My involvement began quite simply by being picked up. A girlfriend and I were waiting for our dates in the bar of the Pavilion Hotel one evening . . . .

These first kinds of writing — **rehearsal, commentary,** and *associative anecdote* — are all reflective. The writing serves to sort out thoughts, associations, and responses, and organize them for the reader. But there are other kinds of writing, much more enactive, writing which follows closely the contours of the mind, echoing the processes of understanding at the point of encounter with a text. An example is the *thinking aloud* that Meriel, who is 17, shows us here. She is faced with a Blake poem, **"The Garden of Love,"** which she has never seen before, invited to read it, and whenever she stopped or paused in her reading, to write down precisely what was in her mind at that moment. She numbers what she writes each time she stops. She wrote eight comments: I quote only the first five:

1. *I find that I do not really understand the poem properly. If I read it again, it might help.*

2. *It's a very imaginative piece of writing. But I still cannot quite figure it out. My thoughts at the moment are all very confused.*

3. *This is the first time I have ever written my thoughts aloud quite like this.*

4. *I've been thinking what on earth I'm going to write about this poem.*

5. *I like the way it is written and the sort of words it uses. I find the whole poem a bit of a mystery and though I hate to say it a bit boring. That is probably because I can't tell what the author is trying to put over to me.*

The writing is serving Meriel as a way in which she can learn about her response. The act of writing helps her to see what her response actually *is*. Here is a similar technique, explored further. Cowper's poem **"The Poplar Field"** was presented to fourteen-year-old students piece by piece, first the opening two lines, then the whole of the first verse, the first two verses, and so on. The students were instructed: "Write down what you think that bit of the poem means, and anything the poem makes you think of. If you want to

ask questions, write them down as well." Here is the opening verse.

The poplars are fell'd: farewell to the shade,
And the whispering sound of the cool colonnade!
The winds play no longer and sing in the leaves,
Nor Ouse on his bosom their image receives.

Here is what Stephanie wrote. Her writing gathers intensity as the meaning of the poem seeps in to her *consciousness:* she is not able fully to articulate that meaning, but she is enacting consciousness in her own way. I cite her first two pages only, for brevity's sake. She is not too sure at first what a "poplar" is, and in fact when she worked it out (on her page 5) went back over what she had written. Her second thoughts are printed in bold-face.

1. *What does poplar mean?*
   The scenery is brightening up, the sun's coming out, and in the background the sound of the breeze. **Reminds me when a heavy shower has slowly withdrawn and the sun is starting to peer through shining on the ground, making shadows fall away.**

2. *The air is silent, motionless, like a picture taken when everything is still. The river reflects the scenes of the trees, like a clear mirror.* **But now the trees are felled there is no image reflecting in the river.**

These two kinds of writing about reading — the reflective and the enactive — are basic because they represent, I believe, basic processes in reading and understanding. They are things we do anyway, although generally we do them either in talk, or in that silent talk inside the head which is one kind of thought. When we tap them for our students, they discover that not only are they able to write in ways they didn't know they were capable of, but also that their writing has an effect on the way they read, deepening and extending their response and understanding.

All these examples involve the reading of literature. Similar processes, and similar uses of writing can be applied to the reading of non-fiction. But that is perhaps another essay altogether.

The Reading/Writing Connection

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When the reading of literature is used as a stimulus for writing assignments, it is assumed that students adequately comprehend the material they are reading. Unfortunately, this assumption is unwarranted: High schools and colleges have large numbers of students who are unable to understand literary texts. This inability is usually not due to students' lack of intelligence or basic skills; it is rather due to the fact that they lack appropriate background knowledge to actively construct meaning from text.

Although the teaching of reading comprehension has not traditionally been the work of the high school or college English teachers, many of us who teach writing use the reading of literature as the stimulus for writing in our classes. It seems necessary and, in fact, critical that we concern ourselves with students' ability to comprehend literature if we require students to write about literature. We must also take care to differentiate between problems our students experience because they are composing and problems they experience because of their inability to comprehend the literature they are reading. The reason is obvious: When students write papers about a piece of literature, their papers reflect their understanding of the literary text as well as their efforts to write about that understanding. Too often teachers concentrate their attention on their students' compositions, overlooking the real source of many students' composing problems: Inadequate background information to understand the texts they are reading or the requirements of the assignments they are to fulfill or both .

How Does The Human Brain Comprehend?

Because it is difficult to both completely understand and describe how the human brain comprehends, I have found it useful to describe the more easily understood comprehension mechanisms and processes of mechanical intelligence and then compare some of the comprehension processes of the human brain to them. Computers have processing components for manipulating information; memory components for retrieving data they need; and methods for bringing information from outside the system into the system. They also have programs and "software" for organizing and manipulating information to produce concrete products such as "print outs."

There are obvious differences between human and artificial intelligence such as emotions and creativity; still the human brain appears to have components which perform several of their functions in a fashion similar to the fashion in which components of computers function. The human brain has mechanisms for taking information in, sending it forth, storing and retrieving it from memory, and processing it.

Preparing Students To Read Effectively

If we assume that our students have a normal ability to learn when they come to us — a normal capacity to store information, to process it, to manipulate it, and to communicate it — then we can assume they can handle reasonable reading and writing tasks. What separates students from one another is not so much differences in their mechanisms for learning — their "hardware" — as it is differences in the background information they possess, their "memory," their cognitive skills, and as a result, the "programs" they have successfully developed to manipulate and communicate information — their "software." When students lack background information and the skills to process and complete the reading and writing tasks we assign them, we must provide them experiences which will prepare them for that reading and writing.

The process of helping students acquire the necessary skills and knowledge to prepare them for reading and writing is not a simple one. We cannot simply "load" information into them in the same fashion in which we might program a computer. Providing our students with the background knowledge they need to effectively complete our assignments requires our careful analysis of their needs, sensitivity to their backgrounds, and careful planning and preparation.

For example, if we ask our students to write about a sonnet, we have to determine whether or not our students can read the sonnet with sufficient understanding to write about it intelligently. Our own familiarity with the work being studied may cause us to underestimate our students' ability to understand it. It is easy for us to forget those times when we struggled for long hours trying to determine the meaning of a literary work. (I can refresh my memory, by trying to read a few pages of a statistics text.)

When I ask students to read and write about Shakespeare's "**Sonnet 15,**" for example, I first prepare them to understand the sonnet's form so they are able to organize the information in the sonnet in a way that allows them to make meaning from it. Too often, students try to organize only individual lines of the poem into meaning units, forgetting that

sentences, phrases, and clauses within the poem are units of meaning also. Furthermore, they are perplexed by the vocabulary of this sonnet written almost 400 years ago. I need to draw their attention to references which are unfamiliar to them and to forms of language which have changed. One effective way I have found to accomplish this task is to give them a copy of the work that includes **glossing** of difficult words in the margin. This **glossing** provides them the necessary definitions of unfamiliar terms so that they can concentrate their attention on the meaning of the poetry.

Sonnet 15

When I consider everything that grows	
Holds in perfection but a little moment,	(stays)
*That this **huge stage** presenteth **nought** but shows*	{ (the world as a stage) (nothing)
*Whereon the **stars** in secret influence comment;*	(reference to astrology)
When I perceive that men as plants increase,	
*Cheered and **check'd** even by the selfsame sky,*	{ (encouraged) (restrained) (reference again to stars)
Vaunt in their youthful sap, at height decrease	(swagger)
And wear their brave state out of memory:	
*Then the **conceit** of this inconstant stay*	
Sets you most rich in youth before my sight,	
*Where wasteful time **debateth** with decay*	(realization/awareness)
*To change your day of you to **sullied night***	
And all in war with time for love of you,	(argues)
As he takes from you I engraft you new.	(old age and death)

When I am content that unfamiliar terms and language forms no longer create a barrier to their understanding, I try to help students focus on larger units of the poem. I divide the poem into four parts and direct class discussion to each of these parts.

Sonnet 15

When I consider every thing that grows	{ What idea is presented in these two lines?
Holds in perfection but a little moment,	
That this huge stage presenteth nought but shows	
Whereon the stars in secret influence comment;	
When I perceive that men as plants increase,	What idea is presented by these lines?
Cheered and check'd even by the selfsame sky,	
Vaunt in their youthful sap, at height decrease	
And wear their brace state out of memory:	
Then the conceit of this inconstant stay	{ Who is the poet speaking of in these lines? What is his concern?
Sets you most rich in youth before my sight,	
Where wasteful time debateth with decay	
To change your day of youth to sullied night;	
And all in war with time for love of you,	What will time take?
As he takes from you I engraft you new.	

