

“DISCOVERING” WRITING WITH STRUGGLING STUDENTS:  
USING DISCOVERY LEARNING PEDAGOGY TO IMPROVE  
WRITING SKILLS IN RELUCTANT AND REMEDIAL LEARNERS

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Few writing teachers will disagree that teaching writing conventions in isolation is a fruitless, even harmful, pedagogy which does little, if anything, to improve student writing. Teaching conventions, style, and usage (often collectively referred to as grammar) in context, however, proves difficult when struggling secondary students develop good ideas and evidence but fail to clearly articulate them because of their lack of understanding of various writing conventions. The purpose of this study is to test the efficacy of a carefully designed discovery learning activity which intends to push students into metacognition about what they read, how it is structured, and how that structure affects the reader. Three sources of data were used to determine whether students who had learned by discovery were better able to avoid and revise run-on sentences than students who did not learn through discovery pedagogy. The data sources include two sets of essays, surveys taken by the students, and teacher analyses of essays for readability. The results of the data analysis indicate that use of run-on sentences, especially early in an essay, detrimentally affects the readability of student written work; discovery learning activities improve student understanding, application, and transfer of skill; and while students believe they understand more than their written work indicates, the results provide teachers direction for further instruction. The findings of

this study indicate that use of discovery learning for writing instruction with struggling learners holds great promise: a group of students generally regarded as academically weak showed greater understanding and application of run-on sentence avoidance than slightly stronger students who learned without discovery methods. This indicates that discovery learning is a method that improves learning among reluctant secondary students, a population many teachers struggle to reach effectively. Discovery learning is not limited to conventions, though: the promise of its application potential extends into a variety of writing skills and concepts. In addition to the run-on sentence discovery activity studied here, discovery activities for various other skills—from semicolon use through creating characterization with dialogue—are included.

Kim Brian Lovejoy, Ph.D., Chair

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## Chapter 1

## What Am I Doing Here?

I wanted to be a doctor. Or at least, I thought I wanted to be a doctor. Really, I just wanted to make a lot of money and have people respect me and think I was smart. But I was seventeen, a freshman in college, and generally ill-suited to know what I wanted to be. The doctor thing didn't pan out well because of my deep-seated hatred for science: I had to drop my introductory biology class because I was failing it, and even with great effort, the best possible grade I could earn in the course would be a D. I failed in biology because I hated the ridiculous minutiae of counting kernels of corn on a cob and analyzing the results for patterns. Could anything be less interesting or important? I was certain the answer was no.

Of course, then I had to start thinking about what I was going to do with myself. I was capable and bright but not particularly motivated: I had been able in high school to do little work and still succeed academically, so working hard to get good grades was a concept I did not identify with. College had proved much less friendly than high school toward my lackadaisical study habits—as was clearly indicated by my performance in biology—and I needed to figure out what I could do with myself that wouldn't be “too hard.” I briefly considered psychology, but again, it was a science. Igh. There was so much data. Who needs that? Certainly not the now-eighteen-year-old me, trying to select a major.

I settled on English, not because I felt some compulsory draw toward literature (though I liked reading literature) or writing (though I loved writing), but because I was relatively good at it and was pretty certain I wouldn't have to work very hard to do well

in the major. My young-adult laziness had won another battle. I opted to pair my English major with secondary education because my love of interacting with others and being the center of attention seemed like a perfect fit with pedagogy: I would get to “perform” in front of a captive audience every day. And I’d get summers off. Yeah, I’d have to grade a ton of essays, but I could temper that by just not assigning too many. I had this racket all figured out.

Except that I didn’t. While I got into English and teaching out of a desire to avoid a lot of hard work, what I found once I started teaching—both as a student teacher and later in my own classroom—was that teaching English is a lot of hard work. But unlike counting corn kernels, the work was rewarding and meaningful. Sure, it was also maddening and involved in many ways its own ridiculous minutiae, but it was also amazing and enlightening and purposeful. I loved—and still love—the ongoing struggle to develop the best and most effective means of reaching my students and helping them find success, even though that struggle is often an overwhelming and time-consuming one. My favorite students, even those I encountered as early as my student teaching experience, are those who have the most difficulty in English class: struggling readers and writers, students with disabilities and dysfunctional home lives, those whose behavior problems function as a mask of their pain or lack of understanding of the skills and concepts in class. These are the kids who generally take what are often known as remedial, lower-level, or basic courses, and they are labeled with a wide variety of tags: special needs, defiant, underachieving, low-ability, and so on. Their labels change based on the district, school, or class they are in, but they have one thing in common: for one

reason or another, they do not perform as well as many of their peers in the English classroom.

