, each of which contains a prepositional phrase:

I would I were alive again
To kiss the fingers of the rain,
To drink into my eyes the shine
Of every slanting silver line,
To catch the freshened, fragrant breeze
From drenched and dripping apple-trees.

But until a student understands exactly what he is doing, he will occasionally flaw what should be one of his best sentences by allowing one element to escape from his control and slip out of parallel. A common error of this type is the inclusion of a verb in a series of predicate adjectives, as in "He was capable, intelligent, brave, and had a sense of humor."

To improve students' ability to use parallels, the teacher will probably need to assign some exemplary sentences. He should decide for himself whether to use any incorrect sentences for the students to correct. Perhaps he will prefer to have them build their own sentences, using models that he provides. After the students gain confidence, they are ready to begin incorporating parallelisms of increasing complexity in paragraphs. Their reward, in the words of Baker, is "balance and control and an eye for sentences that seem intellectual totalities, as if struck out all at once from the uncut rock" (1, p. 109).

If a teacher agrees that prescriptivism is obsolete or obsolescent, if he is willing to grant as much freedom as students can handle, then he should allow them to experiment with fragments in writing formal papers. He make sure they
are fully aware of what they are doing, they should at first label each fragment and be prepared to justify it. But even under these conditions students should not use the fragment indiscriminately. Usually, it can do its best job starting or ending a paragraph (1, p. 110). For instance, any paragraph after the first one in a theme could begin, "Next, a legitimate objection," or "And now for the opposing viewpoint." In any case, the fragment should be as carefully chosen and written as if it were a sentence.

Another type of construction that is usually too difficult for weaker students to manipulate successfully is the nominative absolute. Many English teachers dislike it and avoid it. Francis Christensen, however, not only defends the construction but also recommends it as a highly useful, thoroughly established idiom that appears frequently in fiction (2, p. 83). The almost universal condemnation of the absolute, then, should not be allowed to deprive accelerated classes of an interesting and useful method of adding details. It frequently adds imagery to a composition, since by its nature it usually pictures an action (2, p. 85). This attribute of the absolute should be obvious in "Joe walked with his shotgun ready, the Irish setter dashing excitedly from one interesting clump of grass to another to check for birds." Superior students will find this construction both natural and useful.

To speak of mechanics in an accelerated class is to speak not of correction but of improvement. The teacher has the
opportunity to give the students a few new tools and the skills to use them. Still, too much concentration on mechanics, especially by a prescriptivist, can stultify an excellent student's writing. The student begins to concentrate too much on the process, to the detriment of the content, as most teachers must learn from experience. But once the teacher finds a workable balance between such elements as naturalness and conformity, he has a chance to know the reality of effective composition teaching.

Diction

Diction is almost always a problem in student writing. In accelerated classes, however, a rare type of problem occasionally arises: a student gets the idea that the longest word is the best word in any particular situation. His writing becomes a showcase in which he attempts to exhibit the very best of his vocabulary, unaware that an uncommon word carries with it its usual context. When he writes of labial protuberances, his teacher may need to explain that lips would carry with it much better connotations, especially if the subject is kissing (1, p. 179).

Nor should the student writer use euphemisms to the extent that is acceptable or desirable in speech. For instance, most of the expressions used as substitutes for die or death are too delicate to be effective in writing (1, p. 183). Pepe, in Steinbeck's short story "Flight," did not "go to meet his
Maker"; he died an ugly and brutal death when he was shot by his unseen pursuers. Edgar Allan Poe was not so much "an unfortunate, weak-willed man who drank because of psychological disorientation and emotional instability" as he was an alcoholic who drank because, as he himself said, he was very near insanity and could not bear the real world.

Sometimes a superior student weakens the impact of his writing by trying too hard to add modifiers. He may have to be shown that his sentences are not effective. One way to approach or forestall this problem is to give the class an exercise in adding modifiers to a number of simple, austere sentences. For example, the teacher may write on the board "The bird flew" and instruct his students to rewrite the sentence, adding as many one-word, phrase, and clause modifiers as it can stand. After the papers are turned in, he may write a few examples on the board. When working with a spirited group, this writer has achieved improved results and made the class more interesting by inviting the class to compose a sentence before attempting the exercise. As members of the class offer suggestions, one student writes them on the board. To add interest and challenge, the teacher rules out certain words in the original sentence; for instance, when expanding "The bird flew," students are not to use the word bird or the word flew.

