



WLA Newsletter

. . .writing as a liberating activity. . .

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Co-Editors:
Richard C. Gebhardt
Barbara Genelle Smith

FLEXIBILITY FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

Kim Flachmann
California State College
Bakersfield

If asked to articulate a general philosophy of teaching composition, I think most people in the field would agree that flexibility should be a major factor in the process. As an instructor of English, I think flexibility should be a concern of ours on two accounts: it should characterize our various approaches to the students in our writing classes; and our students should be able to maintain a state of flexibility as they approach a writing assignment. In other words, flexibility seems to me to be an appropriate means through which we can stimulate and educate our students.

First of all, our methods of teaching composition should be flexible, so that we can adapt our approaches to the varying clientele, the size of a given class, the needs of the members of the class, the classroom situation, and any other factors that affect our students. It is probably safe to say that a standard instructional goal in a writing class is some degree of syntactic fluency, or an ability to write coherent, and possible lucid, sentences. But our methods of achieving that goal (and others) will vary depending on our own personalities and the temperament and needs of the class.

In reference to the actual product that the student produces, several factors exist that the student should be aware of, and that he or she should be able to mold to any number of situations. The writer's tone, for example, should be flexible in reference to his or her subject-matter and audience. The writer should be able to address several different types of audiences--not just the instructor. Though it should be consistent, the writer's style should be flexible to the extent that he or she is aware of the various stylistic options that are available. And, finally, the writer should be able to assume several different purposes--depending on the specific nature of the subject and of the intended audience. These considerations and their variations should ideally be internalized by the student writer and appropriately adjusted

WRITING:

PROCESS, PRODUCT, AND THE "BASICS"

The February 1976 College Composition and Communication contains a pair of articles that will interest WLA readers, particularly at this time when the cry for "the basics" may seem a direct attack on the spirit behind this newsletter.

First, there is Glenn Matott's "In Search of a Philosophical Context for Teaching Composition," an essay which argues that the self-awareness and self-expression approach to composition places too much emphasis on the personal process of writing. Matott's concern is two-fold. On the one hand, he feels that courses aimed at self-awareness and self-expression separate the writing/To p.7/

to each particular situation.

As you might suspect, there is invariably a danger involved in approaching writing students with such "flexible" vigor in your classrooms and in insisting on flexibility in their own writing. The danger, of course, is the chance that such an approach might be too flexible for beginning writing students--so much so that the students may leave the class with no focus (in terms of your approach to the course) and no skills (in terms of specific adaptability to purpose and audience). Such an extreme would most likely result in the creation of a vacuousness with no substantial foundation for the student's writing competence. The question remains whether the advantages of exposing your students to flexibility outweigh these disadvantages.

If we choose to take the chance, how do we instill flexibility in the English curriculum, as well as avoid the possibility of an exaggerated state of flexibility? To my way of thinking, such a solution revolves around a heuristic, or "problem-solving device," for English composition--a device that would offer structure to the course and direction and form to the art of writing.

In my opinion, we have been too vague for too long. We owe it to our students to furnish them with guidelines for their writing--rather than with incessant empty theories. As a result, I urge you to consider using a heuristic as you teach writing. This "device" has been used in other fields for centuries, but has only recently been applied to the writing process. Its purpose is to aid writers in the stage of invention or in the initial development of a topic. Essentially, a heuristic consists of a systematic pattern of inquiries designed to help writers generate ideas and other questions on a particular topic--thus avoiding the "I don't know what to say" syndrome.

Many heuristics have been applied to the writing process, but the most effective are simple, versatile, and comprehensive. For example, Kenneth Burke's Dramatic Pentad, a heuristic that has been successfully applied to the writing process for years, contains these components:

- ACT (What was done)
- SCENE (When or where it was done)
- AGENT (Who did it)
- AGENCY (How it was done)
- PURPOSE (Why it was done).