I also focus on larger elements that further their comprehension of this sonnet as a literary work. In this work I call students' attention to extended metaphor — a term and concept which I have previously introduced to them.

Sonnet 15

*When I consider every thing that **grows***	
Holds in perfection but a little moment,	
That this huge stage presenteth nought but shows	
Whereon the stars in secret influence comment;	
*When I perceive that men as **plants** increase,*	
Cheered and check'd even by the selfsame sky,	
*Vaunt in their youthful **sap**, at height decrease*	**Why is this extended**
And wear their brave state out of memory:	**metaphor used?**
Then the conceit of this inconstant stay	
Sets you most rich in youth before my sight,	
*Where wasteful time debateth with **decay***	
To change your day of youth to sullied night;	
And all in war with time for love of you,	
*As he takes from you I **engraft** you new.*	

The examples described here are not meant to be exhaustive but rather illustrative of the types of activities which classroom teachers can create to provide their students with background knowledge which may enhance their reading of "Sonnet 15." Activities such as these not only provide students with skills which they may use when reading other texts but also provide them a repertoire of devices that foster comprehension of any unfamiliar material.

When activities which enhance their reading, specifically provide students with the means to analyze the techniques authors have used to achieve their purposes, students begin to think about the writing process itself. Student readers become conscious of the techniques available to them as student writers. Often this awareness becomes the foundation for their development as writers.

How We Construe Is How We Construct

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[NOTE: *The philosophical argument for the claims made here about the centrality of interpretation is developed in* The Making of Meaning: Metaphors, Models, and Maxims for Writing Teachers *(Boynton/Cook, 1981). The "dialectical notebook" is described at length in* Forming/Thinking/ Writing: The Composing Imagination *(Hayden, 1978; Boynton/Cook, 1981).*]

Literature has lately been exiled from many a composition classroom and for reasons which are all legitimate (in one way or another) and all pernicious. One doctrinaire contention is that the students' own writing should supplant literature because students can learn best how to write by learning to read what they and their classmates have written, treating their writing as they would printed texts. Some hold that there is simply not enough time to teach both reading and writing. And there is a strong conviction among composition specialists that no writing teacher should be permitted to teach literature because all writing teachers, even those certified as composition specialists, are literature teachers in disguise; and, since their first loyalties are to the printed page, to poems and stories by authenticated writers, they will — given half a chance — desert the spurious for the real. The assumption seems to be that in teaching literature the teacher would be engaged in an enterprise which has nothing whatsoever to do with composition and, furthermore, that the only role literature could possibly play in the writing class is to provide prose models for imitation or to generate topics. It follows that if there is to be any reading in the composition classroom other than that of student texts, it should be of informational articles written in that "effective" prose proclaimed by rhetoricians as ideal, identifiable by its high readability rating and its decidedly unliterary character.

It is a delusion, however, to think that reading that kind of expository writing will necessarily teach those who read it how to write it. I like to remind my colleagues that when T.R. Henn, a Yeats scholar, was asked shortly after the Second World War to do something about the problems science undergraduates were having with their writing at Cambridge University, he chose to teach them to read tough poems.

The point is that critical reading can be a way of coming to know, of learning to learn and thus discovering some important things about writing, but *only* if it is taught as a means of making meaning. Arguably, that approach is most profitable when what is read is worth the trouble, when the text is literary. Even more crucial than the character of the text, though, is the *method* of teaching critical reading. Calling literature back from exile is fatuous if the reason is only that the "message" is more valuable than that of a *Reader's Digest* selection: The heuristic power of literature will not be released by asking "What is the author trying to say?" That non-question is generally matched by others: "What do you want to say?" "Who is your audience?" "Where is your thesis statement?" Literature taught as dressed-up message and writing taught as effective communication deserve one another.

Critical reading can replenish a student's repertory of syntactical structures and can create an interest in ways of deploying them; it can awaken the moribund auditory imagination, the chief cause of sentence errors. But the centrally important reasons for returning literature to the composition classroom is that it is a form of knowledge. The critical reading of literature can turn on the mind to its own powers of making meaning; it is the best means we have of raising consciousness of the heuristic powers of language itself. If we can teach reading so that the mind is actively engaged in seeing "how words work" (Richards' definition of rhetoric), anything and everything that is learned in reading will be transferable to learning to write. The reason is that how we construe is how we construct.

Positivists enjoy derailing the argument I've been making by wearily noting that "literature" is hard to define; that some people might consider the instructions for cleaning a fish tank as beautifully textured as any poem; that students should not have to suffer the tyranny of their teachers' conceptions of just what is literature and what is not. The answer which must be vigorously returned to the weary positivists and others who see such skepticism as the true scientific spirit is that real scientists don't agree with them. As Robert Oppenheimer puts it, Einstein did not sit pondering the question "What is a clock?" Real scientists do not contemplate the meaning of such concepts as *Life* and *Time* and *Purpose*; they form hypotheses which they then test experimentally. I suggest that we follow the procedure set forth by C.S. Lewis in that excellent little book which all reading and writing teachers should read and re-read, *An Experiment in Criticism*. Lewis says that instead of declaring that we must read literature in a certain way, we should take as our premise that what we read in a certain way is literature. Put the fish tank instructions on the reading list if they can be read rigorously, energetically, thoughtfully, heuristically. Paulo Friere shows us how we can indeed convert anything to a genuine "text" — pictures, lists, aphorisms, slogans — by raising consciousness about the ways meaning is being made.

Constructing and construing: at the heart of both reading and writing is *interpretation*, which is a matter of seeing

what goes with what, how this goes with that. Interpretation is a process analogous in many important respects to what we do when we make sense of the world. It has survival value: We and all our fellow creatures must interpret in order to stay alive. The difference between them and us is language: It is language that enables us to go beyond interpreting, to interpret our interpretations. This spiralling circularity empowers all the activities of mind involved in making meaning. We continually use meanings to find other meanings, use forms to find forms, use whatever intellectual activity in which we are engaged to find other intellectual activities. This is what I.A. Richards meant when he said that "all studies are language studies, concerned with the *speculative instruments* they employ." Our **speculative instruments** are the ideas we depend on in order to interpret our interpretations. They are our means of making meaning, in writing as in reading. Keeping reading and writing together will enable us to teach interpretation, to take as our point of departure what Vygotsky calls "the unit of meaning." That way, to strengthen one kind of meaning-making will be to strengthen the other.

I believe, with I.A. Richards, that what our students need most when they are studying English is "*assisted invitations* to find out what they are doing and thereby how to do it." What that means is that consciousness in reading and writing is not a debilitating self-consciousness but a method of thinking about thinking. Language is not just "verbal behavior" and it is not adequately modeled by motor skills. Language is our means of form-finding and form-creating, and it involves us in looking and looking again; in stating and re-stating; in trying our many **how's** to go with many **what's**. When we see forming as an activity of mind central to both reading and writing, we will have no difficulty finding ways to keep reading and writing together.

In this enterprise of teaching reading and writing as ways of making meaning, ways of interpreting our interpretations, the emphasis will have to be on process. That self-evident premise is not helping us as it should because we rarely develop pedagogies which are consonant with the kind of processes which reading and writing are. Reading cannot be represented by linear models derived from the way the computer processes "information" or the way we memorize nonsense syllables, any more than the composing process can be represented by such linear models as "Prewriting — Writing — Rewriting" or "Writer-based Prose — Reader-based Prose." We need ways of making the **dialectical** character of reading and writing apparent. We need models (and images) of the ways our expectations guide what we think we are reading, of the ways that "feedfor-

ward" (Richards) shapes the emergent meanings we are forming.

Let me suggest a way to get the **dialectic** going. I ask my students — all of them — freshpersons, upperclass students, teachers in graduate seminars — to furnish themselves with a notebook, spiralbound at one side, small enough to be easily carried around but not so small that their writing is cramped. (School teachers who have tried this idea tell me, however, that their students insist on a notebook that will fit into the back pocket of their jeans.) What makes this notebook different from most, perhaps, is the notion of the double entry: On one side, reading notes, direct quotations, observational notes, fragments, lists, images — verbal and visual — are recorded; on the facing side, notes about those notes, summaries, formulations, questions and queries and mumbles, editorial revisions, comments on comments are written. The double-entry format provides a way for the student to conduct that "continuing audit of meaning," which is Richards' name for the activity at the heart of learning to read and write critically. The facing pages are in dialogue with one another.