As students offer their suggestions for this sentence, the teacher continues to accept them. When he can lead students
to see for themselves that the sentence is becoming overburdened with modifiers, he makes his point in a most effective way. If necessary, however, he can simply call attention to the development. It is fairly easy to expand "The bird flew" into some such unwieldy form as "The hungry, ragged vulture, his ominous shape sharply outlined against the deep blue of the desert sky in the early hours of another hot day, flapped his amazingly efficient wings only rarely as he soared high above the innumerable life-and-death struggles below and watched for one of the victims which would mean sustenance to him for another day." Students can readily see that for most purposes this sentence is hardly better than the original. Then they are ready to try on their own to add modifiers to other short sentences.

At this stage of the unit the teacher should bring up the question of the author's purpose. Ideally, he can motivate a student to ask, "But doesn't the author's purpose have something to do with the way he adds modifiers?" The teacher could at this point refer to the overloaded form of "The bird flew" and ask under what conditions it might be acceptable. Students will have little trouble realizing that this sentence, worth little as narrative, might be quite useful as artistic description. At this time the teacher could call their attention to the opening of Milton's *Paradise Lost*, the first sentence of which includes about one hundred words, or to the first stanza of Whitman's "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking,"
which is actually one highly effective sentence of about two hundred words.

After students understand the aesthetic value of descriptions too flowery for most forms of writing, the teacher may call attention to the other extreme. One of the best examples is Hemingway: the term "clipped diction" as it applies to his writing will be easy for young writers to understand. Almost all of his writing contains excellent examples. He opens "The Killers" with "The door of Henry's lunch-room opened and two men came in. They sat down at the counter." As students can see, perhaps with a little help, the purpose here is narrative. Hemingway wants to get on with the story. When the teacher asks why earlier writers used more description, he will have no trouble leading his students to see that early readers had little chance to travel and had no television or movies. They wanted descriptive passages that would enable them to travel vicariously; with few forms of recreation competing for their leisure hours they did not mind spending the extra time reading. The author's purpose determined his style, just as it should determine the style of student writing.

Another source of possible difficulty is figurative language. Comparisons, a vital and inescapable part of communication, may be obvious or delicately subtle. Usually, however, they are much more complicated than they first appear. For instance, a teacher "molds his students." This apparently simple metaphor contains three parts, any of which
may carry distinctive meaning that depends on the experience of the one who reads or hears the expression. First is the performer, in this case the teacher. The second part is the action he performs. Third is the material with which he works. The teacher may appear as a highly skilled artist or craftsman working with precious materials. Or he may seem to be a burly foundry worker turning out coarse metal shapes. Again, he may seem to be a worker with yielding clay, one who with loving care presses the material between his hands and then smooths the rough spots. As students need to keep in mind, almost any figurative language carries with it emotional colorings and impacts that are difficult to predict.

On the other hand, as Edward Corbett says, without figurative language a writer's style may seriously lack the vigor necessary to make it interesting (3, p. 416). Figures of speech can give concreteness to abstract ideas and improve communication; and, "because they elicit admiration for the eloquence of the speaker or writer, they can exert a powerful ethical appeal" (3, p. 425). Students constantly invent new figures of speech in an attempt to enliven their conversation. Vividly they describe their performances on a test: one "gets shot down," while another considers it "a piece of cake." A boy works on his car, making improvements until it will "take off like a jackrabbit." Another's car, personified, "strains to obey his will." Using figurative language effectively is a matter of polishing a skill that already exists.
Often comparisons reveal the writer's tone. For instance, one who writes that a girl is "like a beautiful statue" may mean that she is cold and heartless. Another may indicate the depth of his admiration by writing that a girl is "the sunshine that dispels emotional darkness." With a little guidance, bright students can learn to establish particular moods, persuade their readers, and invigorate their writing through the use of figures of speech.
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CHAPTER V

GROUP ACTIVITIES

Group Work with Themes

One type of project that is especially effective in an accelerated class would almost certainly be a disappointment in a class of lower ability. This project allows students to work in groups as they criticize examples of each other's writing. Though this idea is not new, it is seldom used effectively. One common reason for failure is that teachers generally are not willing to spend enough time on individual evaluation and re-evaluation. Another is the apprehension some teachers feel about actually confronting students and justifying evaluations. In either case the teacher is likely to deviate too far from the proved plan. The plan itself has evolved from this writer's experience; a teacher should carefully consider possible effects before making any significant modifications.

For best results the entire unit should have an allotment of about six days. The teacher uses the first day to prepare his class for the upcoming activity. He explains that the actual writing of the paper will be little different from the writing of other short papers that the students have written. The big difference is that they will carefully read each other's papers and write critiques of them. It is important that each
student understand that other students are going to read his paper. Even in an accelerated class a few students will feel a slight apprehensiveness about having peers read their papers, but the reluctance causes little difficulty and soon disappears. The teacher also makes clear that the paper is to be in formal English. If time allows, he spends the rest of the period reviewing any pertinent matters of mechanics, organization, or logic.