When used in the beginning stages of writing, each of these headings offers the writer a source of stimulation for further investigation, questions, and answers, and each heading guides the writer in his or her attempt to present a thorough examination of a topic. This heuristic is effective because it can be applied to any subject and any situation--as either a means of stimulation or a means of double-checking oneself to see if a topic is thoroughly developed.

As you are well aware, a composition is not a series of thoughts broken up into paragraphs and glued together, but rather a well-constructed, unified theme revolving around one central thesis. But how do we teach students how to produce this final product? How do the students know where to begin?

In its first role, a writing heuristic, like Burke's Pentad, can serve as a framework for a writing course. It should be introduced as part of the course content and offered consistently as a foundation for the students' mental explorations as they approach a topic. With such a stable base as part of the instructional apparatus, the rest of the course content can be varied and deftly adjusted to the situation in a given class--thus promoting flexibility within structure. This sound base will, in turn, encourage the students to experiment with the factors that constitute a composition. If they are given a point of reference for their thoughts, the students are more liable to explore the possibilities of the tone of their writing, of the intended audience, of the stylistic options available to them, and of the purpose that will be most effective.

A heuristic should be a generating mechanism. The substance of its questions or sub-divisions should trigger related questions for a writer. As the backbone of the writing course, a heuristic is meant to foster confidence in your students' thinking and writing abilities. Any standard pattern of inquiries (whether it is pulled from an existing source or designed by you) will suffice, because it will furnish a coherent strategy to the course as well as to your student writers.

I urge you not to let your students flounder and leave your class without a determined approach to the writing process. Help them "discover" a heuristic that is comfortable for them to work with. Encourage them to use this heuristic on all of their writing projects. A liberating mechanism such as a problem-solving device will furnish your students with new confidence in their writing, foster flexibility in your students' approaches to their writing assignments, and inevitably tap the untapped resources in each individual's mind.

If you are interested in pursuing this possible remedy to the frustrations and ambiguities that are still thriving in English composition, I would suggest any of the following sources as starting points:

- Burke, Kenneth. A Grammar of Motives. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969. This is the source of Burke's Pentad.
- Christensen, Francis. Notes Toward a New Rhetoric. New York: Harper and Row, 1967.
- Jakobson, Roman. "Linguistics and Poetics," in Thomas Sebeck, ed. Style in Language. New York: John Wiley, pp. 350-377.
- Larson, Richard. "Discovery Through Questioning," College English, 30 (1968), 126-234.
- Wallace, Karl. "Topoi and the Problem of Invention," Quarterly Journal of Speech, 58 (1971), 387-395.
- Young, Richard and Alton Becker. "Toward a Modern Theory of Rhetoric: A Tagmemic Contribution," Harvard Education Review, 35 (1975), 450-468.
- Young, Richard, Alton Becker, and Kenneth Pike. Rhetoric: Discovery and Change. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1970.

THE CUCU REPORT*

Edward Morris
Bowling Green State University

A two-year study, financed by a grant from the Council Undertaking Communications Upgrading, has resulted in a plan for teaching composition which the Council describes as having the "most radical and far-reaching concepts in the history of such instruction."

Produced by a committee under the direction of Dr. Lamont Pleasantry, Shaker State University, the plan calls for:

1. Class attendance - Dr. Pleasantry said there was substantial reason to believe that "sustained interaction between teacher and students in a controlled situation of mutual fear and revulsion would be very conducive."
2. Area competence - The plan suggests that only teachers who can write better than their students be engaged in compositional instruction. Committee-member Sarah Lucid, Quartile Teachers College, noted that adherence to this tenet would have the corollary advantage of freeing most senior staff members to teach literature courses.

/To p. 6/

*These CUCU recommendations were originally published in the English Association of Northwestern Ohio's EANO Bulletin, 15 (Winter 1976), 11-12.

