

velop harmoniously. The moment I gave him full liberty and stopped teaching him, he wrote a poetical production, the like of which cannot be found in Russian literature. Therefore, it is my conviction that we cannot teach children in general, and peasant children in particular, to write and compose. All that we can do is to teach them how to go about writing.

We cannot teach children to compose; all we can do is to teach them how to go about writing. This is another paradox, and I'd like to see what I can do to make sense out of it.

Now in working on the Tolstoy Paradox, I do not choose to read these passages as celebrations of natural innocence, where a good assignment replaces "teacher-sponsored writing, with "student-sponsored" writing, freeing a student from the fetters of an oppressive culture.

Tolstoy's own accounts of his "method" show him getting in his students' way more than his narrative would lead one to believe. The prime consideration, he says, in designing a sequence of "themes" should not be length or content but "the working out of the matter." And this, the working out of the matter, was the occasion for teaching.

At first I chose from the ideas and images that presented themselves to them such as I considered best, and retained them, and pointed out the place, and consulted with what had already been written, keeping them from repetitions, and myself wrote, leaving to them only the clothing of the images and ideas in words; then I allowed them to make their own choice, and later to consult that which had been written down, until, at last, ...they took the whole matter into their own hands (Tolstoy, p.224).

When Tolstoy talks about choosing, selecting, preserving and remembering, he is not talking about "natural" acts but a system that is imposed. He, and the text

he has in mind, allow for certain choices. The procedure must be learned.

Derrida has taught us that the Rousseauesque notions of a "natural" language are all symptoms of a longing for a perfect relation between the word and the thing it is meant to signify for a language that gives us direct access to the truth, without the mediation of the stuff and baggage of a culture, for a form of understanding that represents data raw and not cooked, for a mode of composition in which thinking and writing do not interfere with each other. What comes before speech, he argues, is writing, that conventional system, discourse, that inscribes us as we inscribe it. There is, then, no natural or pure language because the language we use always precedes us, belongs to others, and it, and not the writer, determines what is written. The writer does not write but is rather written, composed by systems he did not invent and he cannot escape. Our language is derived, "stolen," never original. The celebration of innocence, Derrida argues, is not a denial of teaching but a denial of writing.

But Tolstoy, in his rejection of education, does not reject writing, even though he feels the burden of the role of the teacher. In fact, in a telling passage, he says that after the episode with the proverb he felt not just joy, but dread--

Dread, because this art made new demands, a whole new world of desires, which stood in no relation to the surroundings of these pupils, as I thought first.

This is the Tolstoy that gives his student "material." All they need of me, he says, is material--not pencils and paper, not subjects, but the material (as in fabric) that is woven with the habits, discriminations, preconceptions--the "stuff" of his material, that is, textual, culture. It is exclusive. It privileges some statements at the expense of others. It is driven by a law of exclusion--this then fits, that, "the world of his pupils," does not. At one point, one

child in a "fatigued, calmly serious and habitual" voice comments on his text. Tolstoy says, "The chief quality of any art, the feeling of limit, was developed in him to an extraordinary degree. He writhed at the suggestion of any superfluous feature, made by some one of the boys."

Let me put my cards on the table, and explain why I want to read Tolstoy this way. I think a good assignment teaches by interfering. It interferes with a student and his writing, but more of this later.

Tolstoy's "method"--the method that does not teach composing but how to go about writing--could be seen to be in service of what we now comfortably call the "Process" approach to composition instruction. If the act of composing is beyond a teacher's art, it is a natural or mysterious facility, then a teacher can at least attend to the behavior of composing--to the business of prewriting, revising, and editing. This is how I take the pedagogies of the "new rhetoric." The tagmemics, the pentads, the classroom heuristics--all these are devices that precede writing. They are not part of a project. The nine-fold grid may give a new perspective on, say a tree (and the metaphor of vision is telling) but it does not give a language. What happens to the student when he begins to write, when he locates himself in a discourse, is that he is caught up in all those available phrases about nature, and ecology and the pastoral world that turn his "vision" into an occasion for cliché.

Don't get me wrong. Writing is a behavior and a good set of assignments teaches a student to understand this--to experiment with varieties of planning activities, to take time with his writing, to revise (often for the first time) by reworking and not just recopying a text, and to edit, to make corrections. I'll confess, however, that I think most of the attention to pre-writing is a waste of time, unless pre-writing is, in fact, the first act of writing--in Tolstoy's terms--the first "working art of the matter." Most pre-writing activities, how-

ever, treat "ideas" as though they existed independently of language, of the sentences that enact them. And, in my experience, students treat these exercises the way they used to treat outlining; they either do them after they have written the paper, or they do them and then go about writing the paper the same damn way they have always written--starting at the top, working to the bottom and then handing it in for a grade.

Let me go back to Ann Berthoff. Here is what she says about Tolstoy and his teaching:

Nothing is needed more urgently in the current reassessment of what we think we have been doing in teaching composition than a critical inquiry into this concept of the simultaneity of thinking and writing, of the role of consciousness in composing. Tolstoy's description here is a useful point of departure for that inquiry because it reminds us that composing is both creative and critical and that it is an act of mind; it doesn't just happen; it is conscious (Berthoff, p.89).

This consciousness is critical consciousness, not consciousness as it is represented by classroom heuristics. It is rooted in an act of reading. She says, elsewhere in her book, that "writing can't teach writing unless it is understood as a nonlinear, dialectical process in which the writer continually circles back, reviewing and rewriting: certainly the way to learn to do that is to practice doing just that" (Berthoff, p.3). The key words here are "reviewing" and "dialectical," and they are difficult words to understand. Let me try to put them into the context of assignment making.

I'm concerned now with that version of "thinking" which is textual, not mental, since it involves reading and interpretation ("reviewing") and a use of language in service of dialectic. Here's an assignment: It was given to me by a teacher at a school I visited as a consultant.

Pick a poem that you like. Discuss why you like it by analyzing its features rather than defending your response. Think before you write so that you produce a coherent and well-organized essay.

This is the sort of assignment that most likely will prove the law of reciprocity--what you ask for is what you'll get. It's poorly written and demonstrates, more than anything else, a teacher's boredom and inattention, and it would be the exceptional student who would make anything of it other than the occasion for poor writing and inattention. There is no indication of how or why the fact that one likes a poem is dependent on an "analysis of its features." Nor is there any clue as to what it means to "discuss" while at the same time not "defending a response." The final sentence, "Think before you write so that you produce a coherent and well organized essay," is a not-quite-so-polite way of saying, "Please do a decent job of this" and it finesses the whole question of how "thinking before writing" (making an outline? getting one's thoughts together?) leads to a "coherent, well organized essay." There is, however, a rhetoric at work here--the rhetoric of the controlling idea in service of what seems to be an act of new criticism--but the demonstration that Tolstoy provided, the way he assisted students in a project he had begun--and it was his project, belonging to his culture--this assistance is missing. The word "analyze," for instance, exists as an invocation, a magic word calling up powers to possess the student. It does not belong to the vocabulary shared between teachers and students; it does not, in fact, belong to the vocabulary shared between teachers in different academic departments. It presumes to tell students to do what they cannot know how to do--and that is to carry out an act of analysis as it is represented by the conventions of the discourse of a certain form of literary criticism.