I think I like the kids who produce work at the bottom of the ability range because on a number of levels, I get them. While on the outside it might not seem that a now highly motivated graduate student who speaks at conferences and publishes articles in scholarly journals would have much in common with students who regularly refuse to do homework and teeter on the edge of academic failure, the connection is there. While I was motivated in high school to do well, it did not take a tremendous effort on my part to achieve that goal. It was not until I attended college that I discovered what it meant to work hard in school. And the awakening was a rude one. I met it with general disdain and efforts to minimize the amount of work I had to do—an effort that many of my struggling students make on a regular basis. I understand very well the pull to do something more interesting, more engaging, more personally fulfilling than classwork that seems purposeless and tedious. And I want to help my struggling students see past the maddening minutiae to the rewards because I know both sides of the coin.

For this reason, my classroom is an epicenter of activity. I work hard to make sure that what we do is as engaging and purposeful as possible. Within the constraints of my curriculum, I design activities and assessments that students can find meaning and enjoyment in, and I give them as much leeway as possible in determining what they would like to research, read, and write about. While I am not able to deviate from the four core texts my students must read each year or the four required assessments each quarter, I strive to approach those texts and assessments so that students are most likely to find them appealing. When we study *Romeo and Juliet*, for example, I introduce the text

by telling students that if they are looking for a love story, they'll be disappointed because the plot is really a three-day relationship between two hormonal teenagers whose secret marriage directly or indirectly causes six deaths. We poke fun at the characters for their ridiculous plans and dramatic reactions to the plot twists, and we predict who will die first or next and why. We play "Are You Smarter Than a Renaissance Friar," a game I designed that has students developing alternative plans that would be better, safer, or more likely to succeed than the one proposed by Friar Laurence and then collecting those ideas from their classmates on a bingo-style card.

The point is, my efforts as an educator are focused to make the work my students do—in reading, writing, analysis, and critical thinking—interesting and engaging. I want them to talk to and help one another, to interact and engage with the texts, to move about the classroom, to think about the texts and their writing and their thinking. And I want them to *want* to do these things—or at least not hate doing them. I don't want it to feel like counting corn kernels.

In seeking means for engaging the disengaged student, my greatest struggle has been in finding ways to approach writing instruction that are both interactive and effective and that push students to think critically. My writing pedagogy as a novice teacher was very style-based and skill-and-drill heavy: I had a style manual, the contents of which the students were responsible for and had to pass a test over every quarter. This method, unsurprisingly to me now, did nothing to improve students' writing. I also designed a grammar football game wherein students were engaged in a team-oriented question-and-answer competition. While the students did sort of learn conventions, their writing did not improve: they were unable to transfer their understanding of those rules to

their own writing. In my current teaching position, such approaches to grammar instruction are discouraged, so when I started, I moved away from the worksheets and style guides. As I studied writing instruction for my Master's Degree, I encountered overwhelming research indicating that my earlier methods for teaching writing—heavy on direct grammar instruction and light on virtually every other aspect of composition—were not only ineffective, but likely harmed some of my students' writing by placing focus on the wrong things in the wrong ways.

I dumped what remained of my style-based writing instruction and started focusing entirely on meaning with my students. We did a lot of gradual release of responsibility: I would model what we would be doing, then we would work through writing and revising activities as a class, in small groups, and finally students would work independently. Much of the work was started in class and completed out of class; students would then bring back completed or more complete pieces for critique and review. We started working on review and revision skills in greater detail. And my students' content and meaning in their writing improved—in some cases significantly.

But while their writing was improving in terms of meaning, for many of my students—especially those who are among the lower-level-labeled pupils I so enjoy teaching—their style and conventions were still getting in the way of their meaning. They were bringing greater information and importance to their work, but because they were struggling with their understanding of sentence structure and other conventional elements, their essays lacked clarity. I started to focus my studies on teaching conventions as a way to make meaning, and I found some interesting ideas. But as I searched for ways to push for higher levels of cognition to help students with conventions

and meaning-making, the idea I found most intriguing is one I found most frequently described in other disciplines. Discovery learning, a means of learning new concepts used in science and math courses regularly, appealed to me as a pedagogy for helping students come to a stronger understanding of the writings skills and concepts they were lacking. In short, discovery learning involves students analyzing data for patterns or common characteristics and developing and testing hypotheses based on those observations. Rather than listening to a teacher simply explain a concept, then, discovery learners are figuring the concept out for themselves by examining some sort of data. Because it relies on students to come to an understanding rather than a teacher professing that understanding to them, learning by discovery taps into students' higher-level thinking and pushes them to find connections and draw conclusions for themselves rather than being passive vessels to be filled with a teacher's wisdom or knowledge. In addition, it is most often done at least partially collaboratively, an additional skill needing refinement for many of my lower-level students. Finally, and importantly, it could be developed into a variety of activities covering a wide range of skills and concepts.