Interconnections*
A MIDDLE-GRADE TEACHER
READS A COLLEGE TEXT

Eleanor Hunyadi
Central Junior High School
Findlay, Ohio

As a junior high teacher, I habitually peruse a variety of materials from comic books to college texts for teaching of writing ideas. One college text that was useful and pleasant to read was Writing: The Personal Voice (Harcourt, 1975) by Jill Wilson Cohn. Although written for college freshmen, classroom teachers will find Mrs. Cohn's ideas adaptable to the classroom.

Mrs. Cohn's approach is personal. The reader often has the feeling of being involved in a conversation about writing with a friendly person of experience. She is interested in the "personness" of the students. Mrs. Cohn says, "This book is written to help you to explore some ideas about the process of writing, about yourselves, and about the uses of language. I hope you will discover, through your own writing and the writing of others, that composition is not merely a fixed pattern of words arranged on a page according to specific rules." Her method in writing the book is true to the philosophy that she states. For example, she didn't alter examples of student writing to conform to her own standards; in fact, she did not edit student writings at all. As a result, the examples sometimes skip from first to third person or show other problems of style or usage. Still, teachers who are frustrated because they can't teach all the rules of grammar will be comforted by a college teacher who "ignores grammar, usage and writing conventions" on her students' papers.

Mrs. Cohn's personal approach also show itself in the Piagetian philosophy behind the contents of the book's chapters: Self Encounter, Place, Others, Autobiography, Larger Institutions, Criticism, and Fiction. If Mrs. Cohn is using Piaget's idea of moving from self to outside, she may have placed the chapter on autobiography in the wrong order; logically, autobiography seems to follow self-encounter.

An idea-seeking teacher may be interested in the dozen or so "Specific Writing Possibilities" found at the end of each chapter. Most of the ideas in these sections are easily adapted to junior high and high school classes. For example, the assignment to "Identify a strong emotion or prejudice you have; then relate a particular incident that you feel caused it or contributed to it," is no less applicable to ninth graders than it is to college freshmen.

In Writing: The Personal Voice, Jill Cohn fulfills her stated function of exploring, experimenting, and responding. Sharing in this process is beneficial to the junior high school teacher who is looking for useful materials and approaches to use the English class. Furthermore, knowing how the college teacher does it helps the secondary teacher evaluate his or her own teaching approaches.

*"Interconnections" is a new section of WLA which explores common concerns that connect writing instruction in elementary school, middle-school, high school, and college. In this issue, a junior high teacher reviews a college writing text; future issues might contain pieces on how applicable elementary language arts activities are to the college teacher, or what a high school teacher thinks of some current hot issue among college teachers. Short articles examining the materials or approaches of one level of writing instruction from the perspective of another level are welcome.

CREATIVE WRITING: THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER
IN FOSTERING ITS DEVELOPMENT*

Adele Kookogey
Rahway Junior High School
Rahway, New Jersey

Teachers who wish to implement creative writing as a methodology designed to elicit greater interest and technique in general writing must first establish themselves as creative teachers. It is not enough to say, "today we're going to do some creative writing," and then to proceed haphazardly by letting the students write anything they want (as creative writing is sometimes defined). It is essential that some measure of content and structure be mingled with freedom of expression and thought. In emphasizing the importance of the synthesis of literature as being of at least equal merit to its analysis, students must be approached on both personal and intellectual levels. Naturally, the route to the latter may be through the former.

Creative teachers must also train themselves to recognize and encourage creativity in their students by becoming aware of and sensitive to the creative processes each student displays in writing. . . . It is significant to mention here that every child has the ability to create, that is, the potential is there. The individual portion may be large or small, but it is there to be developed. It is the teacher's concern to come to grips with the creative needs of the students and to find ways to feather the arrows of creativity.