Our assignments are often studded with such words--think, analyze, define, describe, argue. These words, however, are located in a very specialized discourse.

Analysis, for example, is a very different activity--its textual forms, that is, vary greatly--in an English course, a history course, a sociology course or a chemistry course. When we use such words, we are asking students to invent our disciplines, to take on the burden of the mindset of our peculiar pocket of the academic community. This is not a bad thing to do, even though it is cause for dread as well as joy. It is why, for me, a good set of assignments leads a class to invent a discipline, a set of specialized terms (a jargon) and a subject with its own privileged materials and interpretative scheme.

Because writing--or writing that is not report or debate--is the invention of such a project, writing is also, as we are fond of saying, a mode of learning, where learning is a matter of learning to use the specialized vocabulary and interpretative schemes of the various disciplines. To learn sociology--and to learn it as an activity, as something other than a set of names and canonical interpretations--is to learn to write like a sociologist, for better or for worse. Students cannot do this, however, without assistance, since the conventions that govern a rhetoric do not "naturally" belong to the mind, the heart, reason, or the soul. Reason, in fact, is not an operative term if one begins with a conception of rhetoric. It is metaphor, a way of authorizing one discourse over another, but it is not a descriptive term.

Here is a sequence of assignments that offers more by way of assistance in the "working out of the matter." It comes from a course in 19th century fiction.

Bleak House

I. In order to prepare a paper on the narrative in Bleak House, I'd like you to do the following:

- 1) Locate two passages that, as you read them, best characterized the voice and perspective of Esther Summerson as she tells the story. Write them out.
- 2) Locate two passages that, as you read them, best characterize the voice and perspective of the other, the unnamed narrator. Write them

out. Working primarily from one passage for each narrator, write a paper that compares the way they see the world of Bleak House and the way they tell a story. Be sure to look at sentences as well as sentiments; that is, pay attention to language each uses to locate a perspective and a world.

Then, when you've done this, go on to speculate about how the presence of two narrators controls your reading of the story.

II. I'd like you to look, now, at the first and last chapters. Who gets the first word and who gets the last word and the difference it makes. What difference does it make, that is, to you and your attempt to make sense out of the novel?

III. Here is a passage from an essay by J. Hillas Miller. In it, he offers one account for the effect on a reader of the presence of the two narrators. I'd like you to write a paper that talks about the way his reading is different from yours, and about what difference the difference makes to you. Be sure, again, to talk about sentences as well as sentiments. What, for example, does Miller notice that you didn't? And what did you notice that he leaves out? What special terms does he use that you don't. What difference do they make?

IV. On the basis of these 3 papers, write an essay to help us better understand narrative technique in Bleak House. Don't feel you have to settle the question once and for all. Remember, that is, that the rest of us are working on this problem too, and that we're looking for your help. We're not beginners and we have a lot invested in our own projects.

Often any such assistance is at odds with the peculiar rhetoric of the composition class, with its obsessive concern for the thesis, the controlling idea. When, for example, we ask students to write about texts, the tyranny of the thesis often invalidates the very act of analysis we hope to invoke. Hence, in assignment after assignment, we find students asked to reduce a novel, a poem or their own experience into a single sentence, and then to use the act of writing in order to defend or "support" that single sentence. Writing is used to close a subject down rather than to open it up, to put an end to discourse rather than to open up a project. This, I think, is the

rhetoric that is "natural" to our students. If English teachers can have any effect on students' writing, it should be to counter this tendency. To interfere with it.

The term "interference" comes to me from Kenneth Burke, whose writing I admire for the way it enacts a constant dissatisfaction with the thesis. Burke's rhetoric is in service of a form of knowledge that is not equated with certainty. His sense of a dialectical use of language is a use of language that allows the writer not only to translate "reality"--the subject that is only a thing to be written about--but also to transcend the conventional and often oppressive gestures built into the history of our language, to transcend, then, the inevitable reduction caused by writing. Burke says

We would only say that, over and above all, there is implicit in language itself, the act of persuasion (that domination or closing down of a subject); and implicit in the perpetuating of persuasion, there is the need for interference. For persuasion that succeeds, dies.

Burke, then, brings me to my last principle of assignment making. A good set of assignments assists students toward a subject by interfering with their immediate procedures for dominating a subject by reducing it to a closed set. Edward Said, whose words stood at the beginning of this talk, said that writing requires the writer to maintain an "obligation" to "practical reality" and a "sympathetic imagination" in equally strong parts. By obligation, he means

the precision with which the concrete circumstances of any undertaking oblige the mind to take them into account--the obligation not just passively to continue, but the obligation to begin by learning, first, that there is no schematic method that makes all things simple, then second, whatever with reference to one's circumstances is necessary in order to begin, given one's field of study.

And by "sympathetic imagination," he means

that to begin to write is to "know" what at the outset cannot be known except by inventing it, exactly, intentionally, autodidactically (Said, p. 349).

I have been offering a defense of a sequence of related and redundant assignments, assignments that define both a project and a way of working on a project, assignments that are designed to enact for students that there is no schematic method to make all things simple. And I have been arguing that an intellectual project requires indoctrination, assistance, interference, and trust.

Let me conclude with a passage from the poet, William Stafford.

A writer is not so much someone who has something to say as he is someone who has found a process that will bring about new things he would not have thought of if he had not started to say them. That is, he does not draw upon a reservoir; instead he engages in an activity that brings to him a whole succession of unforeseen stories, poems, essays, plays, laws, philosophies, religions, or—but wait!

Back in school, from the first when I began to try to write things, I felt this richness. One thing would lead to another; the world would give and give. Now, after twenty years or so of trying, I live by that certain richness, an idea hard to pin, difficult to say, and perhaps offensive to some.

A sequence of assignments is repetitive. It asks students to write, again, about something they wrote about before. But such a project allows for richness; it allows for the imagination that one thing can lead to another, that the world can give and give. This is an idea hard to pin, difficult to say, and, perhaps, offensive to some.

Our students have come to us, however, to learn. It is not enough to say to them

that knowledge is whatever comes to mind. If we have them write one week on Democracy, and the next on Pollution and the week later on My Most Memorable Character, that is what we are saying to them. Tell me what comes to mind. The writing that I value, that demands something of me as a reader, that turns back on whatever comes quickly to mind, requires repeated and on-going effort. Students need to work at finding something to say. They have to spend time with a subject. That, to me, is what it means to be a writer at a university.