The **dialectic notebook** is for all kinds of writing, creative and critical; any assignment you can think up can be adapted so that it can teach **dialectic**. Suppose you want your students to read some nature poems. The writing assigned could be a record of ten minutes of observation and meditation carried out daily over a period of a week — descriptions and speculations in response to a seashell, a milkweed pod, a garlic bud, a chestnut bur, or any natural object (the odder the better) that can serve as a "text": **Reading the Book of Nature** is probably the oldest writing assignment in the world. Each day should begin with re-reading the notes from the day before and writing a recapitulation or critical comment on the facing page. At the week's end, two paragraphs are assigned: (1) a description of the object, based on the right-hand entries; (2) a comment on the process of observing and interpreting, based on the left-hand side. Writers should be encouraged to move freely from one side to the other, from notes to recapitulations and back again, interpreting as they go.

Meanwhile, a poem could be assigned for study in another section of the double-entry journal, to be read and contemplated and responded to **dialectically**. On alternate days perhaps the pine cone or crab shell could be responded to **dialectically**. (The poem should not be about the object.) New poems might emerge and new ways of reading surely will. This kind of writing will encourage students to set aside the non-question "What is the author trying to say?" in

favor of critical questions about what has been made. They can learn the art of interpretive paraphrase: "How does it change the meaning when I put it this way?" By teaching that how we construe is how we construct, the double-entry notebook assures that whatever is learned about reading is something learned about writing and that looking again will come to be seen as the way into interpretation.

In my opinion, the best texts for these purposes are those which demand that we read them as literature. To make this point, I juxtapose, for instance, Gerald Manley Hopkins' "Inversnaid" with the Baedeker description of the same landscape. After a couple of weeks with their **dialectical** notebooks, students feel a kinship with Hopkins because they have been discovering for themselves something about the power of language — of words and images, metaphors and syntactical structures, of rhythm, rime, cadence, and so on. They come to see reading as a process of making meaning, discovering in their own parallel composing how sources, constraints, emergent purposes work to find and create forms. These discoveries become their **speculative insruments**, fit for exploring the literacy text which serves as point of departure and promises safe return.

Writing For Readers

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Effective writers write with their readers in mind. They make a series of decisions which guide their planning and composing. They ask themselves questions about the *content* of their writing (How much background do I have to give my readers? How many examples of my ideas should I supply?); the *language* in which they write (Should I use the vocabulary of those familiar with the subject in this piece of writing? Or should I use familiar, everyday terms?); and the *role* they wish to assume (Should I establish myself as an authority on my subject? Or should I establish myself as a peer or colleague of those to whom I am writing?)

Effective writers know that readers construct meaning from texts based upon the readers' personal and cultural backgrounds as well as their purposes for reading. In addition, readers construct meaning based upon specific *visual*, *verbal*, and *structural* features of the texts they are reading. Although writers cannot substantially alter either readers' personal or cultural knowledge or readers' purposes for reading, they can substantially influence the meaning constructed from their texts by supplying *visual*, *verbal*, and *structural* clues which invite readers to share the meaning they intend.

VISUAL CUES

Graphic Layout

The graphic layout of writing helps readers to understand a text more easily, giving cues to writers' major and minor points of emphasis. This notion can be illustrated by examining almost any text book. Major headings are often centered, capitalized, and underlined or italicized. **VISUAL CUES** above is an example of a major heading. Minor headings are indented, typed in capital and lower case letters, and underlined or italicized. *Graphic layout* above is an example of a minor heading. Both major and minor headings work best when they are parallel in structure.

Material which is indented and single spaced is quoted and serves as an illustration of an idea. Linda Flower explains the practice:

> *The fact that this passage is indented and single spaced says it is either a long quotation or an example. The additional space around it and the single spacing indicate it is a different kind of text, and let readers adjust their reading speed and expectations (Flower, 160).*

Extra white space can also be used to highlight material or to signal a shift in thought. This notion can often be illustrated by looking at literature, where writers signal a shift in time or point of view by added white space. Some writers underline or *italicize* key words to call attention to their importance.

Paragraphing

Donald Hall has called paragraphs the "hand-and foot-holds in the cliff face of an essay" (*Writing Well*). They allow the reader to rest before going on to new information. A good class exercise, I learned from Francis Christensen, asks students to create paragraphs in an article where paragraph markers have been omitted. A good source is articles from a one volume encyclopedia where paragraph markers have been omitted as a space-saving device. Because students inevitably begin paragraphs at different places in the given text, their individual decisions can lead to interesting class discussions.

Punctuation

Punctuation is also a visual cue to readers as to how they should relate ideas. To illustrate this point for my students, I make up examples. In the following examples, I demonstrate two functions which the semi-colon performs to make meaning visually apparent:

1. **Joining two closely related sentences**

   – to highlight contrast

   Her teeth were straight and white; he remembered the nicotine stains on his.

   – to suggest a logical relation that is not explicitly stated
   He hated to lie; she was such a nice girl.

   – to suggest what follows comments or what precedes
   Architecture is more than a science of being sure something will stand forever; it is also an art form.

2. **Punctuating a complicated series of ideas into easily grouped semantic units**

   He pulled at the chrome handle of the squat thick refrigerator, glossy and humming softly, and the plump door clicked open with a dull rubber sound, revealing a porcelain interior lighted from the rear by a frosted electric bulb and the food stuff his vacationing wife had left for him to forage on: pale yellow bottles of milk, beaded with cold and filled to the paper stopper; a covered plas-

tic dish of leftovers – *deflated green peas, wax-like carrots in a thick gray juice; fluted aluminum* mold of jello, *red and shiny, like dime-store costume jewelry; and* packages of meat – *round, folded and right-wrapped in bloody brown paper and fastened with strips of sticky tape* (Francis Christensen, **A New Rhetoric**).

Students enjoy developing their own examples of how punctuation functions as a visual cue to meaning. They might try constructing examples using the colon, the dash, parentheses, and so on.

VERBAL CUES

Some verbal cues to meaning preview points writers wish to make (titles, thesis statements, method of development statements, and topic sentences); some tell readers how to relate what follows to what precedes (transitional words); and some point back to what is presupposed (cohesive words of reference and repetition).

Cues that Preview Information

A well chosen *title* does more than satisfy the needs of composition teachers for identification of the content of a paper. It gives readers a context and a frame for approaching a paper, directing their attention to the topic at hand. I ask students (1) to examine titles in a magazine, in their text books, or in other student papers, (2) to write a preview of what they think the articles are about on the basis of the titles, and then (3) to read the articles to see if their expectations are met.

Thesis statements and *method-of-development* statements function to preview points for readers and are easily illustrated for students of writing: I define a *thesis statement* as the explicit statement of the argument of the paper, and illustrate it:

> The eleven children as speakers of black English have been denied equal treatment under 1703f of the United States Code, which is part of the Equal Educational Opportunities Act, because in not treating these children differently from the other predominantly white students, the school failed to account for the children's special needs.

A *method-of-development statement* differs, for here the writer simply suggests the direction of the paper, without explicitly stating the argument:

> This paper will answer three separate questions in order to determine if eleven black children who speak black dialect have been denied equal educational opportunity: whether black English is a separate dialect from standard English; whether speakers of black English have a language barrier as they participate in the school system; and whether, if these children have a language barrier, the school system has taken adequate action to help them.

Sometimes writers preview their points with a combination of *thesis* and *method of development statements*.

> As speakers of black English, the eleven children have been denied equal educational opportunity under section 1703f of the United States Code. To demonstrate how they have been denied equal education opportunity, the following points will be discussed: black English as a distinct dialect; black English as a language barrier in learning to read, and teachers, and school board's responses to these students, language barrier.

I also show my students that within a paper the same previewing of points occurs at the paragraph level. Sometimes initial sentences preview the entire content of a paragraph. Thus:

> There are three problems with capital punishment that argue for its abolition.

suggests that the writer will develop three problems in the paragraph without specifying what they are. Just as the sentence:

> The solution is to abolish capital punishment and to institute a better system of rehabilitation which will have two features.

suggests the paragraph will develop two features of the rehabilitation system without specifying what they are.

Cues that Demontrate the Relationships Between Information

I have found it useful to illustrate the layering of ideas that exists in a piece of writing by diagramming a text according to Francis Christensen's model. In Christensen's system ideas are categorized as being on the same level as what precedes them (coordinate) or at a lower level (subordinate). Superordinate ideas are marked with a (1) and ideas at subordinate levels are indented and are marked by numbers lower than (1). When ideas are added at the same level they receive the same number and are indented accordingly. I have analyzed the paragraph below according to Christensen's system, adding arrows to show how ideas either point back to a superordinate structure, or forward to a coordinate or a subordinate idea.