On the second day the students write the first draft of the paper, preferably about two hundred words in length. Ideally, the students themselves choose the topic, with the teacher only presiding. He may give subtle direction to their discussion, however, until they "choose" the topic he has in mind or one that he approves. Whatever method of choice is used, the students should write only the first draft on this day and then put it away or hand it in as the teacher directs.

The students write the final copy on the third day. They should by now realize the importance of careful revision and effective use of transitions. Sometimes, however, the teacher needs to remind them to proofread their papers before turning them in. At the end of the period he collects all the papers.

Since early knowledge of results is highly desirable, the teacher should make a genuine effort to evaluate the papers before the next class period. He does, however, have another day to finish the job, in view of the nature of the fourth
day's activities. When he evaluates a paper, he puts no marks at all on the paper; instead, he writes all of his comments, including the grade, on a separate sheet of paper. By using at least two grades, one for mechanics and one for content, he can show the student just which phase of the writing needs improvement.

At the beginning of the fourth class period the teacher divides the class members into groups, preferably groups of four. After he returns the papers, the students trade them within groups. Then, using a separate sheet of paper for each theme each student writes critiques of the papers of the other members of his group. The student uses the same marking procedure that the teacher uses. It is interesting to all concerned for the student evaluations to include grades, with the understanding that the grades will not be recorded. Thus students can gain some insight into the factors involved in assigning grades. At the end of this class period the teacher collects the themes and the critiques. He then evaluates the critiques, deriving a third grade for each student, to be added to those for form and content.

The teacher returns all papers on the fifth day. In their original groups the students discuss with each other any disagreements or discrepancies in the critiques. This is a busy day for the teacher, as he acts as consultant and final authority. At least one class period will probably be needed to settle all difficulties.
The students use the final day for correcting and rewriting their papers. In these six days they have had a variety of learning experiences. Besides pure composition they have had several lessons in proofreading and have had to use their knowledge of mechanics; they may have learned a little practical psychology in the group relationship; and, as evaluators, they have had a small taste of responsibility.

So that the teacher may take advantage of the enthusiasm while it is still strong, and so that students can try to improve their evaluating process in the light of experience, this unit should be used at least once more before too long a lapse of time. Since students will not need to have the introduction repeated, the second use of the unit may not take more than five days. The teacher can then decide whether a third application of the unit would be profitable.

Student Graders

After completing a unit of group or class work with themes, the accelerated students should be able to serve well as lay readers of themes written in other classes. For instance, seniors in an honors class could evaluate papers written by juniors. In fact, honors seniors or juniors could successfully evaluate papers from students of lesser ability at their own grade level. To forestall possible objections from both students and parents, the teacher should explain carefully that these grades are not official. The purposes are to make possible more theme writing for the students being graded and to
give the graders a new type of experience. A number of school systems use this method in classes taught by educational television, but any school with an accelerated English class could benefit from such a project (1, p. 44). It reduces the teaching load, perhaps of several teachers, and, if well executed, benefits all students concerned.

Accelerated students benefit from encountering a variety of writing styles and having to read them carefully. Also, by having to refer to a handbook or textbook to check out possible errors, they give themselves a rather intensive review of usage and mechanics. The other students benefit from the extra writing that their teachers can assign.

To avoid personality factors, the teacher should require the writers not to put their names on their papers; a system of numbers will easily establish identification. The teacher should not record these grades in his grade book, although any failure to complete the assignment should bring a penalty (1, p. 44). The writers should not know which themes the students will grade and which the teacher will grade. Then the teacher can use his discretion in deciding how to evaluate. The accelerated students, however, should receive grades based on their ability to execute their part of the project.

Another question for the teacher to decide is how much class time to allow for the evaluations. The best approach is to distribute no more than three short themes to each student for marking in one class period. Or, to provide a more
interesting activity, the teacher could give one paper to each student and then have the evaluating done in groups of three or four. This way each paper would have the advantage of evaluation by three or four different readers as it makes the complete circuit of the group. A block of time should be provided for consultation within the group, even if an extra day is necessary.

If the teacher decides not to allow class time for grading, he should use a class period to explain and discuss the details of what he requires before he distributes whatever number of themes he thinks the graders can handle. If the press of other work is not too great, each accelerated student can successfully evaluate at least seventeen short papers in a period of about a week and a half (1, p. 44). When the papers are returned, the teacher should use another class period for a discussion of errors and cooperative preparation of an assignment for the writers. This assignment should be based on difficulties encountered by the writers. It could take the form of a list of words misspelled in the papers, with a test to follow (1, p. 45).