REFERENCES

- Berthoff, Ann. The Making of Meaning. Montclair, N.J.: Boynton/Cook Publishers, Inc., 1981.
- Burke, Kenneth. A Rhetoric of Motives. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969.
- Dowst, Kenneth. "The Epistemic Approach: Writing, Knowing and Learning," in T. R. Donovan and B. W. McClelland (Eds.), Eight Approaches to Teaching Composition. Urbana, Illinois: NCTE, 1980.
- Kernode, Frank. The Genesis of Secrecy. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979.
- Said, Edward. Beginnings: Intention and Method. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978.
- Tolstoy, Leo. Tolstoy on Education, Leo Weiner (Trans.) Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967.

Autonomy, Intimacy, and the Teaching of Writing¹

Jeffrey E. Evans
Residential College
The University of Michigan

My discipline is clinical psychology, and for the past two years I have taught a freshman seminar² entitled In the First Person which introduces students to ways of thinking about young adult development by asking them to read and write about autobiographical texts, most of which are written by other college students. Two anthologies of first-person student writings I have used in the course are Peter Madison's Personal-ity Development in College, and George Goethals and Dennis Klos' Experiencing Youth: First-Person Accounts.

Both the structure and content of In the First Person are shaped by my conviction that everything we do as teachers has an impact on students' personal as well as their intellectual development--on their growing capacities for autonomous action and expression and for intimate involvement with others. My conviction is based on the following assumptions about young adult development and about the significance of the role of the teacher:

(1) Autonomy and intimacy are life concerns of special importance to university students, particularly since attending

¹For discussion which led to the ideas in this paper, I would like to thank Jane Hassinger, Judy Kirscht, Harold Korn, Jean Long, Marvin Parnes, John Reiff, and my colleagues at the NEH/Beaver College Institute, 1981. Thanks also to my Freshman Seminar students.

²Freshman Seminar is a required one-semester course which combines instruction in English composition with the study of introductory-level material in a discipline in the Residential College at The University of Michigan.

college is a culturally sanctioned step toward social and economic independence.³

(2) The role of the teacher in a student's development is as a conveyor of knowledge, skills, and an approach to scholarly work. As a significant adult who is not the student's parent, the teacher influences students' inevitable changes in their relationships with parents, and the development of their relationships with peers, through the activities and approaches toward learning which he or she requires.⁴

(3) Teachers contribute to students' developing definitions of the nature of intellectual work and scholarship. They can reinforce isolation or collaboration, competition or cooperation, anxiety or exhilaration in students' developing conceptions of these activities.

(4) Learning to write is paradigmatic of student's developmental relationship to

³In Chapter 7 of Childhood and Society, Erik Erikson presents a list of critical life concerns which emerge at successive stages of development from infancy to old age. While, as Erikson shows, the concern with autonomy begins in early childhood, the college situation gives it a special urgency as students are confronted with the necessity for sustained individual effort in the midst of unusual opportunities and pressures to socialize. According to Erikson, intimacy arises as a concern during adolescence.

⁴For a discussion of various dimensions of the teacher's role see Joseph Adelson, "The Teacher as Model," in Nevitt Sanford, Ed., The American College. See also Nevitt Sanford, "The Developmental Status of the Entering Freshman" in the same volume.

the collegiate curriculum because, more obviously than many other kinds of learning, its emphasis on skill development and on communication provides a concrete analogue to their concerns with autonomy and intimacy. Successful writing instruction requires the teacher and student consistently to evaluate the development of the student's thought processes, attitudes towards course material, and ability to communicate his or her understanding to others.

In this essay, I describe three practical techniques for teaching writing that grow out of the beliefs and assumptions outlined above, and I suggest their developmental force for students as persons as well as for students as writers. As I have said, the task of writing stimulates concerns with autonomy and with intimacy in the student: During the initial stages of composing-- collecting ideas in a journal, freewriting, focusing upon expression rather than communication--students are most profitably concerned with autonomous activity. Yet, in those initial stages students are also concerned with communicating in their own voices to an imagined audience, a process of self-revealing, or intimacy. Later stages of composing--organizing and polishing--require students to communicate in effective voices to a real audience, and to address that audience's ignorance of what the writers have to say, in other words to achieve intimacy. Later stages of writing also require students' autonomy--their self-assurance and competence as writers who would give precise shape to the messages they wish to express. As they compose, student writers must learn to balance internally the needs for autonomy and for intimacy so that the impulse behind each concern can be

satisfied and harnessed to produce effective writing.

In this balancing, it is important first for learners to separate initial from later stages of composing, and contemporary composition theorists help with that distinction. In Writing Without Teachers, Peter Elbow exhorts us to separate the process of creation from that of editing. Trying to do both at once, a practice typical of students who write their papers the night before they are due, is, as Elbow says, like trying to drive with the brakes on. The advantage of Elbow's advice is that it makes legitimate a stage of writing during which ideas are collected and thought through on paper, when organization and polish can be temporarily forgotten. It invites students to experience the particular satisfaction of improvisation and to separate it from the subsequent satisfaction of shaping ideas and perfecting language. The key to getting students to follow Elbow's direction is to require them to do so, to require that they keep a journal of ideas and to give them class time to write in it. Students have told me repeatedly that the requirement of a journal introduced them to a useful and satisfying tool; in some cases students have continued to use the journal on their own long after our class was over. Of course, simply assigning a journal is not the same as teaching students to improvise--to collect and manipulate ideas. That is another matter which must be handled in another way.

The following technique encourages an experimental attitude toward the task of gathering material. It is designed to give students a sense of control over the mysterious process of "getting started"

and "knowing what to say."

Technique 1: 5-Card Draw⁵

I have used Card Draw to introduce assignments such as this one: "Write a 3- to 5-page paper in which you take a position on an issue in human relations that is related to our class discussions and readings or to your own life"; or one from my Senior Seminar which requires students to research the life of a famous person--F. Scott Fitzgerald, Woody Guthrie, Fritz Perls--and to begin a lengthy psychological case study. The materials for 5-card Draw are five 3x5 file cards per student. Cards are handed out one at a time with the following instructions:

Card 1: Write at the top of your card: "One thing I might like to write about in my paper is..." (When they have all written that one-sentence statement, have them continue with), "My thoughts on it now are...." (After they have finished writing have them look back over the card and underline details that seem interesting.)

Card 2: List the details you underlined on Card 1, in the form of statements.

Card 3: Choose one statement from Card 2, write it at the top of Card 3, and expand upon it. (After they have finished, have them summarize Card 3 in one sentence.)

Card 4: Form the negative of the statement at the top of Card 3, write it at the top of Card 4, and expand upon it as if you believed it.

Card 5: Put the last sentence on Card 4 in the form of a statement, write it at the top of Card 5, and expand upon it.