(1) **People** *have speculated about the* **nature of language** *for a long time.*
  (2) **Both Plato and Aristotle discussed the matter** *but as one might expect, they did not agree.*
    (3) **Plato** *seems to have* believed *that the connection between a word and a meaning was a product of the nature of things . . .*
      (4) *He was* therefore *interested in etymology as a process of discovering . .*
        (5) *the word "etymology" reflects this view that ./ .*
    (3) **Aristotle,** *on the other hand,* **regarded** *the connection between a word and a meaning as a product of convention . . .*
      (4) **Consequently** *he had little interest in seeking original meanings (Francis Christensen,* **The New Rhetoric** *, 137).*

Transitional words and phrases constitute another device which writers use to give readers cues about how parts of a text relate to other parts that either follow or precede them. For example conjunctions indicate both a relationship between words and the level at which the material to follow is being added. Students quickly recognize specific examples of conjunction and the relationships they communicate:

Conjunction	**Relationship**
furthermore	*addition*
however	*contrast*
thus	*consequence*
before, after, next	*time*

However, not many students have thought about how conjunctions move a paper back and forth between general and specific ideas. Some conjunctions such as *and* indicate ideas are being added at the same level; whereas others such as *for example* indicate ideas at a lower level; some indicate the implications and consequences of what precedes such as *in conclusion* and some indicate a temporal relationship such as *finally*. A useful classroom activity is to ask students to construct as full a list of conjunctions as they can to explain the logical relationships implied by those conjunctions. After I assign this exercise, I give my students a chart like the following one which I have adapted from the work of Linda Jones, Michael Halliday and Ruqaiya Hasan.

LOGICAL RELATIONSHIPS

Ideas at the same level

continuation conjunctions	*moreover*
(What follows develops	*in addition*
at the same level)	*furthermore*
	'also
	and
enumeration conjunctions	*first, second, third*
(What follows indicates	*first, next, finally*
material at the same level	
of prominence)	

comparison/contrast	*likewise, similarly*
(What follows is similar to, or	*however, nevertheless*
different from what precedes,	*but, yet*
but is at the same level	*on the one hand/on*
of prominence)	*the other hand*

Ideas at a lower level

paraphrase conjunctions	*in other words*
(What follows explains	*to say it another way*
what precedes)	*to explain*
example conjunctions	*for example*
(What follows is an	*to illustrate*
illustration of what precedes)	

Ideas that sum up the consequence of what precedes

summary conjunctions	*in summary*
(What follows sums up	*in conclusion*
what precedes)	*in short, in brief*
consequential conjunctions	*thus*
(What follows spells out	*therefore*
consequences of what	*hence*
precedes)	*so*

TEMPORAL RELATIONSHIPS

Ideas related in time to other ideas

time conjunctions	*previously, before*
	while, meanwhile
	soon
	after, immediately
	thereafter
	at length
	next
	then
	finally, last

STRUCTURAL CLUES

Writers can also guide their readers' understanding of text by structuring their ideas according to familiar writing plans such as **narration, description, collection, cause-effect, comparison and contrast,** and **response** (see p.69 this issue of **fforum** for B. Meyers taxonomy of writing plans to which I am indebted). Readers use these plans to help interpret what they are reading; the plans serve as a frame to which readers attach the details of the text as they read. Readers also use the plans to help them recall writers' ideas. To help readers grasp the underlying prose structure, writers can explicitly signal their writing plan.

I find it useful to analyze a piece of student writing for my classes to demonstrate that student writers embed one plan within another. For example, an essay a student of mine wrote arguing for the abolition of capital punishment used a

response plan with a *problem-solution format.* The student argued capital punishment should be abolished because of the problems associated with it. The problems were described through a *collection plan:* Capital punishment does not deter crime, does not eliminate murders, and is unfair. In turn each of these ideas was developed by a sub-plan. The idea that capital punishment does not deter crime was developed by a **contrast** plan which described deterence of capital crimes in states that have capital punishment — Ohio, Indiana, and so on — and in those that do not — Michigan, Delaware; the argument that capital punishment does not eliminate murders was developed by a *collection* plan which detailed the numbers of murderers executed in a given time period; and the idea that capital punishment is unfair was developed by a *collection* plan which discussed the ways it is unfair: in jury selection, to the poor, to the innocent). Borrowing from Bonnie Meyer's method, I draw a tree diagram to demonstrate the relationship of ideas in a text from the top down. The diagram is a good visual way to present students with the hierarchical organization of ideas in prose. Below is a diagram of the ideas of the student who argued for the abolition of capital punishment.

By explicitly demonstrating ways in which students can make use of *visual, verbal,* and *structural* clues and thereby improve their writing, I believe teachers introduce their students to useful devices. I find my students become more effective writers when they become more conscious of how they are structuring and presenting their ideas. As they become more aware of the *visual, verbal,* and *structural* features of the text which they are using, they can edit to make sure they are following through on patterns of organization, and taking advantage of the conventions of writing available to them.

Tree Diagram

90
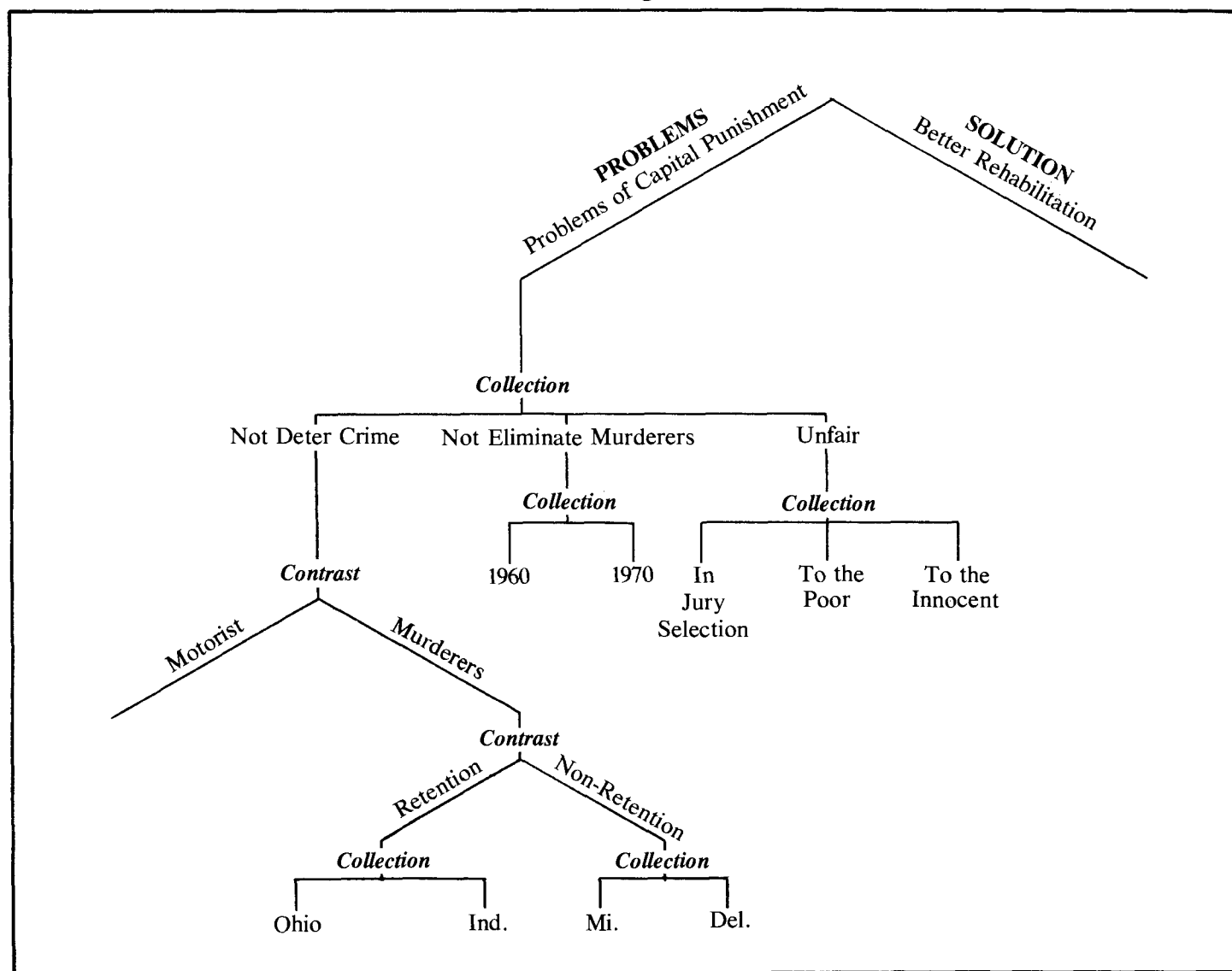
Identity, Reading, and Writing

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Writing re-creates identity: We write as we read, think, talk, dress, or play, using distinctive patterns that distinguish our personal styles from those of others. If we examine samples of our own and others' writings over a period of time, we can detect patterns of word choice, theme, imagery, and tone in those writings that characterize each of us as much as the shapes of our noses or our smiles do. We can express these patterns as an *identity theme,* to which all our statements and actions will be variations.