Students in the accelerated class should have several chances to help formulate writing assignments for the others. This procedure is especially effective when the writing can be correlated with what the accelerated class is studying in literature. The graders then have a personal interest in the papers that helps to increase their feeling of involvement in
the project, and the extra concentration gives them a deeper understanding of the literature involved.

Besides the reduction of the teacher's grading time, other benefits result from this unit. The student readers tend to be much more exhaustive in their evaluation than the teacher can possibly be in the time available. They can easily mark a set of papers every six weeks without feeling that they are burdened. Most of them, in fact, come to anticipate the next assignment with pleasure. The writers, too, experience extra interest in finding out what other students think of their work (1, p. 45). Although the student-allotted grades should not be recorded in the grade book, they, along with student comments, can be used to compile an excellent error chart for each writer. The chart, if kept current, will then give the teacher a picture of each student's progress (1, p. 45).
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CHAPTER VI

THE RESEARCH PAPER

One of the most controversial subjects among English teachers is the research paper. When badly taught, it is sometimes worse than a waste of time. According to a study conducted by Madeira High School of Cincinnati, Ohio, and reported by Beth S. Neman, colleges disapprove strongly of what their freshmen have learned in high school about writing research papers. Some of these colleges even go as far as to suggest that the research paper not be taught at all in high school except in accelerated classes (2, p. 262). Such an idea is certain to meet considerable disapproval among traditionalists, but it is not as impractical as it may sound. Incompetent teaching, often brought on by lack of teacher time and the discouragement of trying to get an acceptable paper from every student, frequently results in mere plagiarism and fails to accomplish its goal of training students to organize and use research material (2, p. 262).

But for the teacher of an accelerated class there is no such escape as abandonment of the effort. Since it is logical to assume that this teacher and his students will have more ability than most others, it is also reasonable to assume that the main question concerns how to teach the research paper most effectively. Certainly, this teacher should accept the
responsibility of teaching it well. Though superior students can usually make the necessary effort and learn quickly under stress how to write the paper after they get to college, the sacrifice should not be necessary. According to authorities, "Every college-bound student should have the opportunity during his last years in high school to learn the skills necessary for the construction of a scholarly research paper" (2, p. 263). Quite often, too, an ex-student returns to report how grateful he is that a high school English teacher taught him how to write this type of paper (1, p. 610).

The best results are achieved when a large block of time—usually about five weeks—is scheduled, during which class time is devoted almost exclusively to this project. During the first week the teacher should lead discussions and describe in detail what he expects the students to accomplish. He will need to suggest topics and help students make decisions. Some students will choose impractical subjects, often too large to handle or too small for the school library. Accelerated students should have as much freedom as possible, consonant with teacher supervision, in their choices. Certainly no reasonable choice should be slighted as being undignified or unscholarly.

Contrary to what most students believe, the research paper should not be merely an account of an author's career; neither should it be simply description. It should contain a definite thesis, which the writer argues convincingly (2, p. 264). A major inherent danger is that in his argument the
student will lapse into a personal or persuasive style (2, p. 265). The teacher must make sure that students realize the importance of justifying from research sources any judgments they make. He may need to stress the fact that their unsupported opinions have no place in this paper.

It is almost impossible for the teacher to be too explicit. For instance, his students seldom understand fully why they should use cards for taking notes. Even some of the most intelligent ones will not grasp at first the importance of including only material on a very small subtopic on a particular card in order to facilitate organization later. The teacher should make an early check to determine whether students are writing the "key" to the subtopic at the top of each card and are indicating the source. While some authorities recommend almost complete freedom in choosing methods of taking notes, others feel that to avoid plagiarism the methods should be rather carefully prescribed (2, p. 266). This writer's experience indicates that too often students simply copy material directly from books onto the note cards and then onto the research paper. Only close supervision will prevent this practice. Also, many students, if left to their own devices, will write the whole paper on the note cards. Apparently, students need a great deal of help with the whole process of taking notes.

By the end of the first week the students should have prepared a working bibliography on another set of cards and
should be ready to start taking notes. This phase should take about two weeks. If the teacher finds too much ineptness during the first few days, he should consider stopping the whole process for a quick review of note-taking methods.