5-Card Draw can convince students that they have more to say on a topic than they first think they do, that they have something to say even before they have researched the topic, and that they are ultimately capable of more complex ideas than they can imagine about a topic at first. And they might be further convinced that what they have to say is worth revising and polishing before it is "handed in." Clearly, the number of cards used and the instructions are bounded only by time and imagination.

The generation and manipulation of ideas in writing which this exercise provides for is one way of teaching students that writing advances thinking. In the same way, writing can also help students interpret primary texts as they explore their reactions to material and discover what seems worth communicating to others.

In my Freshman Seminar, "In the First Person," I require students to evaluate their many complex and contradictory reactions as they learn to interpret the thoughts, feelings, and motives of young adults from autobiographical accounts they read. As students learn to evaluate and to interpret, the instructor is crucial in two ways:

(1) In helping students gain and use psychological knowledge to make inferences about human personality and development.

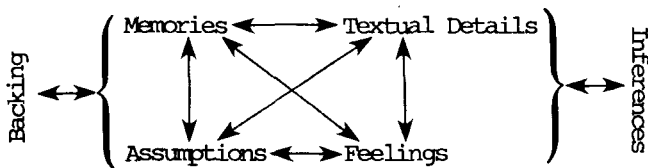
(2) In validating those processes of inference which students bring to class from their prior formal and informal learning.

Students' interest in psychology is grounded in inferences they have already made about themselves and others in their life-long activity of organizing and making sense of the social world. To build upon students' native interest requires instructors to help them evaluate what they already believe in the light of what others--experts and peers--also believe.

⁵I was first introduced to this technique by Professor Gerald Belcher, an historian at Beaver College.

Technique 2: Writing and Thinking

The diagram below is intended to instruct students about the logical and psychological status of their own and others' interpretations. It helps them sort out the inferences they make about the lives we study in class and to recognize the data, or evidence, on which those inferences are based. A major task for beginning students is to evaluate the extent to which an inference is based on their own experience and the extent to which it is based on the details of the text. The diagram helps students write and think about the sources of their inferences.⁶



The diagram shows that the sources of the inferences we make about others--about their thoughts, feelings, motivations--can result from our own feelings and memories, from our assumptions about the way the world works, and from the details of the text. Each of those sources of evidence receives support, or backing, from our own experience, from the avowals of others (consensus), and from the opinions of experts, including those who formulate psychological theory. Furthermore, as the double arrows indicate, each category influences every other category. For example, just as our assump-

tions about life influence our selection of relevant details of a text, so our assumptions are influenced by unexpected and convincing details of a particular life.

With the aid of this diagram, I give writing assignments which ask students to separate their inferences from the evidence for those inferences, and to write about both how they evaluate the life they are studying and why they evaluate it as they do. A typical beginning assignment is to have students divide a notebook page into two columns labeled "Details" and "Reactions." As they are reading a first-person account they are to note their reactions to the account and to cite the specific details of the text which led to that reaction. They are then asked to write about why that detail led to that particular reaction and what that reaction leads them to infer about the person who wrote the account. For example, while reading the case of Cindy (Goethals and Klos, pp. 28-41), a student noticed that she was reacting with anger toward Cindy and that her anger correlated with details of the text in which Cindy describes conducting her personal life in accordance with her mother's wishes (for example, breaking up with boyfriends at her mother's suggestion). The student's feeling reaction was influenced by memories of struggles with her own mother and by her assumption (backed by many other students in the class) that Cindy was old enough to make up her own mind about whom to date. The inference which resulted from these sources of evidence was that Cindy was in a relationship of destructive dependency with her mother.

Another typical writing assignment asks students to explore a general assumption such as the one above that asserts that someone Cindy's age should be old enough to make his or her own decisions about dating. In a class of young adults in which the topic is young adult development, such assignments lead to lively debate and learning that advances social as well as intellectual development.

⁶I developed and modified this diagram based upon students' reports of their own experiences reading autobiographical materials.

Technique 3: Coherence, Glossing, and Glue⁷

The final technique teaches students to analyze their writing closely for coherence by requiring them to detect cohesive devices in each other's work that bind together sentences and paragraphs. Having students comment on each other's writing introduces cooperation in intellectual work that students in my classes have carried outside of class and into other learning situations. In addition, the experience of critically reading each other's writing facilitates their growing ability to criticize their own work.

For this exercise, students trade papers and are instructed to divide a notebook page into two columns, labeled "Main Ideas" and "Glue." Beginning with the first paragraph of the paper they are analyzing, students are instructed to abstract each sentence into its essential idea or ideas, then to number the ideas by the sentence in which they occur, and finally to list them in the first column. In the second column, students list the cohesive devices (glue) that make each pair of sentences cohere. A few sentences from a freshman student paper and their analysis by another student are presented below. (The woman referred to in the example, Anne Moody, was a sharecropper's daughter who became a civil rights activist and wrote the autobiographical Coming of Age in Mississippi.)

(s1) Anne Moody was influenced greatly by her mother, whether she knew it or not.

(s2) She was also influenced by her social situations which were enforced, often unconsciously, by her mother.

(s3) One of the most prominent aspects of this comes in the form of the social rules and distinctions that both the Blacks and Whites were expected to follow.

(s4) One of the more outstanding distinctions was that of the interrelations between Blacks and Whites.

⁷I have adapted this technique from ideas presented by Ann Bertoff during her visit to the English Composition Board, September 29-30, 1981.

	<u>Main Ideas</u>	<u>Glue</u>
s1	Mother influenced Anne.	Repetition of idea of influence and of mother's involvement.
s2	Social situation influenced Anne; mother reinforced it.	General to specific: Social rules as instance of social situation.
s3	Social rules for Blacks & Whites as an example.	Specific to more specific: Rules of interaction as instance of social rules.
s4	Rules of relationship between Blacks & Whites	

This example, illustrating as it does the identification of "repetition" and movement from "general to specific" as cohesion for this text, advances an hypothesis about the author's thought process and can provoke a discussion which ultimately facilitates the process of revision. In such a discussion students are also instructed to judge the value for the author's intent of the cohesive devices he or she has used. Thus, Technique 3 advances students' skills of constructive criticism and of collaboration as it focusses on devices--ideational or linguistic--that affect the clarity of the author's message. In addition, it demonstrates a connection between learning to write and learning to read that can be applied across the curriculum.

The teaching of writing is a paradigm for diverse processes of instruction as it raises life concerns typical to the development of young adults. The central concerns with autonomy and intimacy are addressed by each of the techniques explained above as they (1) encourage students to exercise and reflect upon what they already know about the social world; (2) develop competencies by imparting new knowledge and skills in a way that makes sense to students in terms of their prior learning; (3) create an intellectual and social environment in the classroom in which students can develop trust in their own capacities and

in each other through exchanging ideas and helping each other learn.

REFERENCES

Elbow, Peter, Writing Without Teachers, New York: Oxford University Press, 1973.