This notion comes from the work of psychoanalyst Heinz Lichtenstein who theorized that all persons achieve an identity through their earliest symbiotic relations with their parents (Lichtenstein, 1961). As infants, we "match" our undifferentiated **potential** to become a certain person with our mothers' and fathers' specific conscious or unconscious needs for us to develop into **particular** persons. As a result, some patterns of thought and experience become characteristic for us, while others become unlikely. Norman N. Holland has worked out the implications of Lichtenstein's theory for literary responses (Holland, 1973; 1975). Holland has formulated a model of "literary transaction" to describe the way we interact with texts through our *identity themes.* When we "transact" a text, constructing meanings and fantasies from it, we use what Holland called **DEFT** perception:

> We perceive DEFTly – through defences, expectations, fantasies, and transformations. All, however, are aspects of a single principle: we perceive so as to match our identity themes (the essential sameness of ourselves) as best we can from the mixture of matches and mismatches our environment offers (Holland, 1976, p. 336).

Identity theory and the model of "transaction" offer us some new ways to think about reading and writing in English education. Our responses to literature, to anything we read, reveal our personal psychological styles. Instead of thinking of different readers as "imprinted" by an identical text, we can think of each reader as "transacting" a text according to his or her characteristic identity. And we can think of sharing responses — using our unique blends of **DEFT** perception — as an opportunity to mutually discover the ways our differing identities enable us to "transact" texts.

At the Center of the Psychological Study of the Arts of the State University of New York at Buffalo, Norman Holland and Murray Schwartz have developed a teaching method that calls for free associative written responses to assigned readings as a means of exploring students' *identity themes* or particular styles of "transacting" literature (Holland and Schwartz, 1975). They call their teaching method the *Delphi Method* (named after the oracle's motto: Know Thyself). Teachers and students write weekly responses to assigned reading. These informal writings focus on personal associations with the readings, emotional reactions, or initial analysis — whatever gives the text relevance or importance to the individual. Before class, class members distribute copies of their reponses to all other class members. During class time, the teacher and students discuss the week's reading assignment and the responses to it. At a certain point in the semester, the class format changes. Instead of reading assigned works, the class reads and responds to the collected responses of one or two class members, looking for the patterns, themes, images, and so forth, that will describe each person's *identity theme.*

The *Delphi Method* asks participants to pay careful attention to the specific style in which they structure their readings and writing. Such attention yields an intensely personal learning process. Class meetings usually remain unstructured, with teachers facilitating participation rather than lecturing. Teachers become role models for open, flexible, and sensitive attitudes toward others, and for composing thoughtful and sincere responses to students' work each week.

Neither teacher nor students need to become experts in psychology or the dynamics of reading response criticism to participate effectively in a *Delphi* class; they need simply to focus their human powers of observation and insight upon each other's responses as they might focus them upon literary texts. The following are comments one might typically find in a class using the *Delphi Method:*

> You seem drawn to characters who share your values, but then when they do something you dislike, you get angry and feel betrayed by the character and the author.

> You seemed to feel the novel forced you to have certain feelings that were unpleasant. You say, "The scene made me feel . . ." rather than, "I felt . . . during the scene."

> You always use the passive voice, which makes me feel you don't want to be seen as the "I" or subject voicing your opinions.

Introducing the *Delphi Method*

Teachers can develop a series of assignments which introduce students to the *Delphi* process gradually. For example, students can begin the semester writing responses to printed essays or stories. After they have practiced writing responses and have become attuned to the different responses of different class members to the same texts, they can begin responding to each other's work.

It is also possible for teachers to adapt the *Delphi Method* to complement other methods and goals in writing courses: Teachers can have classes spend an entire semester reading and writing responses to each other's papers; or they can set aside one class per week over a semester for discussion of responses; or they can devote a few weeks of concentrated attention to responses. Teachers can also evaluate response in various manners: Responses can remain ungraded, with only the students' formal written work evaluted for grades; or students can develop their own criteria — such as effort or thoroughness — for self- or class-evaluation of responses and discussions; or students can write formal papers at the beginning and end of the semester and be graded on their growth as evaluators. In large classes teachers can divide students into small groups. The members of each group can exchange and discuss responses among themselves, with teachers rotating membership in the various groups.

The *Delphi Method* offers numerous advantages to writing teachers. It clearly demonstrates to students the individual unity underlying each person's reading and writing. Students become aware of the way they and others not only read texts, respond to texts, and write texts, but also of the way they view themselves and their world.

Students in a *Delphi* class can learn much simply by comparing their formal and informal writing styles. For example, students are apt to spot one student writer's use of the active voice in informal responses and the passive voice in formal papers. These observations can lead to a discussion of that writer's feelings when she writes in each voice. Or they can probe another student writer's consistent use of abstract words, or strings of unsupported generalizations. Rather than judging such writing as flawed or mistaken, students in a *Delphi* class encourage one another to understand the link between their identities and their writing. Such insights can help students reinforce their strengths, reduce their limitations, and increase their control over their own writing.

By receiving a wide variety of responses to their work, students perceive that the comments their teachers and peers make about their writing relate to their teachers' and peers' distinctive styles of thinking, feeling, and communicating. This perception both undercuts students' potentially defensive reactions to comments they might otherwise assume to be personally judgmental or destructively critical and frees students to use comments about their writing as aids to their development as writers.

Because students in *Delphi* classes write directly to each other, they become sensitive to the impact writers' words have upon them, and they practice articulating this awareness in their informal responses to others. Because they often write carefully, seriously, and specifically to their peers in informal responses, their selection and use of words in formal writing situations usually improves as well. Another benefit of the *Delphi* method is that students receive extensive information about the effect their writing has had upon others. And finally, students receive more individual responses than a single teacher in a single semester can provide.

Students not only like to learn about themselves but they also like to know the way their life styles, values, beliefs, conflicts, and needs compare with those of their peers. The *Delphi* Method creates a writing class that offers rewarding interpersonal exchanges which build upon students' natural curiosity.

A Case for Cases

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It is unfortunate that our new-found awareness of writing as process hasn't yet extended to a parallel awareness that any act of communication is a response to a situation — a situation which may, in fact, have other possible responses. For example, faced with a large and angry man who wants to rearrange my face, I may fight, run, or talk him out of it. It is this principle — language use is a response to a situation — which should govern our lives as teachers of writing. A failure to recognize and use this principle as we teach writing has a number of unfortunate consequences: First, it forces us to unusual lengths to provide methods of invention and audience analysis for our students; second, it leads to a tendency to speak of *An Essay* or *A Theme*, as if they were artifacts unearthed by a team of archeologists, and to giving writing assignments which are themselves artifacts (*A Narration, A Cause and Effect Essay*); third, it gives much of our writing a sterile, cut-off-from-it-all feeling.

Consider a typical writing assignment from a current rhetoric:

> *Think of a place that is important to you and describe it to a friend who might be interested.*

The steps the students go through before they can even begin to communicate about this topic are tortuous. First, the students must find a subject to write about. This is *invention* in the current sense of the word, often involving complicated heuristics and discovery procedures — freewriting, brainstorming, conceptual blockbusting, or whatever. Second, once students have discovered what they are to write about, students must marshal arguments, data, facts, suppositions, lies, generalities, and specifics, all to develop an idea which has, as often as not, been made up out of whole cloth-invented. Third, the poor students must visualize, make up, create, imagine an audience for this information. Finally, students are ready to begin communicating. When students have completed this long process, they are graded on (1) how well the invention went, (2) how *real* the details were, (3) how well developed the structure was, (4) how well the sentences flowed, (5) how well the words were spelled, and (6) how neat the punctuation was, as if these six processes existed discretely, like motes of dust in a sunbeam.

On the other hand, consider how we normally communicate in writing. It usually is a two-step process. First, a situation arises which needs a written reply to resolve it: The bank sends us a note telling us we're overdrawn; our kid's teacher wants to test her for a speech impediment we know she doesn't have; a pastoral scene sets words dancing in our minds; a group of us decide to declare our independence from Great Britain. Second, we create texts *which will answer the demands of the situations*. An over-simplification, of course, but organizing communication in terms of situation and response will help us to understand it, and perhaps indicate where we have gone wrong in the assignments we create for students.