The fourth week should be devoted to outlining material gathered in the notes. Again the teacher needs to be very explicit; many students do not understand the form or the process of outlining. Neman believes outlining to be the most important step in the whole unit (2, p. 267). Here is where the student gets an overall view of his subject and makes the first serious efforts to organize his material. At this time he realizes the value of using cards for taking notes and of including only a small subtopic on each card. By carefully arranging the cards he can get them into logical order. Another vital point for the teacher to stress here is that the outline is only an aid to organization and is flexible; it is a guide, not a straitjacket.

Usually, the outline should consist of three, four, or five major topics; Neman recommends no more than four, "to assure the proper subordination of ideas which is necessary for final unity" (2, p. 267). For example, the outline of a paper on the subject "Modern Hospital Procedures" might contain three main topics: Admission, Confinement, and Dismissal. Often students feel that they need ten or twelve main topics for a subject such as this one, and will go into far too much detail, as in this example:
I. The doctor's recommendation
II. The ride to the hospital
III. Settling into a room
IV. Laboratory tests
V. Hospital food
VI. The work of the nurses
VII. Hospital noises
VIII. Hospital visitors
IX. The doctor's release
X. Making arrangements to get home
XI. Paying the hospital bill
XII. Returning home

This outline, by the time subtopics are added, could be several pages long. The teacher might write this outline on the board and then ask students to suggest ways of grouping the topics into three logical divisions. He can guide them toward grouping the first three as Admission, IV through VIII as Confinement, and IX through XII as Dismissal.

Logical arrangement of subtopics is also essential. Detailed explanations of the various methods of organization should not be necessary for accelerated students. At most they may need brief reminders of some of the methods—time order, space order, and least to greatest, for instance. The order should be one that fits the subject: time order, for example, in the case of hospital procedures. If the outline contains arguments supporting and opposing a thesis, the
negative ideas should come first, so that the affirmative ideas can readily refute them (2, p. 267). In almost any class the teacher will have to give a great deal of individual assistance during the outlining.

During the fifth week the students write the bodies of their papers. In this accelerated class mechanics should be no serious problem: the teacher should emphasize that there are several accepted bibliography and footnote forms. He should decide, however, whether his students need the "security" of one recommended form. The teacher may wish to have students criticize each other's first drafts before they write the final copies. This activity is as effective as group work on shorter papers. However, in view of the length of this paper, pairing students of comparable ability offers the best method of grouping (2, p. 264). The teacher may wish to allow extra time, perhaps a weekend, for final revising and rewriting.

When the papers are turned in, a small precaution on the teacher's part can forestall the possibility of an unpleasant situation. The teacher should give each student a receipt stating that the research paper was received on a certain date. Otherwise, unless the students have made carbon copies, there may be no way to be absolutely sure a student is telling the truth if he claims he has turned in a paper that the teacher cannot find. It takes only one such experience to convince the teacher that some safeguard is necessary.
CHAPTER BIBLIOGRAPHY


CHAPTER VII

LITERARY CONTESTS

For the teacher who appreciates special effort and who enjoys competition, one of the most gratifying of all teaching activities is the training of superior students for literary competition. The teacher of an accelerated class can almost always find students who wish to take part in such contests as the University Interscholastic League speaking and writing events. But because he will have to commit himself to considerable extra work, any teacher who considers participating should first be able to convince himself that he will find enough enjoyment to sustain him through the extra work. If he qualifies, he will find himself working with highly motivated students who want to do as much work as they can. He will probably enjoy the competition in each of the contests. His students' triumphs will be his also.

For the teacher the work is certainly not easy; he must supply his contestants with writing topics or suggestions and must evaluate each paper with extraordinary care, since the quality of this composition is in some cases comparable to that of college seniors. He does not, however, need to concern himself with the usual problem of finding some topic that will inspire the students; the students must adjust to the necessity of writing on whatever topic appears before
them. The well-written papers that result are ample evidence that one's teaching efforts are not wasted.

If the teacher coaches contestants in the persuasive speaking contests, he works to improve two skills: writing and speaking. Since the students have only about thirty minutes to prepare a speech on a topic they have never seen before, they must be able to write fast and well. If a speech is to have a chance of winning, it must be truly persuasive and must avoid most of the wrong approaches commonly made by immature writers and speakers when they try to persuade. A few glittering generalities, for example, will kill the chances of a speech.

Even the spelling contest is closely related to composition, since its participants are usually superior writers trying to improve one particular skill. Accurate spelling is an extremely important factor in good writing: without confidence in his spelling ability one can never write with complete self-confidence. This contest, as well as the others, provides an interesting avocation for a teacher who has special skills, special interests, and a competitive spirit.