. . . In teaching creative writing, the skills and concepts of narrative, descriptive, and expository writing may be taught subtly, and even individually, as the teacher circulates around the room, assisting each child with his or her writing efforts. In this way the writing process becomes seemingly less academic to the students who are actually learning writing skills while enjoying the freedom inherent in being imaginative. The heart of the matter is for teachers to attempt to instill confidence in each student's ability to be imaginative. . . .

. . . Young students anticipate criticism and are innately afraid of appearing inferior in the eyes of their peers. Therefore, it is basic to establish creative writing as something at which everyone can achieve at least a moderate degree of success. Constant reassurance and praise will be necessary in some cases, particularly with underachievers whose long careers of frustration and failure may tend to negate the possibility of existing creative potential. . . .

. . . It is essential to build up confidence with positive comments rather than deflate egos with the negative and censorious "red pen." The necessity of grading every paper that a student submits is questionable. Toward the communal end of achieving appreciation of writing, developing writing potential, and fostering creative thought processes, it is quite justifiable occasionally to underplay certain technical errors and to praise ideas or expressed feelings instead. The desire to write again will, in many cases, evolve into the desire to write correctly.

As far as incorporating creative writing into the curriculum is concerned, there are a number of ways in which this can be done with great success. It is definitely wrong for the teacher to "jump" into creative writing without some prior preparation. . . .

Students must understand what they are being asked to experiment with before they can realistically be asked to embark upon the experiment. Therefore, it may be

*This is an excerpt from an article originally published in the English Association of Ohio's Ohio English Bulletin, 16 (June 1975), 33-35.

best to save creative writing until its more basic concepts have been clarified-- then, through the learning-by-doing process, proficiency in writing may be fostered through creative forms. Motivation may be less of a slow, painful procedure if it is begun this way, especially if creative writing emerges artfully as an outgrowth of positive classroom situations and activities.

James Moffett's interaction method of small grouping is particularly useful in teaching creative writing. According to Moffett, students can learn as effectively from one another as they can from a teacher. After some initial practice in the skills and concepts of writing, students will be ready to work in small groups where they can exchange ideas, discuss each other's work, and propose suggestions for improvement. In addition to supplying a valid kind of evaluative feedback from the students, this kind of writing atmosphere can become a valuable tool in increasing the students' tolerance, acceptance, and estimation of one another; and in the small group situation, a greater integration of the five language arts skills--writing, reading, listening, speaking, and acting out--can be achieved.

Creative writing operates chiefly in the affective domain. Its foundations lie in emotion, opinion, and sentiment, but it is significant to realize that cognitive matters may be taught through creative writing, thus culminating in a duality of purpose: one, using creative writing to develop ability in expression of feeling, appreciation of literature, and evaluative skills, and two, to employ creative writing as a medium through which spelling, vocabulary, syntax, paragraph structure, technical analysis, style awareness, and group process may be taught. You may teach creative writing and you may teach through creative writing.

(CUCU Report, ctd.)

3. Common concerns - "It is psychologically exhilarating," the report points out, "for a student to discover that the instructor has some small familiarity with the reading matter assigned for class discussion." But in a written dissent, Dr. Gordian Tenure, a key figure in the AAUP's battle with Sangre de Savio College for the right of teachers to use colored chalk, said the suggestion endorses "yet another institutional encroachment into the domain of individual integrity and things like that."

4. Marking of compositions - Dr. Pleasantry admitted that the most hotly contested issue was the committee's suggestion that instructors be encouraged not only to read student compositions but to actually affix relevant criticisms to them and return them to the students. By way of amelioration, the committee conceded that the return of the papers could be delayed to the end of the academic period and that instructors should not be called upon to explain the significance of the marks.

5. Encouragement of breadth - The committee was unanimous in its contention that English prose styles common before 1945 are legitimate areas of study. "The psycho-social domination created by indigenous scientific and ethnic imperatives toward bizarre and often whimsical word patterns, plus vocabularic accretions and inconsistencies which beggar the imagination, bid fair to make our language a mess, lest we put a screeching halt to it," Dr. Pleasantry warned.