Describes a developmental process for writing and a method of learning to write without a teacher. Elbow advocates that groups of interested writers work together, critiquing each other's work.

Erikson, Erik H., Childhood and Society, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1963.

Cast against the backdrop of Freud's theory of psychosexual development, this classic describes, through rich case examples, the contribution of cultural forces and social structures to human development.

Goethals, George W. and Klos, Dennis S., Experiencing Youth: First-Person Accounts, Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1976.

An anthology of short, autobiographical writings by college students, organized into cases which concern autonomy, identity, and sexual intimacy. The cases are also selected to illustrate various theoretical approaches in psychology: psychoanalytic, interpersonal, psychosocial, phenomenological, and object-relational. The authors present very little analysis of the cases; rather they juxtapose the primary texts with brief synopses of the theories. The theoretical sections are well-referenced.

Madison, Peter, Personality Development in College, Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1969.

An anthology of autobiographical writings by college students, with analysis according to the author's theory of "reintegration." That analysis stresses how the student's reactions to college are dominated by his or her precollege personality.

Moody, Anne, Coming of Age in Mississippi, New York: Dell Publishing Company, Inc., 1968.

The autobiography of a Black sharecropper's daughter who became an activist during the height of the Civil Rights Movement. The story is told with emotional force and with detail that lends itself to psychological and cultural analysis.

Sanford, Nevitt (Ed.), The American College, New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1962.

A classic collection of articles on higher education organized into sections on The Entering Student, Academic Procedures, Student Society and Student Culture, Student Performance in Relation to Educational Objectives, Interaction of Students and Educators, The Effects of College Education, and Higher Education and the Social Context. The article by Joseph Adelson, The Teacher as Model, discusses the concept of identification in this context, typical reactions of students to their teachers, and the characteristics of the good teacher. The article by Nevitt Sanford, Developmental Status of the Entering Freshman, describes freshmen in terms of statistics, stage of development, and the situation they face as they enter college. It also discusses college as a stimulus to development.

Folklore and/of the Research Paper

Helen Isaacson
English Composition Board
The University of Michigan

When I first began to teach folklore I had already been teaching writing for a long time. I had become aware that there had taken shape in the composition classroom what folklorists call a monster legend. A group of stories, rumors, and beliefs had developed and clustered around that piece of writing usually assigned by composition teachers as the final project of the semester: the research paper.

Students envisioned this final effort as monstrously large: four or five times the size of an ordinary paper; as terrifying: it could determine the final grade; as supernatural: humans had better learn the proper magical formulas--"Single-space within the footnote, double-space between the notes"--if they wished to survive. Above all, it was mysterious: What was the meaning, the purpose, the very nature of the Thing called Research?

Research becomes less fantastical if we examine how researchers in a particular discipline work. I ask the members of my folklore class not only to read about what folklorists do, but also to become folklorists, to conduct original research in the field.

My students collect items of folklore from "informants" or "tradition bearers"--friends, family members, colleagues, or strangers who have some lore to pass on. The lore can be stories, songs, jokes, riddles, beliefs, customs, or any of the long list of items that interest folklorists. As collectors, students use a variety of techniques and sources to learn as much as possible about the function and context of the lore. They have collected such wide-ranging materials as: "Haunted House Tales," "Pregnancy Lore," "College Pranks," "Theater Folklore," "Traditional German Recipes Spanning Four Genera-

tions," "Cures for the Common Cold," "Superstitious of Athletes," and "Place Legends of Ann Arbor's Arboretum." This collection project enables students to learn about research as they engage in the complex of thinking/inventing/investigating/writing activities that comprise the research process.

Students begin the process by choosing a topic, which I ask them to discuss with me to ensure that the project has a reasonable scope and a clear purpose. Often a student has a personal reason for selecting a subject: "I want to learn how and why the religious beliefs of my family have changed over four generations," or, "I want to understand a very strange series of occurrences that made certain members of my family conclude we might be living in a haunted house." From his or her statement of purpose, the student researcher develops a series of questions and one or more hypotheses. These questions and suppositions determine the particular research to be done. For example, the student who wished to understand her family's religious views decided to interview family members about how they celebrated or remembered they used to celebrate the religious holiday of Passover. As the research progresses, students' questions or hypotheses may change, be added to or discarded. The student whose house was the scene of extraordinary events speculated at one point that her home might have been disrupted by a poltergeist.

At any stage in their investigations students may discover they need information from secondary sources. I suggest that before beginning their fieldwork they read background material on their subject in order to feel more confident and be more competent to do their observing and interviewing; check a fieldwork hand-

book¹ to help them develop a set of questions and a plan for getting the most useful material from informants; and read selections from an archive I maintain of student collection reports. The archive not only offers ideas and models to students beginning their research but also assures them of a potential audience of future researchers.

The assignment sheet² I give students offers a model for the written research report, but students may adapt the model to suit their own needs. Indeed, the form of the research paper both shapes and is shaped by the complex of activities that comprises the individual research process.

¹Suggested reading for doing folklore field work: Kenneth S. Goldstein's A Guide for Field Workers in Folklore (Hatboro, Pa.: Folklore Associates, Inc., 1964) remains the classic in the field. Includes important chapters on Problem Statement and Analysis, Pre-Field Preparation, and Rapport Establishment and Maintenance. Richard M. Dorson's Folklore and Folklife (University of Chicago Press, 1972) is an excellent collection of essays and includes advice on Collecting Oral Literature, Recording Material Culture, and Recording Traditional Music. Barre Toelken's The Dynamics of Folklore (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1979) includes sections on Being a Folklorist and on Folklore Research, plus a very useful nearly-verbatim "Field-work Transcript."

²Atelia Clarkson, a former member of the English faculty at Eastern Michigan University, generously shared with me her ideas and materials for a collection project when I began to teach folklore. Teachers interested in using folktales in their classes should consult the anthology she edited with Gilbert B. Cross, World Folktales: A Scribner Resource Collection, which contains appendixes on "Folktales in the Elementary Classroom" and "Folktales in the College Classroom."

The Assignment Sheet
for the
FOLKLORE COLLECTION PROJECT

AREAS OF FOLKLORE STUDIES:

- I. Traditional Verbal and Performed Art
 - A. Prose Narratives
folktales, legends, memorates, myths, jokes, anecdotes
 - B. Folk Poetry
rhymes, toasts, etc.
 - C. Folk Songs
 - D. Proverbs
 - E. Riddles
 - F. Folk Speech
proverbial similes and metaphors, curses, the dozens, etc.
 - G. Music and Dance
- II. Traditional Products and Processes: Arts, Crafts, Architecture
 - A. Visual Arts
such as Pennsylvania Dutch decor and designs
 - B. Crafts
quilts, toys, furniture, etc.
 - C. Architecture
barns, weathervanes, fenceposts, etc.
 - D. Foods
 - E. Occupational Techniques
farming, fishing, hunting
 - F. Instruments
fiddles, dulcimers, special tunings, picking styles
- III. Traditional Attitudes: Beliefs and Associated Custom and Ritual
 - A. Folk Medicine
 - B. Stereotypes
 - C. Taboos
 - D. Magic
 - E. Festivals
(and the costumes, food, dances, narratives, etc. associated with them)

PLEASE NOTE:

The above list is, of course, incomplete.