If the teacher is allowed a regular class period for working with contestants, he has only to decide how to divide the time for efficient use. Usually, however, a teacher willing to sponsor this activity must use his own time. He can assemble contestants before or after school or during an activity period; at this time he gives them general information,
explains rules and procedures, answers questions, and formulates a tentative schedule.

Coaching contestants for spelling competition requires a great number of practice tests. The Texas Interscholastic League office in Austin furnishes official lists of words for a nominal charge. Most of the words used in the district, regional, and state contests are drawn from these lists. For practice, contestants can study the lists and take written tests periodically, the sponsor pronouncing the words. The activity period is usually the best time for these tests, but sometimes it becomes necessary to use the lunch hour or stay after the school day ends. By using two days a week the participants can cover two hundred to three hundred words each week. Thus, they must start preparing as early as possible, preferably by November, since the district contests are held in March or April. Two to three weeks before the district contest the sponsor should pick his team of two spellers and one alternate, so that they may work together, drilling each other. This contest benefits all who take part, whether they win or not. Those who work hard will improve their spelling permanently.

To prepare those students who wish to compete in the persuasive speaking contests, the teacher needs a regular time block of at least thirty minutes. He must supply the contestants with sample topics of current interest. He should give them three or four topics from which to choose. These samples
should be well within the students' range of understanding and, for best results, should be somewhat controversial. The students should have twenty to thirty minutes to prepare a talk at least three but no more than seven minutes long. Because the judging of these talks is necessarily subjective, the teacher may wish to call on some disinterested outsider to help pick the team of one boy and one girl, along with alternates. This contest teaches students to organize, outline, and write under pressure.

Most beneficial of all to composition skill is the ready writing contest. Since a period of two hours is necessary for writing, it is almost impossible to practice during the school day. Fortunately, however, students who take part in this contest are willing to work on their own time. As in the speaking contests the teacher needs to formulate many possible topics. He can duplicate lists, usually containing three topics each, to distribute to contestants. He should fold the lists so that the topics are hidden, and instruct each contestant not to unfold his list until he has two hours available for writing. No outside source whatever is to be used: the paper is to be written completely from the student's knowledge, experience, and imagination. It is to be approximately one thousand words in length.

Students respond surprisingly well to this challenge. Of course, the teacher must do additional work in the process of writing a detailed critique of each paper. And when he is
ready to pick his team of two writers and an alternate, he needs to assemble all candidates for a two-hour elimination contest under official contest conditions. This meeting probably will have to be held at night or on Saturday. At the beginning of the two-hour period the teacher writes three topics on the chalkboard. Each contestant chooses one topic and writes his paper. Again, outside judges probably should be asked to help determine which students are to represent the school. This contest, too, can be of great benefit to student writers because of the extra practice and the individual coaching.

Other contests may also be available to the English teacher who wishes more involvement or greater selectivity. Some of these others are debate, poetry interpretation, and prose reading. Each has its own distinctively enjoyable features. Each offers the teacher an opportunity for vicarious participation in exciting competition. Here he has a chance to savor unusual success in his teaching.
APPENDIX A

SUGGESTED WAYS TO THINK OF A JOURNAL

1. The Treasury

As the name indicates, this section is concerned with the small but valuable experiences and quotations that might be lost if not secured in a safe place. The quotations consist of witty sayings, intelligent observations, and any other words that may be worth preserving.

2. The Storehouse

Into the storehouse go ideas for possible future use. They are like provisions stored for a time of need. Since future needs cannot be estimated accurately, the student should collect indiscriminately whatever might have future value. Then when he has leisure time, he can enjoy looking through his collection and using items as he sees fit.

3. The Collector's Cabinet

In this perspective the journal is like a collection of items for display: insects, Indian artifacts, stamps, bottles, or matchbook covers. Like this collection the journal may contain specimens for private or public view. What the student collects depends upon his own preference.
4. The Snapshot Album

As an album contains the photographer's choices of impressions he wishes to preserve, so the journal may contain impressions that the student wishes to "freeze," at least long enough for a careful examination. He may learn whether the lens through which he sees life is normal, telescopic, or microscopic, and whether it is in focus.

5. The Experimental Laboratory

A student may take into his laboratory-journal an idea, an incident, or a statement and there subject it to scientific analysis. In a scientific manner he can weigh, measure, dissect, assay, and mix. Perhaps he can discover or establish laws. Perhaps he can find answers new to him, answers which, because he discovers them himself, will be much more meaningful than any given to him by someone else.

6. The Giant Wardrobe

In the seclusion of this wardrobe the student can experiment with new "clothes": attitudes, mannerisms, and expressions. Or he may wish to borrow the clothes of a friend. He may even try on those of foreigners. And he need not buy any of them.