(Process, Product, and The "Basics," ctd.)

process from its natural end--papers that can be examined in the context of other written products:

. . . for quite some time now, the focus . . . has been shifting from process and product to person and process; and in this shift, process no longer refers to the achieving of an excellent product but, instead, points back to person--that is, to what may be done with or to the individual in order to call forth . . . creative energy. The value of any product which may result tends to be measured not in relation to other products-of-excellence of the same kind but, instead, in terms of the degree to which personhood is presumed to have been self-expressed.

(p. 26)

On the other hand, Matott feels that this focus on the person and process tends to isolate the individual in solipsistic self-expressiveness:

. . . the new pedagogical orientation apparently does not expect the individual to do much more than self-express. It does not require the individual to be measured against any norm, nor to be placed in relationship to any other human being. It is, apparently, a view of the human experience which values the individual in all his uniqueness--or, one might say, his isolation. (p. 27)

In the process of making such points, Matott quotes part of the "Position Statement" printed in the March 1974 WLA Newsletter:

. . . we feel that the writing class should keep the individual student at its center by focusing, more completely than is typical, on writing as a creative process of self-awareness and self-expression. The writing class . . . should not dictate a single writing process.

And Matott comments on this passage in the following way:

Certainly there is much here with which to agree. No doubt, writing is, at best, a liberating activity. Surely, too, it is admirable to insist that "the writing class should keep the individual student at its center." And one has no fundamental objection, really, to viewing writing "as a creative process of self-awareness and self-expression. One may insist, however, that the creative process entails a great deal more than self-awareness and self-expression. . . . The creative process . . . also demonstrates command of techniques appropriate to the expressive/creative medium: and in the older pedagogy this is where the teacher came in--and not merely to "dictate" either. (p. 26)

Glenn Matott's view, then, is that while it contains much with which to agree, the WLA approach to composition overemphasizes the creative and self-expressive process, and underemphasizes the finished product of writing and the teacher's role of helping students gain command of the techniques that make good writing.

This may be an understandable interpretation of the "Position Statement," though one that requires some misreading of that statement. For the paragraph that precedes the one Matott quotes places a pretty clear value on the written product of the writing process: "Writing is a means for one human being to communicate achieved insights to other human beings, and so a writer must be aware of the clarity of his/her writing for others; recognizing that choices in language, structure, and usage will have a direct influence on the effectiveness of his/her writing." And the sentences immediately following the section Matott quotes continue this concern for what Matott calls "techniques appropriate to the expressive/creative medium" of prose. The writing class, the "Position Statement" concludes, "should handle the necessary aspects of usage, organization, and language from such a perspective and in such ways that they do not in any way prevent writing from being what it rightfully is--a creative, liberating, humanizing activity."

The idea that writing classes should not devalue the written artifact as they emphasize student-centered teaching, then, has been a part of the WLA since the March 1974 "Position Statement"--and before. But the February 1976 CCC contains an elaboration of this philosophy in an article adapted from the "Writing as a

Liberating Activity" session at the 1975 CCCC. In "'Liberation' Is Not 'License,'" the WLA editors examine the self-awareness through writing approach to composition instruction in order to explode a misconception some people have about WLA: "that the 'L' in WLA stands for license, not liberation; that the WLA approach is an example of 'touchy-feely,' non-intellective teaching; that it values subjective exploration above clear communication" (p. 22). The point of the article is that "the genuinely liberating writing class must include both exploration and communication--that it must strike a balance between liberty and discipline" (p. 22). As the concluding paragraph of the article puts it:

. . . the discipline of writing is fundamental to the concept of Writing as a Liberating Activity. For this approach contends that writing classes should work with organization, development, grammar, and usage; it simply demands that teachers approach these things from such an angle that they do not prevent writing from being what it rightfully is--a creative, liberating humanizing activity. (p. 24)

* * *

A blend of discipline and creativity seems a worthy goal for writing teachers to strive for, especially at a time when the public seems to demand that English teachers turn "back to basics." As many people are interpreting this cliché, the basics are rudiments of usage, punctuation, spelling, and the like. And increased attention to these matters--without simultaneous efforts to prevent students from identifying writing with the correcting of "errors" and the proper placement of commas--could prevent writing from being a creative, liberating, humanizing part of the student's life.