Consider the elements of the situation. First, there is no need for elaborate heuristics and discovery mechanisms in order to uncover a subject; the subject, indeed the substance of the communication, is inherent in the situation. Students, like us, don't have to figure out what to write about or even what to say; most of the time that's already apparent: They tell the bank, "I am not overdrawn"; they tell the teacher, "My child speaks very well." Second, because the audience is part of the situation, it does not need to be created or defined but addressed. With subject matter, content, and audience inherent in the situation, writers need only turn their minds to the meat of the problem: Finding and arranging arguments. Success in such a situation is determined by how the bank or teacher (or King George III) reacts — how well the writer has accomplished the rhetorical purpose generated by the situation.

One way out of the dilemma caused by disembodied assignments is to make them real. Ideally, teachers would put students in situations in which their success at writing is measured by success or failure in important tasks: Staving off financial ruin, keeping out of jail, getting or keeping a job, fomenting an insurrection. However, since these are not practical classroom activities, the second best approach is to use *cases* as the basis for assignments.

A *case* is a scenario which creates a situation requiring writing as a response to that situation. The situation is typically as real as possible with sometimes several pages of supporting information. In it the audience, the problem, the data, are all carefully laid out as they would be if the students were actually involved. The students study the material, and then produces the document called for by the events outlined in the case. The student's grade on the assignment is based on the effectiveness of the response to it. That is, the controlling question in grading is, "How well have the students met the rhetorical demands of the situation?" Since purpose, subject matter, and audience are inherent in the assignment, the discussion in class becomes not how to invent an audience, but how to address the one that is there; not what to say but how to say what is there to be said. The discussion also centers around what information is crucial, what can be summarized, and what can be

left out — around strategies of presentation rather than modes of discourse. In other words, writers can quit spending time on material unique to composition classes and can get to the heart of composition — arranging information in the best possible order for a particular purpose as they would in a normal, real world, rhetorical situation.

A natural consequence of a *case* approach is that assignments can neither be casually created nor casually given to a class. Since a *case* may have fifteen pages of supporting data and comprehensive directions for responding, some time must be spent on presenting the assignment to the class. The students must receive the information in enough time to assimilate and understand it — to become familiar with the situation and the problem. After students have a good grasp of the *case*, they need to walk through it with the teacher, making sure that they understand the sorts of things that need to be said and possible approaches to saying them. It is not at all unusual for consideration of a *case*, its background, and approaches to it, to take two or three class periods. Making up such assignments can be difficult; however there are texts available on the market that present *cases* ranging from two to seventeen pages long.

My experience has been that the *case* approach, routinely used in graduate and professional schools, works very well for introductory writing courses as well. The most frequent response to *cases* is that they are "easy to get into," meaning, I assume, that the students find a certain validity, or reality, in *cases* that they don't find in more traditional assignments.

Reading Theory and the Teaching of Writing

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More and more often today courses in composition and literature are taught by persons who possess considerable sophistication in literary and discourse theory. Other English courses are taught by members of the profession whose understanding of their mission is conservative and sometimes even hostile to some of the tenets of postmodern critical theory.

No matter where you stand on the theoretical spectrum, no matter how much you think curricula should be shaken up or tightened up, I hope you will imagine with me a student who hears in one course that texts are *indeterminate*, and that reading is a radically private activity wherein readers make meaning, and then moves to another course where it is announced that the meaning of *Paradise Lost* was intended by John Milton (who didn't like surprises) and that we can best find that meaning out by clearing our minds of preconceptions and letting the poem come to us. My hunch is that the student is less likely to be enchanted by the theoretical diversity of the Humanities than to decide that the English Departments have problems of coherence.

In response to these problems of coherence, I propose an introductory composition and literature course that uses a traditional anthology, requires such traditional kinds of writing as a library paper and interpretive essays on fiction, poetry and drama, and even employs traditional language for literary analysis. But this course is unlike traditional ones in that it abandons the notion that the text is an object with determinate meaning, and as a consequence, it avoids the simplified definitions that characterize introductory textbooks, definitions that deny our students crucial information about the nature and workings of language. To tell a student, as a best-selling anthology does, that "a literary symbol is something that means more than what it is," whereas "arbitrary symbols . . . have no meaning in and of themselves but . . . mean only something else, not something more than what they are," (Perrine, p. 128) is to "simplify" to the point of mystification. A course that assumes a theory of language as symbol, or a theory of determinate meaning, or no theory at all, does our profession a profound and dangerous disservice: It implies that the humanities stopped growing and changing and thinking years ago. The alternative I propose simplifies instructions, rather than concepts, to do one narrow thing well. Within the tradition, it confronts the problems of *indeterminacy*.

For *indeterminacy*, it seems to me, is the greatest problem encountered by members of the profession who wish to design a conceptually responsible introductory course in an environment that is sometimes hostile, always in flux, and, at the moment, under the worst possible economic conditions, involved in a struggle for survival. We experience the problem pedagogically: If meaning is *indeterminate*, what do we teach in composition and literature classes, what do we ask students to write about, and when they do write, what do we evaluate?

I wish to propose a course design that confronts these problems by modifying Wolfgang Iser's *The Act of Reading* (Iser, 1978) and thereby producing a plan for teaching students to raise their consciousness, become articulate about the process of reading itself, and to describe their own reading acts clearly and coherently to other readers. I choose Iser, above the other available theorists, because his model of the reading process describes interaction between text and reader. Thus he mediates between the extreme positions that, on the one hand, regard the text as an object, and, on the other, construe it as a stimulus. What you teach, in the course I propose, is first an account of what happens when you read, and second, a language in which to conduct literary analysis.

The terms or concepts in Iser's system — *repertoire, gap, wandering viewpoint, theme* and *horizon, consistency building* — are easy enough to explain to freshpersons, and they produce immediate and perceptible results in student discussion. *Repertoire* is Iser's word for all the extra-textual reality to which the text makes reference. My pedagogical strategy is to suggest to students that what may have seemed to them to be a distaste for English or an inability to "interpret" is explicable and treatable as ignorance of **repertoire.** To illustrate, I begin by assigning some ethnic short story from the department's anthology, one that explicitly and evocatively grounds itself in the experience of being a Jew or a Catholic or Black or a southerner. The key is to find a story with whose *repertoire* some students will and some will not be familiar. Philip Roth's **"Defender of the Faith"** is a good example; Frank O'Connor's **"First Confession,"** another. Students quickly see that unless they understand dietary laws or the necessary conditions for receiving the sacrament of penance, their response to character is not as rich as the response of some of their peers. They see, too, that the peers respond more fully, not because they're "better in English," but because they are Jews or Catholics or whatever.

Repertoire leads quickly to *gaps* — places where information

is not given to the reader. Some *gaps* are trivial — we do not know the color of Stephen Dedalus' eyes; others function significantly in literary analysis. We are not explicitly told the connection between Dante's threat that the eagles will pluck out Stephen's eyes and Stephen's unjust punishment for being without his glasses and the Prefect's pedestrian conversation which defines beauty as that which is pleasing to the senses. Students readily assent that we read by closing *gaps* like these, and class discussion can then begin with a list of *gaps* that the students themselves come to class prepared to articulate. Iser's notion that the text guides but does not control the readers' response makes his system readily adaptable to the traditional vocabulary of formal analysis. As one describes *gaps*, in other words, one can use traditional literary language — protagonist, antagonist, plotting, motivation, etc. The form of literary text — as perceived by the readers — establishes parameters within which readers make meaning.

But this is not to say that we *should* or *can* reduce a reception theory such as Iser's to formalism. A clear example of the difference can be seen by comparing Iser's conception of *wandering viewpoint* to the formalist notion of point of view. In Joyce's "Clay," for example, the anthologist's question, "What is the point of view in this story?" evokes the answer "third person limited omniscient." But it does not allow us to account for the ways in which the readers' sympathy constantly changes textual perspectives. If students can stipulate the moments in their reading when the viewpoint shifts — wanders from one character to another character, to the implied readers or even to the narration itself, then they are able to discuss irony with conceptual cogency.

Consistency building, the next important element of Iser's system, lends coherence to the discussion of poetry. As a process of reading, *consistency building* describes both the poem's referentiality and its rhetorical structure. *Consistency* exists, that is, between tenor and vehicle of a given metaphor and among the several image patterns of a given text. Class discussions of Roethke's **"I Know A Woman,"** for example, usually evoke "consistencies" involving grass-hay imagery, or motion-statis, or death-life oppositions. That discussion leads to the question of how these patterns themselves are consistent with the relationship that the poem describes.

Iser's description of the shifting structure of theme and horizon makes a useful overview, for it allows for student response at a higher level of generality than questions about individual strategies. I prefer to work with *theme* and *horizon* in the context of a relatively accessible play, like *Death of a Salesman*, so that students can perceive that a given *theme* is perceptible to them at a given reading moment only against the *horizon* of other perspective segments.