7. The Drafting Board

The especially serious student may draft on the pages (blueprints) of his journal plans for a place to live.
he is capable of planning only a framework or only a floor, perhaps he will realize that he needs to seek help. Perhaps he will begin to realize more of the responsibilities involved in planning a life. He may begin to sense his own capabilities as his ideas lead him to greater plans.

8. The Psychoanalyst's Couch

As a place to confess, the journal can serve as a quite useful outlet for guilt feelings and aggressions. The student should let his mind run free and express himself with as little reservation as he can allow. The result may be nonsense, or it may be a list of sins. Almost surely this kind of journal will reflect dreams and fantasies, perhaps wild, dangerous ones. Here, however, the student can crystallize them and then examine them in safety.

9. The Tape Recorder Attached to the Brain

When a student is fortunate enough to be able to take full advantage of this opportunity, he can simply record his thoughts as fast as he can write. He should not concern himself with formalities such as punctuation and sentence structure. The ideas are all-important. After an inspirational period is over, the student can "edit the tape," clarifying whatever is too vague.

10. The Continuous, Unmailed Letter

The student imagines that he is writing a personal letter to some real person. One interesting variety is
the love letter to someone of the opposite sex. Another
is the letter to a member of the family. Also, writing
to a close confidant can be a real pleasure. A student
with an active imagination may choose to write to some-
one of the past or future. Any of these letters can
expose thoughts that lie deep in the obscurity of sub-
consciousness. They can also provide an outlet for
expressions that need badly to be set free.

11. The Letter to Oneself

If a student fears that he may forget today's im-
portant experiences, he may wish to write of them in a
letter to the person he will be at some definite time in
the future. Possibly he will even wish to write to the
person he was at some time in the past. Great value lies
in the experience of deciding what he will write in any
given circumstance. What, for instance, does he especially
want to remember? What advice would he give his younger
self? Interestingly enough, any of these selves may set
up a system of communication by which they can debate,
discuss, or argue.

12. The History

If he is writing a history, the student picks his
reader, who may be someone of the distant future or even
someone from another planet. The choice will determine
to some degree his style and content. Though he may re-
cord any events he chooses, his writing should be personal,
with his impressions and interpretations always included. Though he may choose to write about major events of history, he should write about how those events affect him personally.

13. The Travelogue

With a deliberately heightened awareness, the student may write of his "travels": a trip to the supermarket, a visit to a friend's house, or a new look at his back yard. Undoubtedly, he will perceive more, perhaps far more, than he usually does. He may be fully aware for the first time of the supposedly uninteresting characteristics of the people around him. By attempting to record their speech patterns, customs, and lore he will involve himself with them and find them more interesting than he would have thought possible.

14. The Contemplative Exercise

Contemplation can be quite enjoyable and productive. If he has enough power of concentration, the student can narrow his field of meditation to any single object he chooses. For example, in a particular scene he may concentrate on each component object singly in turn, writing down his thoughts as they occur. He may vicariously place himself at some vantage point from which he can contemplate the mind of a friend, an enemy, or a stranger. In his descriptions he is likely to put a healthy strain on his ability to describe, particularly on his use of
figures of speech. Consequently, he may work with re-
newed determination to express what seems at the moment
inexpressible.
APPENDIX B

SUGGESTIONS FOR USE IN CREATIVE WRITING

1. The Frame

The student locates a single object of special interest. He rolls a sheet of paper into the form of a cone, through which he looks at the chosen object. Thus the cone forms a frame for the object and blocks out its environment. The student then writes about what he sees through the frame. Hopefully, he learns to use an imaginary frame when observing other objects. If he is able to take the next step, he can use an abstract frame for an intangible, such as an emotion or an impression.

2. The Thought Card

For this exercise the student keeps with him a pack of note cards on which he records any significant impression, observation, or idea. By keeping the cards with him he is able to write immediately when the opportunity arises; he would forget or the image would lose sharpness if he had to wait until later to write. He submits the cards to the teacher periodically.

3. The Reaction Card

The student uses the reaction cards, preferably of a different size from that of the thought cards, to record his reactions to aesthetic experiences such as
attending cultural events or reading. He submits these cards at intervals so that the teacher can comment.

4. The Deep Well

During the time when the student feels most reflective each day, he attempts to set up conditions that will enhance the mood. Certain types of music or lights, for instance, might facilitate reminiscence, so that from the "deep well" of his past he can draw experiences that demand to be written down.