As many letters and personal comments indicate, readers of WLA Newsletter tend to feel rather strongly that writing is a vital, humanistic activity. And those of us who feel this way should look for ways to promote the view in the face of the back-to-basics movement. Consider, for instance, Glenn Matott's way of viewing student papers. He advocates a forthright approach of teacher to student paper--not therapist to patient or guru to disciple. But he suggests an approach based on Martin Buber's I-Thou relationship rather than on the model of the vindictive critic or the computerized comma corrector.

Consider, too, the recent report of the National Assessment of Educational Progress that mechanics of writing have not declined since 1969, though complexity and coherence have declined. Writing Mechanics, 1969-1974 contains this summary of how writing of 17 year old students in 1969 compares with that of 17 year olds in 1974:

It is important to note some characteristics of essays that have not changed in the average essay: agreement errors continue to crop up in about 1 out of every 10 sentences; comma splices occur only 5% of the time; the use of dashes, quotation marks, question marks, explanation points, colons, semicolons or parentheses has remained constant and almost negligible; misspelling in general is not on the increase . . . ; word-choice and structure errors remain infrequent and display no change in either direction It seems, then, that most of the "mechanics" are well in hand. (U.S. Printing Office, 1975, p. 11)

But where mechanical matters are judged to be "well in hand," the NAEP finds a widening difference in apparent complexity between papers judged to be of high quality and those judged to be of low quality: "The better papers are considerably more sophisticated in their composition: they employ much more punctuation and considerably more complex sentences and sentences with phrases--and the four-year trend among good papers is toward greater sophistication" (p. 14). Further, the National Assessment study indicates a significant decline in general coherence of student writing. While 85% of papers written by 17-year olds were judged coherent in 1969, only 76% of the 1974 papers were coherent. And this overall drop masks even more dramatic declines in the coherence of weaker papers: while the

percentage of all papers judged coherent fell only 9% between 1969 and 1974, the percentage of the low quality papers fell a full 27%, from 83% judged coherent in 1969 to 56% considered coherent in 1974 (Writing Mechanics, Table 3, p. 8).

Such information can be quite useful to teachers who value writing as a broad, humane subject. For it suggest that writing teachers really may need to work more with coherence, organization, and adequate development of ideas than with punctuation, spelling, usage, and the like. Perhaps teachers who consider writing a broad, humanistic subject should try to convince colleagues, school boards, and their communities that what is really basic in writing classes are the broader matters of thought and organization and support. W. Ross Winterowd of USC, one of the writing teachers who reviewed the findings of the National Assessment before its report was issued, did something like this. At a news conference on the NAEP report, Winterowd said this:

I think we do need to get back to basics. But it is absolutely essential that we first identify the basics we want to get back to. The National Assessment data indicate that there is no particular decline in youngsters' ability to use surface features of written language--spelling, punctuation, verb agreement, pronoun reference and such. We don't need to get back to the "basics" as the general public popularly conceives them. We need to focus on the real basic skills: coherence, development and syntactic fluency. (NAEP Newsletter, February, 1976, p. 3)

This sort of advocacy of an accurate definition of "the basics" is the responsibility of college and high school writing teachers. As Winterowd indicates, the public generally believes that "the basics" are made up of narrower concerns of writing instruction than they actually are. And if the back-to-basics movement is governed by this popular definition, then writing teachers may be forced to abandon the broader intellectual and humanistic concerns that can flourish when writing classes balance discipline with creativity.