It's easy, and even fun, to talk to students about the reading process. Devising writing assignments that actually evoke the skills at issue, and evaluating them, are considerably harder. The orientation I propose emphasizes thesis as a personal reader's response to be stated clearly and documented. Clarity is measurable in the student's ability to use the language of traditional literary analysis and to name and employ the concepts in Iser's system. Documentation is understood as an enumeration of the clues in the text which guide the reader toward the production of the signified.

Since design of writing assignments is the single most important method of combining writing and reading pedagogies, it is appropriate to begin rather narrowly, asking students to close one *gap*. One might, for example, ask students to distinguish the perspectives of the grandfather and the narrator in **"Battle Royal,"** and then, with reference to one or two incidents in this excerpt from Ralph Ellison's *The Invisible Man,* stipulate the clues that suggest to them that one or the other is to be preferred.

An assignment on *repertoire* is an excellent correlate for library research, especially these days when students have read so little, because it allows the instructor to assign a text that ordinarily would be dismissed as too difficult. The assignment causes the student to experience the difference between *repertoire* and the formalist notion of setting, and to test one of Iser's most important and controversial assertions, that is that the text does not merely refer to its *repertoire,* but rather "defamiliarizes" it, forcing the reader to call into question the social, cultural, and literary norms that were in place at the time of the text's production. Obviously, readers need to determine what these norms would have to do with notions of Jesuit education and its techniques and its value contemporaneous with the writing of Joyce's *Portrait.* In order to prevent the reduction of *repertoire* to setting, it is helpful to ask students to list as many as possible of the clues in the text that point to its repertoire. In the *Portrait* example, such a list might include the elder Dedalus' native belief that a Jesuit education will help Stephen get a good job, the conversations between Stephen and the rector about vocations, and between Stephen and the Prefect of Studies about aesthetics. Considerable class time must be devoted to discussing the commonplaces that would implicitly ground the beliefs expressed by the characters. Here, research is crucial. Students find contemporary accounts of Jesuit education, or investigate the Society's own accounts of the importance of logic, etc. Thus informed, class discussion might produce the following generalization:

> *Many Irish Catholics at the turn of the century believed that Jesuit education was prestigious because Jesuits were highly intelligent men who were trained specifically to be teachers. Such education is an important force for training young people to behave morally and to become economically successful.*

Then, however, class discussion turns on the question of how the text makes that commonplace seem invalid. Here, students' responses are likely to be quite specific and personal. One might notice that Father Dolan punishes Stephen

unjustly, and that the Rector's handling of Stephen's complaint evades the issue of justice. Another might point out that the Prefect of Studies lacks a rudimentary understanding of Stephen's aesthetic, etc. The class as a whole sees the *repertoire* of a complicated text being called into question, while its individual members prepare personal articulations of the judgments they have been led, by this questioning, to make. My favorite response came from a young woman who actually researched the *Ratio Studiorum* and discovered that, when Father Dolan punishes Stephen in *"Book One,"* he violates no fewer than three rules for the conduct of discipline established by the order. This information allowed her to perceive several other instances of hypocrisy within the Society of Jesus and to produce a thoughtful essay on that aspect of Stephen's motivation for leaving the church.

What I like best about this assignment is that student research has as its object *information* rather than other professional interpretations of the text, whose assumptions they neither recognize nor understand. This kind of writing avoids a hodge-podge of half-understood conclusions and it demands a genuine encounter with the text.

In the **consistency-building**, poetry sections of the syllabus, it is appropriate to shift the writing emphasis to revision and to argument. In an in-class writing assignment on Roethke's **"I Knew a Woman,"** students are instructed to characterize the speaker, his beloved, and the nature of their relationships, on the basis of one or more consistencies they have found in the text. At the next class meeting, we analyze three short pieces of literary criticism reflecting three professional critics' readings of the poem. What occurs, of course, is that the students encounter in these professional essays other readings of the poem which are mutually exclusive and which call their own into question. Usually the discussions revolve around some issue on which the students want to achieve closure. Is she dead or did she leave him for another guy? Because they have a stake in the argument, having already written about it, they usually evince some interest in refuting the readings and comments of the professional critics or at least in looking carefully at the evidence adduced, and deciding on its condition of relevance. So argument techniques become important to them.

Alas, I know of no better way to teach *indeterminacy*. It is impossible to avoid the conclusion that both claim and grounds in these arguments are functions of readers' hypotheses, the readers' reading. Students have to see that the closure for which they so strongly argue is of their own making, the text is *indeterminate*.

They revise their essays. This time I encourage them to come up with a thesis about the *indeterminacy* itself and their response to it. This revision, then, is not just a matter of fixing comma splices and dangling modifiers but it is precisely a revision, a re-thinking in another conceptual context.

Finally, the last writing assignment, on drama, calls for a full-scale reading of a relatively uncomplicated text. Students are expected to use all of the critical and analytic vocabulary appropriately and consistently, and to produce a valid argument. Students might, for example, respond to Charley's assertion at the end of *Death of a Salesman* that "Nobody dast blame" Willy Loman, by stipulating the specific elements of the reading process which warrant their readings. It is helpful to form groups which focus on one specific element of reading. One group might attend to "the American Dream" as *repertoire* for *Death of a Salesman* and as rationale for finding Willy neither wholly blameless nor blameworthy. Another could work with "success" or "being well-liked" in the context of *theme* and *horizon*. Still another might look at how the readers' wandering viewpoint prevents *determinate* sympathy for any one character.

What distinguishes these writing assignments from traditional formal ones is the requirement that students stipulate and describe the reading process. Such requirements go far toward countering vagueness: Writers who *must* point to the moments when their sympathy shifts from Willy to Biff and back again cannot depend on *Masterplots*. By giving students a coherent account of what happens when they read, these assignments do tend to produce more critical readings of texts which have not been "taught."

The course I have just described is in many ways a beginning. It is an introduction to literature which provides instruction in literary analysis and, through *repertoire,* a very sophisticated technique for doing literary history; as such, it is coherent with traditional and non-traditional upper-division literature courses. It is an introduction to composition and to argument; as such it is coherent with advanced writing courses. It is an introduction to reading theory; as such it allows students to begin to perceive the theoretical reading spectrum. It is also, I like to think, a preliminary skirmish in the conceptual revolution that must occur in Humanities departments if they are to survive the current crisis.

A Course in Legal Literacy

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*Note: In his talk "Legal Literacy," delivered at the confer-
ence on Literacy in the 1980's, held in Ann Arbor in June,
1981, Professor James B. White described a course he
teaches students at The University of Chicago Law School.
An essay entitled "The Invisible Discourse of the Law: Re-
flections on Legal Literacy and General Education," upon
which Proessor White based his talk will appear in a volume
entitled Literacy in the 1980's to be published in 1982 as well
as in the Spring, 1982 issue of the Michigan Quarterly Re-
view. Fuller treatment of Professor White's ideas are found
in his book The Legal Imagination (Boston: Little Brown &
Co., 1973).*

*In the essay printed here Professor White describes how
high school and college teachers may include a study of
legal literacy in their reading and writing courses.*

It is obviously not possible to make high school seniors or
college freshpersons wholly competent in the language of
the law, for that is the work of a full-scale professional edu-
cation, indeed of a professional life. But I believe it is possi-
ble to offer such students a writing course which will in-
crease their competence at the kinds of writing and thinking
in which lawyers, judges and other public officials engage;
to make them fluent, not in law, but in the analogues to law
that can be found in their own lives. This in turn should
greatly increase their competence and confidence in the
various aspects of their lives in which law-like thinking can
be of value: In speaking at a public meeting, in working as
an official of a union, a club, or a school board, in protecting
their private interests (say as tenant or as landlord), and in
political life, indeed in arguing about justice and injustice in
any context.

The way such a course would work would be to ask the stu-
dents to think about the report on the aspects of their own
experience in which they worked (or failed to work) in what
I have called law-like ways. What I have in mind is some-
thing like the following: Suppose students were asked to
write a series of assignments about an aspect of their own
lives that was regulated by rules — say their athletic team,
or the school itself, or their apartment house, or their part-
time jobs. These rules could be examined from several dif-
ferent perspectives. First, for example, students might be
asked simply to reproduce the rules governing these parts of
their lives. (Without overtly burdening the students with the
knowledge, this assignment would raise sophisticated and
interesting questions about the nature of rules in their social
context, for example about the relation between written and
unwritten rules.) One might ask the students: "In what form
do these rules appear in the world? Are they written and

published, and if so, where? How do you know that these
rules apply to you? Are they all the rules, and if so how do
you know that? If the rules are not written and published,
how do you even know what the rules are? Why do you
suppose they are not written and published?" or: "What
exceptions are there to these rules, and how do you know?"
And so on. Similar questions could be raised about the re-
lationship between rules and authority: "Who promulgated
these rules, and upon what authority? How do you know?
What does it mean to have authority to promulgate rules of
this kind?" And so on.