SOME TITLES OF PROJECTS IN THE ARCHIVES:

Folklore of Magoffin County, Ky.; Haunted House Tales of Adolescents; What Happens on Hell Night: How They Scare the Pledges; Theater Folklore; College Pranks; Ethnic Jokes; A Stereotype: Cruelty of Catholic Nuns in Parochial Schools; Folklore of Beauty Aids; How to Cure a Cold.

SUGGESTED STEPS TO FOLLOW IN DOING YOUR PAPER:

1. Choose a topic carefully. Choose one that you think will be fun or (preferably and) useful. Consult with me and hand in a written Project Proposal. Be prepared to change to another topic if the first one doesn't work out.
2. Look at a book or article on your subject. You will feel more confident and be more competent when you do your field work if you have some background on your topic. Look at some of the papers in the archives in my office to see what others have done before you. You may want to use some of the materials you read in making your analysis of the data.
3. Consult a book on field work and write up a plan of how you intend to proceed. Make sure you have a good set of questions to ask your informants.
4. Think about yourself in relation to the project. Try out some of the questions on yourself, on your friends. Do your first interview with the informant you know best and feel most comfortable with.
5. Write up the project (see model below). As you write, you may find you need to do additional field or library research.

SOME THINGS TO REMEMBER WHEN DOING FIELD WORK:

Try to find out where, when, and from whom the informant learned the custom, tale, belief, etc.

You might want to ask:

What is the use (function, value, meaning) of this to you?

Can you describe the situation in which you tell (sing perform) this item?

THE COLLECTION PROJECT SHOULD CONSIST OF:

1. Title page. Please hand in two copies of this page. I will return one with comments and grade. Keep a copy of your paper. Unless you specify otherwise, the paper you hand in will become a part of the Archives.
2. Table of Contents.
3. Introduction. Explain what you have tried to do, describe the group you are studying, give local history. See Introduction to South from Hell-fer-Sartin for a model introduction to a collection of lore.
4. Description of Field Methodology, brief narrative of general collecting experiences, problems, etc.
5. Proper Documentation of Informants. (see informant sheet).
6. Data on Collector. (see collector sheet).
7. Transcription of representative samples of the lore you have collected together with any tapes, photographs, charts, etc. you have.
8. Analysis of Traditions Collected. Although you may refer to secondary sources in your analysis, remember that your main job is to write about the raw data you have collected. You should sort or categorize your material in some meaningful way and discuss the function of the material. Why do the informants do this, believe this, remember this? How does this fit into their lives? Why does this kind of lore continue to exist? Look for a pattern.
9. Bibliography of library and archives materials consulted.

PLEASE NOTE:

We can discuss in conference variations of the above suitable to your project.

When term after term I found the research reports submitted by my folklore students so much more enthusiastically and competently written than the research papers of my composition students, I decided to bring folklore into my composition

course.³ I hoped that by assigning my composition students some modified version of the collection project, that none the less leads them through a step-by-step process of inquiry, I could make the Monster Research less mysterious.

I begin by conducting a workshop on collecting techniques, and then students practice interviewing each other before going out to collect information from friends, roommates, fellow workers, and others. I use data collected by the class to teach such skills as classification-division and basic elements of analysis. For my composition students I limit the choice of lore they study to superstitions and folk remedies since these items are among the easiest to collect. One of my students collected theater superstitions from members of her drama class; a hockey player collected superstitions about winning and losing from his teammates; several students collected cures for colds or hangovers. These students became actively engaged in their research; this is too often not the case when students do only library research for a traditional term paper assignment. The following is a composite sequence of several exercises and assignments for using folklore to teach research and various writing skills as well.

FOLKLORE IN THE COMPOSITION CLASS

An Assignment/Exercise Sequence

(meant to be shortened or otherwise modified to meet individual needs and tastes)

On Collecting Folklore

(a subject about which teachers and students learn they already know a great deal).

³I was encouraged to give a folklore assignment in a course in English composition by the enormously successful results that followed Eliot Wigginton's decision to send his high school English class out to find and record traditional materials in the area of Rabun Gap, Georgia. The magazine of the articles the students write and edit, *Foxfire*, continues to flourish, and anthologies of selections from the magazines continue to find a mass audience.

1. **Collecting Demonstration.** Instructor acts as Collector or Field Worker; students are Informants or Tradition Bearers. Superstitions and folk remedies are easy to collect in the classroom. During the course of the demonstration, students learn that they already know something about the subject. They do use home remedies (one teaspoon of sugar in a glass of water cures the hiccups), they do write with a "lucky" pen when they take exams (or know someone who does).

2. **Interviewing/Collecting Workshop.** Students in groups practice on each other before going out into the field.

3. **Library Research.** Folklorists, of course, usually do considerable research before going into the field. Some library research may be assigned in addition to field work, or the instructor may wish to bring to class something like the following from *The Ann Arbor News*. Articles on certain kinds of lore appear regularly in newspapers and popular magazines and confirm for students that folklore is available all around them.

Ann Arbor News, 3/7/82

Sure-fire hiccups cures

By Joe Graedon

Q - At a dinner party the other night I got an embarrassing case of hiccups, and I went through a real torture treatment. Everybody and their uncle had a different cure:

One person had me glugging water until I spilled it, another one almost suffocated me making me breathe out of a paper bag, and one man gave me a bear hug guaranteed to cure my hiccups - or break my ribs. Nothing worked, so as a last resort they all outdid themselves trying to scare the hiccups out of me.

People's Pharmacy Please tell me, is there a sure-fire simple cure for the hiccups?

A - You came to the right place with this question. I've got three dandy hiccup cures so if one fails you can always fall back on another and they're a lot less traumatic than the misery your friends put you through.

My favorite and most successful remedy is the spoonful of sugar trick. Swallow a teaspoonful of dry, white granulated sugar. Researchers theorize that the sugar granules stimulate the phrenic nerve in the neck and interrupt the hiccup reflex.

If that "sure-fire" treatment fails twice, you could try the vinegar cure. A jigger of vinegar down the hatch should do the job. But if that, too, falls short, the latest remedy I've discovered requires a lemon wedge well soaked with Angostura bitters. Gobble it down quickly (without the rind) and watch those hiccups disappear.

Let's you think these treatments are a little weird or no better than your friends' attempts, we assure you they all come from the prestigious pages of the New England Journal of Medicine.