* * *

* WLA NEWSLETTER would like to hear your opinions about the *
 * "basics" and your suggestions of how creative, humane *
 * teachers can respond to the back-to-basics pressures in *
 * our society. If the subject interests or worries you, send *
 * a fairly brief letter to Rick Gebhardt, English Department, *
 * Findlay College, Findlay, OH 45840. The next issue of *
 * WLA will feature these letters. *

ABOUT THE WLA NEWSLETTER

WLA Newsletter is edited by Dr. Richard Gebhardt of Findlay College, and by Dr. Barbara G. Smith, Coordinator of Special Projects, the Kentucky Council on Public Higher Education.

WLA Newsletter began in a workshop on "Writing as a Liberating Activity" at the 1973 NCTE College Section Meeting. Its editorial policy continues the concerns of that workshop:

- The role of writing classes in freeing student imagination and creativity
- Ways that writing teachers can expand the range of student outlook and opinion
- Ways that teachers can expand the range of instructional options open to them.

WLA Newsletter invites you to submit articles, reports, reviews, and reading lists. Submissions should grow out of a teacher's experiences in high school or college writing classes, and they should relate to one of three elements of the newsletter's editorial policy. The format of WLA demands that submissions be fairly brief and that they not use footnotes. WLA Newsletter is especially interested in receiving "Teaching Plans"--one or two page outlines of how a teacher approached a specific teaching task or organized a unit of a writing course.

From the Student Perspective*

THREE VIEWS OF NON-TRADITIONAL WRITING INSTRUCTION

#1 A Senior Remembers Freshman Writing--Jane Schroeder

It was not until my freshman year that I discovered writing. I had written compositions before in English and various research papers for other high school courses, but these could not compare to what my new understanding of writing would be. When my advisor signed his name at the bottom of my first schedule card, I did not realize that I was about to change my opinion of writing as being a difficult, boring, and undesired experience. This signature enrolled me in a course that would make me aware of a different kind of writing--exciting, fun, meaningful, and a lot easier.

My poor attitude toward writing began changing after the first day of class. As I left my room in Deming Hall and crossed Frazer Street, voices from the past kept shouting unfavorable writing comments in my mind. One voice kept repeating, "if you make one grammatical error, your professor doesn't even bother reading your worthless paper." Following the one-lane, well-traveled barren path through the grass by the Student Union, these rumors continued to pound through my head. "He'll mark it with an 'F' and that will be your only grade for the term." Another one echoed to me up the steps of Old Main to my second floor classroom: "Why, you'll write a different ten page composition every day!"

The time had arrived for my first writing class to begin. I could not help wishing that my name were Mark Twain or Charles Dickens as I sat waiting at my desk for class to begin. Then, the writing professor strolled across the room with an iron in one hand, and a carton of Cut-Rite wax paper and crayons in the other. Once at the head desk, she unloaded her burden, before I could escape into the hall and save myself the embarrassment of mistaking an art class for a writing class. To my surprise, the woman immediately turned to the class and introduced herself as my writing professor.

One hour later, I was signing my name at the bottom of my first college composition. In that first class period, I had learned not only how to melt crayons on wax paper for a stained glass window effect, but also that it was easy to write about the procedure and describe the design.

I felt relieved as I put my writing on the stack of compositions accumulating on the head desk and left the room. I felt more relaxed and easy about writing as the course progressed. I began to realize that I had never before been motivated to write, or aware of interesting things to write about.

#2 High School Creative Writing: A College Sophomore Remembers--Anita Forney

With soft music filling the air, I sat in a pitch black room and suddenly realized that a chocolate covered cherry was being placed in my mouth. Sound strange? Well take it from me, this was quite a class! Yes, I did say class--specifically, creative writing class. In my creative writing class we did all sorts

*Since writing instruction can only be evaluated in relationship to student response and performance, WLA will print, from time to time, comments on the writing teaching enterprise written by college and high school students. The three student writers in this issue are students or recent graduates from Findlay College. Do you have students who have something to say about the teaching of writing?

of crazy things and then we were allowed in class-time to write about the experiences that we had encountered.