The students could then be asked to talk about the ways in
which questions arising under their rules should be re-
solved. What problems of meaning do these rules present?
How should they be resolved, and by whom, acting under
what procedure? Perhaps here a teacher could reproduce
one or two sets of rules the students had provided, and think
up imagined situations where the application of the rules
would be problematic. (After one or two such assignments,
the students could be asked to do it themselves.) Students
could be presented with the difficulty of thinking in terms of
a system meant to operate with constant or consistent — or
at least apparently consistent — definitions over time: they
could be led to see that the way they resolve the meaning of
the rules in one case will have consequences for others.
Both their imaginative and sympathetic capacities could be
extended, and their idea of fairness made more complex.
They might begin to learn that in difficult cases the meaning
of the rules cannot be seen in the rules themselves but must
be found elsewhere: In the resources and equipment each of
them brings to thought and argument about the questions
the rules present. What is more, since these resources are
partly of their invention, it is right to ask how they can be
improved. Finally, depending on the particular system of
rules, this method may lead the students to think in terms of
procedures and competences: Why the judgment whether a
particular player is "trying hard" (as required by a rule) is a
matter for the coach, not for the players (or vice versa); why
the umpire's decision that a pitch is a strike or a ball must
(or must not) be final, and so on. Or students might consider
rules governing life in a cooperative apartment, and the pro-
cedures by which decisions should be made when there are
real differences of opinion about the necessity of roof repair,
the costs of heating, and so on.

Finally, students could be asked to draft rules of their own
devising, whether regulations or contractual provisions, and
submit them to collective criticism. This could be a real les-
son in the limits both of language and of the mind, as stu-
dents realize how little power they actually have to deter-

mine how their words will be given meaning by others, and how little they can imagine the future that their rules are intended to regulate.

All of this could be done with materials from students' own lives, without the use of legal terms or technicalities. It need not even be done in Standard English: Students' writing (or talking, if these assignments were done orally) should indeed reflect the way people actually speak in their own world. And one important lesson for us all might be the discovery that it is not only in the law, or only in the language of the white middle class, that community is constituted, or that argument about justice proceeds.

To do this with material from the students' own lives would tend to make the process seem natural and immediate, within their ordinary competence. But in the process they should be introduced to questions of extraordinary depth and sophistication: About the construction of social reality through language (as they define roles, voices, and characters in the dramas they report); about the definition of value (as they find themselves talking about privacy or integrity or truthfulness or cooperation); about the nature of reasoning (as they put forward one or another argument with the expectation that it cannot be answered, as they try to meet the argument of another, and so on); and about the necessarily cooperative nature of society (as they realize that whatever rules they promulgate can work only with the assistance of others and must work equally for all people and all cases); and so on. They might learn something of what it means that the law seeks always to limit the authority it creates. They might even come to see that the question, ''What is fair?'' should often include the qualifications ''under this set of rules, under these procedures, and under these particular circumstances.'' It might be a good thing at this stage to read as well some actual legal materials: A statute, a judicial opinion, a piece of a brief. If I am right in my expectations, after working on rules in their own lives the students would find this material more complex, more interesting, and more comprehensive — also perhaps more difficult — than before. This would itself be an important demonstration of legal literacy, and a direct manifestation of students' competence as educated citizens.

The law itself can be seen as a method of individual and collective self-education, a discipline in the acknowledgement of limits, in the recognition of others, and in the necessity of cooperation. It is a way in which we teach ourselves, over and over again, how little we can foresee, how much we depend upon others, how sound and wise are the practices we have inherited from the past. It is a way of creating a world in part by imagining what can be said on the other side. In these ways it is a lesson in humility. Of course a professional training is no guarantee of such an education — far from it — but it is not a prerequisite either. What I mean to suggest in this paper is that training in the analogues of law that are found in ordinary life, if done in the right way, can be a stage in such a development: That this kind of legal literacy may be a true part of general education.

Argumentative Writing: Persuasion or Inquiry?

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Note: *The conception of inquiry and concrete directions for writing argumentative papers aimed at inquiry presented in this essay are set forth in detail in Jack W. Meiland, College Thinking (New York: Mentor, 1981).*

Teachers of composition often assign argumentative papers to their students. Many composition texts have chapters on argumentative writing. I have even heard composition teachers say that argumentative writing is the most important type of writing to teach students. In addition to agreement on the importance of argumentative writing, there also seems to be general agreement about the aim of argumentative writing: The aim of argumentative writing, we are told, is to *persuade* the reader. Thus, Thomas Elliott Berry, in his very useful composition text *The Craft of Writing*, tells us: "Argument is basically an attempt to persuade or convince the reader to accept a particular viewpoint or conclusion. It presents the facts of a specific case in a manner that aims to lead the reader to accept the author's point of view" (Berry, p. 139). And in her helpful and widely used textbook *The Lively Art of Writing*, Lucile Vaughan Payne says: "The goal in any argument is identical to the goal in any essay — to win others to a particular point of view, to *persuade"* (Payne, p. 34).

If we teach our students argumentation to help them *persuade* others, how far should we go? As teachers, we should want our students to become as well-trained and effective as possible. It seems to follow that as teachers of persuasion we should want our students to learn to use whatever rhetorical devices will prove most persuasive. But, as Wayne Minnick rightly says in his *The Art of Persuasion*, "Persuasion, as it is practiced by some men, appears to other men merely as a clever form of duplicity . . . . Thus teachers of persuasion, in every age, have had to grapple with the question: Are all of the available means of persuasion fit for decent men to use? . . ." (Minnick, pp. 276-277). Composition textbooks give us concrete illustrations of this problem. For example, Lucile Vaughan Payne tells our students: "Never develop a *con* point as fully as you develop a *pro* point . . . . Never allow an opposing point of view to appear stronger than your own . . . (Payne, pp. 49-50). But what should the student do if an opposing point of view is stronger than the student's own?

Not many writers of composition texts — "teachers of persuasion" — worry about questions like this. One who does is Robert C. Pinckert, whose recently-published *The Truth About English*, is billed by the publisher as "the most straightforward, useful, and common-sensical book on the English language to come along in years." Be that as it may, it is clear that Pinckert does not shirk some difficult questions: "Is a good speech, a good ad, a good argument the one that succeeds or the one that tells the truth? Should those who teach rhetoric tell their students not to lie or tell them the truth about lying? That's a good question because I don't know," (Pinckert, p. 179).

Another question connected with these problems of ethics in persuasion but perhaps even more fundamental is this: How is the student to select the position or point of view which he or she is then to persuade others to adopt? I would suppose that we, as *ethical* teachers, want our students to select the position or point of view which *is* the strongest, in order to avoid misleading the reader into thinking that the weaker case is the stronger. So, the activity of finding out which position is the strongest position — which position is most worthy of our belief — is prior to and more fundamental than the task of presenting this position persuasively to the reader. I will use the name *inquiry* for the activity of finding out which position is most worthy of our belief.

This activity of *inquiry* is carried out through argumentation. The position which is most worthy of our belief is the position best supported by good reasons for believing. And these reasons take the form of arguments. An argument is a reason for believing a position on a topic or question. The best reasons or arguments are those which not only give plausibility to the position but which also withstand the test of objections by generating strong replies to those objections.

I suggest, then, that we composition teachers must teach *inquiry* to our students and that argumentative papers may have *inquiry* as their aim. I am not denying that persuasion is a legitimate purpose of an argumentative paper. I am only claiming that *inquiry* is also a legitimate purpose of such a paper. I am also claiming that *inquiry* must occur first in order for subsequent persuasion to be ethically correct, since it is unethical to try to persuade someone of any position except that which the persuader believes on good grounds to be the strongest.

There are concrete, easily recognizable differences between these two types of argumentative papers. We have seen that in a persuasion paper it may be most effective to slight and downplay objections to one's position. But in an *inquiry* paper, one must raise and discuss the strongest objections in

elaborate detail to give one's positions and arguments the most severe tests. A second difference is this: The writer of a persuasive paper presents and sticks to a position, come what may; but is is acceptable to end an *inquiry* paper inconclusively as between two positions, since it might be found that both positions are supported by equally strong reasons.

Finally, it is possible that ultimately the distinction between inquiry papers and persuasive papers disappears. If our aim is *ethically correct* persuasion, perhaps the most persuasive paper is an *inquiry* paper which shows a particular position to be supported by the best reasons.