4. **Field Work.** Students go outside the classroom to do field work (they sometimes like to work in pairs). Informants can be friends, family, members of their theater, athletic, or social groups.

5. **Classifying the Materials.** The data collected by the class serves as material for a class session on classification-division.

6. The Collecting Experience. Class session on narrative writing. Assignment: Write a short narrative of your collecting experience that would make a suitable introduction to your collection of lore.

7. The Informants. Assignment: Write a descriptive sketch of one of your informants that emphasizes those details that would help a reader better understand the lore you collected.

8. Point of View. Assignment: Write on the relation of Collector to Collection. Reflect on how your own antisuperstition bias or your own hypochondria affects your view of the superstitions or folk remedies you collected.

9. Analysis of the Collection. Students' raw data is used for class session on analysis. Assignment: Write an analysis of your own data.

The relative success of folklore collection assignments is due surely to a number of reasons including the charm of the subject and the step-by-step approach. But it is due mainly, I believe, to the nature of original field research. Such research gives the investigator--professional or student--the awesome responsibility of collaborating in the creation of the primary source materials; the quantity, the scope, and the quality of the data depend upon how compatible a working relationship exists between interviewer and informant. Such research gives investigators control over the source materials; when they evaluate and analyze their data, they work as "experts" with interviews they have conducted and materials they have collected. Indeed this sense of control and authority may be the key element in pro-

viding students with a successful learning experience.

REFERENCES

Clarkson, Atelia and Gilbert B. Cross, eds., World Folktales: A Scribner Resource Collection. NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1980.

A well-balanced selection of folktales from a broad range of countries that should appeal to readers from the elementary to the college level. Teachers will find the scholarly introductions to each section of the book and the appendices which include information on how to use folktales in the classroom particularly helpful.

Dorson, Richard M. Folklore and Folklife. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972.

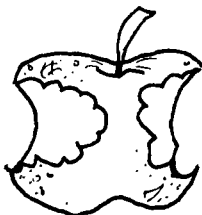
A collection of essays which includes advice on collecting oral literature, recording material culture, and recording traditional music.

Goldstein, Kenneth S. A Guide for Field Workers in Folklore. Hatboro, PA: Folklore Associates, Inc., 1964.

An invaluable book for folklore collectors. It contains important chapters on problem statement and analysis, pre-field preparation, and establishing rapport.

Toelken, Barre. The Dynamics of Folklore. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1979.

A great help to anyone who wants to understand the work of being a folklorist. It includes a section on folklore research and a very useful nearly-verbatim fieldwork transcript.



Moral and Social Inquiry

Robert Coles
University Health Service
Harvard University

In the middle 1970's I returned to Cambridge from New Mexico, where I'd been living in order to work with Indian and Spanish-speaking children. I had finished over 15 years of "field work," an overall effort to understand how various Americans live: Southerners of both races, caught up in a region's particular social conflict; the people of Appalachia; migrant farm families; the Eskimos of Alaska; and the above-mentioned families of our Southwest. As I did my research, I began to realize that my training as a child psychiatrist, for all its worth, was not proving to be the mainstay of my work.

To be sure, I was having conversations with many children, and through the spoken word as well as their various artistic productions, learning a good deal about their worries, fears, hopes. But I was not working as a clinician, to whom families in psychological distress had come in search of clarifications, if not consolation. I was an observer who was trying to learn how lives are lived--how ordinary men, women, children make do, year in and year out. I required a language of irony, of ambiguity, of paradox, of inconsistency, and yes, of mystery--because the individuals I was meeting did not readily lend themselves (in the character of their everyday actions) to the categorical approximations of the social sciences. The apparently strong turned out, often enough, captives of their very strength--unable to mobilize a necessary sense of vulnerability or alarm that preceded changes of mind and heart, and not least, deed. The quite obviously hurt and downtrodden sometimes showed astonishing guile--moments and longer of candor and personal resourcefulness. Again and again I recalled George Eliot's

Middlemarch: the novel as a whole, and as a convenience to my mental life, the astonishing three-paragraph "prelude," with its references to "blundering lives," and the "inconvenient indefiniteness" in which the author characterizes not only "the natures of women," but all of us, whose "limits of variation," she lets us know, "are really much wider" than we are commonly inclined to believe, no matter outward appearances, or for that matter, the results of these inward (psychological) probes we of this century hold to be so significant and revealing.

I was asked, in 1976, to consider teaching an undergraduate course at Harvard. I'd helped Erik H. Erikson do so, off and on, in the 1960's, while I worked in one of Boston's ghettos and in a nearby working-class community. I'd also taught a freshman seminar--using James Agee's Let Us Now Praise Famous Men and George Orwell's Road to Wigan Pier, two books which, in my experience, provoke a persistently thoughtful response to the moral confusions and hurdles generated by social inquiry. Now I had to choose enough books to make up a reading list for a semester-long course, and so doing, figure out why I expected those particular books would work, and what order to ask the students to read them. In a sense, I began to realize, I was not only engaging in an abstract or intellectual effort. Teachers are performers, with all the attendant risks of exploitative narcissism--in George Eliot's unforgettable phrase, "unreflecting egoism." Teachers are also inclined, through their reading lists, to make a strong personal statement: what they value enough to want to press upon others. Put differently, there is a strong subjective side even to the most objective elements in a professor's working life. As my wife (also a

teacher) observed, watching me struggle with the matter of this novel against that one: "We are parading ourselves with those reading lists; inevitably, we are showing off!" The sin of pride is, she and I assume, not merely a familiar phrase of the Bible, or The Book of Common Prayer, but something terribly near at hand for all of us; and so one hopes that the books in a course brazenly dedicated to "moral inquiry" will not let that intimacy go unnoticed--by a teacher, never mind his or her students.

One therefore girds oneself before a somewhat Augustinian conscience, and plunges on. The first section of the course I teach at Harvard College, titled "Moral and Social Inquiry," is called "Direct Social Documentation: The Literary and Journalistic Tradition." Its essence is twofold: Agee's account of a personal pilgrimage to Alabama--a piece of lyrical prose that is, quite simply, sui generis; and Orwell's remarkable evocation of the mining life in 1930's England. A biographical film by Ross Spears titled Agee, and the well-known Harlan County USA, by Barbara Kopple, spell out visually some of the issues the reading explores--in sum, the complex personal and moral issues at stake when a relatively well-off outsider (full of that mixture of curiosity and ambition which prompt so much of our work) crosses various social and economic barriers in order to try to learn about a given "them." The psychological hazards are as real as the more objective ones. Both Agee and Orwell let us know what to expect: distrust from others, yes, but plenty of self-doubt, no little amount of frustration or gloom, and not least, a kind of bitterness that, not rarely, finds an outlet in an animus directed at one's own kind, hence the pages of searing scorn Agee and Orwell direct at various intellectuals.