5. The Fantasy

The student attempts to learn more of his other self, the one that exists in his fantasies and his night dreams. If he succeeds, he finds a great treasure in the form of material particularly suitable for writing.

6. The Image

Imagery pervades all of an imaginative person's life. The student isolates a specific element and determines its effect on as many of his senses as possible. Then he tries to put the imagery into words; perhaps the image becomes symbolic to the extent that a concrete object represents an emotion or an idea. For example, long hair may represent healthy individualism or destructive negativism, depending on the student's own emotions and ideas. The reward to the student is another kind of heightened awareness, not only of his surroundings but also of his inner self.
7. The Personal Image

This exercise takes advantage of each student's individual set of images peculiar to him. Though he may not even be completely aware that he has these images, he can solidify them by listing as many as he can call to mind. Then, by including appropriate ones in his writing, he gives it his own personal style.

8. The Improvisation

The teacher improvises a dramatic situation in which the characters' lives provide inspiration for creative writing. One kind of activity is called adaptation improvisation: a student composes an opening line for his chosen character in whatever situation is appropriate. Other students reply with their own improvised lines, preferably in response to their first impulses. Another type of activity is called set improvisation: the teacher or a student leader prearranges all elements of the drama except the dialogue. Then, as in adaptation improvisation, students invent dialogue. As the students improvise, they gain some acquaintance with the way an author improvises the dialogue in a play. Through practice the students can increase their adeptness in this form of creativity.

9. The Dialogue

This exercise, similar to "The Improvisation," differs by requiring each student to play all parts. Also, the activity can be entirely imaginary, or the student
may write his version of an actual conversation in which he has participated. A student who carefully examines and analyzes each person's contributions will gain understanding of dialogue writing and of people themselves.

10. The Character

This refinement of improvisation focuses upon methods of characterization. Students compare dialogue written by other students with examples written by successful authors. By concentrating on a particular character developed by a student, the class members determine whether the character is believable and whether his development is relatively thorough under the circumstances. In this activity a student who has mastered the imaginary framing exercise can apply it to a certain character for the purpose of intensive study.

11. The Characterization

After doing the work required for "The Character," students are ready to use the characterization of a certain character as the subject of a composition. If both exercises produce success, the character seems to live and to acquire a realistic personality. In a follow-up the teacher has the students read short stories and evaluate the characterization, using the criteria they have learned to apply to their own writing.

12. The Story

With a minimum of guidance the student attempts to write a short story. The simplest way is to use an actual
experience as the framework or skeleton of a story: the student may make a list of the significant events, in sequence, of the experience. Then he can build his story on this framework. Logically, this exercise will follow those on image, dialogue, and characterization, all of which the student should employ in writing a short story. He may possibly need guidance in formulating and presenting a conflict. Although the slice-of-life story also finds some acceptance, the student usually prefers a well-defined conflict. In resolving the conflict he needs to understand how to bring the story to a climax that makes the intended impression. He needs to go over his story repeatedly to assure its verisimilitude. After trying to write his story, a student can profit greatly from detailed study of stories of recognized authors.

13. The Condensation

Condensing can function as a transition from prose writing to poetry writing. If a student condenses one of his own compositions to a dozen or two dozen words, he is likely to retain the strongest single emotion or impression. The next logical step is to use an image to represent this feeling. Development of the image then becomes all that is necessary for completing a poem.

14. The Expansion

The student reverses the activity of "The Condensation." He tries to express in prose a poem that he has written.
Obviously, he must pinpoint the central idea of the poem in order to express it in a different form. Then he must decide on the best method of developing the idea in prose. This method may be mere essay form, a complicated plot development, or any other form the student chooses.

15. The Cliche and the Trite Line

Carefully, the student examines his thought cards, his reaction cards, and many other examples of his writing. He ruthlessly discards any expression that could possibly be called trite. To bring more objectivity into play, students may cooperate by examining each other's papers. If either reader feels that an expression may be trite, it should be discarded.

16. The Ditto Anthology

Each student uses a ditto sheet for the purpose of duplicating one of his best compositions. Every student in the class then accumulates an anthology of his and his classmates' best writing. Then discussion of a particular example is easy to arrange.

17. The Critique

The student writes critiques of some of the examples in his "Ditto Anthology"; then he writes a critique of some of his own writing. In each case he should take the positive approach. A resulting critique will indicate to the criticized author just where he succeeds and just where he fails in his efforts to communicate meaning.
16. The Revision

The student revises one of his manuscripts, considering suggestions made by the teacher and by other students. The critiques will give valuable help in this exercise. Once again each student must carefully determine what he wants to accomplish and how he can best achieve his goals.
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