We students were responsible for conducting class. During our time as "teacher" we could do almost anything imaginable. And we did try all sorts of activities ranging from group sings to eating chocolate covered cherries in the dark. The reason behind these activities was simply to give our fellow students something to write about.

What's ironic is that this type of "folly-rall" really did the trick. By this, I mean that we really began to think creatively. Not only were we more creative in our writing, but we were also very original in the type of activity we personally planned for our day as "teacher." It was almost a peer competition to see which student could out-do the other.

Why did I remember this class as a memorable experience? Well, it was something out of the ordinary. It couldn't be considered a class, because we had fun doing assignments and class just isn't to be considered fun. Another good thing was that we students took an active part in planning the class activities. And if we are expected to be productive as students, I personally feel that first we must be excited and interested in the class.

I will treasure the work I did in this particular creative writing class, because of two reasons. First, I enjoyed coming in to the class knowing that there could be something new that would stimulate my thinking and writing. And secondly, I felt that my work was as unique as the course itself. It was unique because I was writing about everyday experiences (such as eating) and realizing that even the most familiar things were interesting enough to write about.

#3 "Gimmicks" in Freshman Composition: Thoughts from a Student's Journal--Jeff Hoffman

One thing that I have noticed about our Self-Awareness through Writing class is the ease with which we all get along. Different people from the outgoing to the very shy are in our class, and each of them has no fear of speaking out. I find two main reasons for this. First, one need not fear being laughed at by one's peers nor does one need feel that his opinion is wasted because it falls upon deaf ears. People will listen. I also find the people within the small writing groups to be warmer and friendlier than in other classes. I think some of the underlying reasons for the friendly atmosphere and ease of communication lie in the second reason people in the class get along.

My second reason is the games and activities that we do. It's strange, but from the first day the tone has been set in the class. We started out with two really stupid games. Stupid on the surface. For when all was said and done, every member of our class knew at least one other person on a first name basis (along with a little of the person's background) and also knew a little bit about all of the people in our class. What better way to start a class? Everyone was also relaxed from all of the activity of the games and some of the silly things we were doing. As we moved along in the course activities continued to crop up in which we all had a chance to participate. Take for example, the plays we had to work out to present the Fairy Tales. They were indispensable with regards to keeping the tone of the class as free and loose as it had been before. That maintained an environment conducive to constructive exchanges between people. They also served to make the various points of conflict resolution [studied earlier] in the course.

Summer Workshop:

DISCIPLINE AND CREATIVITY IN THE TEACHING OF WRITING

An intensive workshop for English teachers will be held at Findlay College, 14-18 June 1976. Confronting the "writing crisis" head on, the workshop will explore various professional approaches to the teaching of writing, and it will stress the importance of both discipline and creativity in effective writing classes.

Workshop topics include: "The Skills of the Writing Teacher," "The Compatibility of Discipline and Creativity," "Personal Writing Doesn't Have to Be Mush," "Writing About Literature Doesn't Have to Be Dull," "Teaching Writing by Teaching Writing," and "Teaching Students to Teach Themselves."

The workshop director is Richard Gebhardt, Co-Editor of WLA and a member of the Executive Committee of the Conference on College Composition and Communication. A member of a recent CCCC workshop on "Whats Really Basic in Preparing Composition Teachers," Rick has written books on self-awareness through writing, and on small-group collaboration in the writing class.

Discipline and Creativity in the Teaching of Writing may be taken for credit or as a non-credit workshop. Teachers in school systems that use Findlay College students teachers may take the course for credit for half price.

For further information and application materials, write Richard Gebhardt, English Department, Findlay College, Findlay, OH 45840.

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Department of English
Findlay College
Findlay, OH 45840