Our next segment is called "Ordinary Americans, So-called Working-class Men and Women: Several Angles of Vision." The major "angle" is that of William Carlos Williams: his long poem, Paterson (Parts One and Two), and the novel White

Mule, the first in a series known as the Stecher Trilogy. Williams' continuing attempt to learn America's 20th century language at the knees of his patients and dear friends, the occupants of Paterson's tenement buildings, serves to jolt our students--confuse and inspire them both. He reminds many of us of our social origins, remote or immediate--what we tend to want to forget (go to college to forget!). He is merciless with snobbery and academic pomposity, and merciless with his own kind of arrogance, the hauteur that a busy doctor, a successful writer, can mask with a self-justifying apologia, a sly, disarming veneer of humility. He rouses the students, awakens their senses--eyes and ears, but their moral sense, too. So does Tillie Olsen, whose four stories which make up Tell Me A Riddle are a high point for many young men and women, trying as they are to figure out (as Tillie Olsen still, wonderfully, is trying) what to do in this life, under which moon or sun. A final, marvelous pair in this section: John Baskin's New Burlington, a gem of an American memoir (the rural, Midwestern life of the early 20th century) and the first volume in the well-known series "Foxfire Books," wherein the simple (and very elegant and precarious) dignity and intelligence of a certain kind of farm and small town Southern life is finely sketched through anecdotal reportage, "oral histories," essays. Two films done by James Agee and Helen Levitt help out here: "The Quiet One" and "In the Street."

Next comes "Ways of Seeing Race," borne by two major American novelists: Ralph Ellison, whose Invisible Man is the occasion of much discussion, indeed; and Flannery O'Connor, whose stories "The Artificial Nigger" and "Everything That Rises Must Converge" and "The Displaced Person" offer quite another view of "race," perhaps one best (certainly most briefly!) described as sub specie aeternitatis. The film Nothing But a Man works quite well with Invisible Man, and a sensitive version of "The Displaced Person," by Glenn Jordan, helps bring that short story closer to many students.

We then move on to "Intellectuals and the

Religious Search," with Georges Bernanos' The Diary of a Country Priest (we show the Bresson film of that novel), Dorothy Day's autobiographical The Long Loneliness, and selections from the writings of Kierkegaard and Simone Weil. The last two are thorny, if not cranky, essayists--self-appointed outcasts from conventional Christianity. Dorothy Day, whom I loved so much, and whose work and writing have meant a lot to me, tells what an American woman could end up doing--being. The Bernanos novel has been one of my favorites for years; I scarcely could imagine teaching any course without it! These writers, together, bring all the revolutionary fire of Christ's life and example right to our front door--His passionate embrace of "the lame, the halt, the blind," the poor, the "rebuked and scorned," the terribly odd and the outlawed, and His unnerving admonition that He came to unsettle us, to challenge us ethically in every possible way, hence the absurdity of so much contemporary religion: an hour on Sunday in a nice building!

How do we live our lives? To what moral (yes, spiritual) purpose? In "An American Kind of Existentialism," the writing of Walker Percy serves as a means of such inquiry, such introspection: his novel The Moviegoer, and his startling, suggestive essays that comprise The Message in The Bottle. The film Five Easy Pieces, warts and all, fits well with Percy's kind of dramatic, searching examination

of late 20th century bourgeois American life. I use slides of the Gauguin triptych, titled (in translation) "Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going," and find that, so doing, a French painter's Tahiti artistic triumph, connected to his urgent, end-of-life philosophical ruminations, activate mightily any number of youthful seekers--those whose journey, unlike that of Gauguin, is just starting.

And finally, with a somewhat portentous title of "Historical Change: Moral, Psychological and Social Complexities," we approach three great Victorian novels: Eliot's Middlemarch; Hardy's Jude the Obscure; and Dickens' Hard Times. Why these three? Oh, because they are so strong and persuasive, so wise, so full of moral energy, so hard, once read, to forget--and so preferable in their "way of seeing" to that of today's jargon-cluttered, flashy, imperious, overwrought and ultimately banal social science texts. Lord, if by the end of this course a few American young men and women (and with them some older graduate student "section people," and a middle-aged teacher) end up spiritual kin of George Eliot's--willing to settle for her restrained yet vibrant good sense, her mix of passionate concern for others and ironic detachment about our natural limitations as human beings--then one dares say that a particular college course will have done, as it is put down South, "right well."

Beyond the Graces and the Muses

Rudolf Arnheim
Department of Art History
The University of Michigan

Good hostesses are familiar with the rule that the number of guests invited for a dinner party should be no smaller than that of the Graces and no larger than that of the Muses. If the guests are fewer than three, they will be deprived of the variety that should animate a social gathering; if they are more than nine, the group will lose its unity, and some of its less forward members will be left on the sidelines.

Teachers are rarely in a position to apply this rule. If, at a university or college, they teach an esoteric specialty, the students interested in their courses may be so few that the problem takes care of itself. More often, the number is so great that the teacher's function as a host or hostess is fundamentally different. The course Comparative Psychology of the Arts on which I report here is offered as a discussion class but takes about forty students, half of whom are advanced undergraduates, while the others are graduates. Although the applicants are carefully screened, a more severe limitation of the number would exclude too many qualified persons.

How does one conduct a discussion class with forty people? I doubt that even the most skillful teacher could involve everyone of them actively. Even the giant Argus has only a hundred eyes, and it would take nearly so many to catch, on the faces of forty students, that occasional mobilized look that tells us that he or she has something to say but cannot quite muster the courage to speak up. This is too bad, but it is also true that not everyone of the few students who remain silent throughout the term feels left out or fails to profit from the work. After all, this is a course for contemplative people.

Much of the class time of two hours a week is in fact spent in discussion. But the discussion is mostly limited to a dialogue between teacher and student and involves little exchange among the students themselves. I conduct the class that way because I have always felt that simply letting students loose to talk among themselves cheats them of the gain they should expect from any course. A teacher who just turns on the faucet and then sits back watching the show with an encouraging smile indulges in a comfortable illusion. Active discussion releases active thinking and is therefore invaluable. But if left to its own dynamics it is also bound to float from topic to topic, from idea to idea, and from one outlook to another, without the coherent structure of discourse that is indispensable if students are to learn something about the subject. It takes much teaching experience to attain this goal without losing the freshness and spontaneity of productive thinking.

Comparative Psychology of the Arts is based on readings in the theory of visual art, literature, music, radio, film and photography, dance and theater, and architecture. The selections are in no way focused on the latest publications in the various fields; instead, in the example of the particular semester I am citing here, the selections range from the eighteenth century of Diderot and Lessing through the nineteenth century of Kleist and Hanslick to a few outstanding thinkers of our own time. By necessity they reflect my own judgment and preference; one can teach with conviction only texts that have inspired one's own thinking.¹

¹ Assigned readings

1. Rudolf and Margot Wittkower: Born Under