So I set out to determine if discovery learning was possible in the writing classroom and if it would make a difference in my struggling students' written work. The metacognition and higher-order thinking required in discovery learning seemed a promising possibility for developing learning that would transfer from the activities to students' writing, as it required more of them cognitively than simple skill-and-drill practice like some of my previous pedagogy employed. While much current writing pedagogy research underscores writing development through the act of writing, reviewing, and rewriting, I hoped that discovery learning could be a complementary



teaching method that would help my students develop convention skills they struggled with in spite of my best efforts to help them understand conventions through their own written work. After initial exploration of scholarly research and development of a variety of discovery learning activities, the theory seemed promising: previous work in composition theory research indicated that well-designed discovery learning activities should improve student understanding of writing concepts and transfer to their practice of writing. After developing the theory and then some activities, I set out to determine if the promise of the research would play out in the reality of the classroom.

With my goals and plans in perspective, the remainder of this chapter describes the curriculum and student population I work with in greater detail, defines discovery learning, outlines the system of discovery learning I've developed for my struggling students, and discusses challenges and possibilities of lower-level learners through discovery.

#### The Course: English 9 – Geography-History of the World

In its first year, the interdisciplinary course pairing I teach for lower-level students was mostly successful—at least anecdotally. The course pairs a freshmen English 9 teacher and a Geography-History of the World teacher. Because of the length of the course title, the abbreviation E9-GHW is generally used as a substitute, and, because the class blocks students' schedules, in conversation we refer to the course as *the block*. The teaching partners are assigned paired classes of struggling students and loop student sections: students have English one day, geography the next. The course is capped at 25 students per class. Shared assessments are expected and have been one of the most successful aspects of the class, as students who are not fazed by the gravity of

one grade are often motivated to complete work that counts for two classes. Students have an increased level of accountability because the two teachers are so easily able to track students down and because of increased communication between instructors. Students who have rarely (if ever) taken leadership roles in class gain confidence and skills as leaders. Interpersonal problems are easily solved within the classroom with easy switches between the classes. As a whole, students who are at a greater risk of failure in the mixed-ability classroom have experienced greater success in a classroom where there is nowhere to hide.

It is important here to note that the school where I teach is a large suburban high school with excellent resources and an academically successful student body. Many of the students in the block class, while academically less apt than most of their peers in the school, would likely be very average in most other school districts. Our student population placed in remedial language arts lab classes—half-credit courses designed to give individualized attention to students who have struggled to pass standardized tests—generally test at only just below the national average in reading comprehension and writing. And those are among the lowest performers in the block courses. In addition, the poverty rate in my school is very low: students who receive free or reduced-cost lunches hover in the 6-7% range, so the number of students whose struggles are socioeconomic in addition to academic are very low.

Still, the block is not without its challenges. Management is sometimes difficult. The class population has an unusually high percentage of IEPs<sup>1</sup>, 504 plans<sup>2</sup>, and other accommodations<sup>3</sup> (in the second year of the course, one of our two classes has 14 students with IEPs, 3 with 504 plans, and one English-language learner, meaning 18 of the 22 students in the class get educational accommodations). Motivation is also a significant issue outside of the shared assessments. But all these challenges were expectations when the course was designed. What we had not expected was how abysmal the students would be at group work and how difficult it would be to help them develop stronger writing skills. Group work has been a regular part of the curriculum in our large, high-achieving, suburban district for years, and it had never presented quite the management issue as it did in the block. Students were disorganized and off-task much of the time. And the writing skills that we had thought would be so much more easily remedied with the ability to focus on the problem areas of our struggling students—clarity, evidence, conventions—were not as easily remedied as we initially thought. Simply spending more time on those topics was not enough to bridge the gap between our lower-performing students and average-performing students.

After having some minimal success with a handful of exercises fashioned after those recommended by Andrea Lunsford in “Cognitive Development and the Basic Writer,” I became convinced that a more structured version of such activities could lead

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<sup>1</sup> IEP refers to an Individualized Education Plan for students who qualify for special services because of various learning or behavioral disabilities.

<sup>2</sup> A 504 Plan is similar to though simpler than an IEP. 504 Plans are educational accommodation plans for students who, though they do not qualify for special services, need additional attention or differentiation in the classroom.

<sup>3</sup> Accommodations for IEPs and 504 plans include changes in seating arrangement, small-group settings for tests, extended time for tests, access to certain technologies for note-taking or completion of assignments, and access to instructional assistants or other staff.

to both better writing and better group work. The result is a modified and scaffolded version of discovery learning. Students use evidence, reading passages, and case studies to develop their own theories about how certain writing conventions work and why they work that way. This approach most closely aligns with the constructionism learning theory of Papert (which was based heavily on Piaget's model of constructivism), though without the tangible product. It also has some common ties with progressivism, which is based on the idea that learning happens through developing and answering questions about the world around them: discovery. I believe that when pushed to "conceptualization and analytic and synthetic modes of thought" (Lunsford 283) through structured group work, the struggling students will find greater success and transfer in their writing conventions and ability to participate in and learn from collaborative activities.

#### What is Discovery Learning?

It turns out that defining discovery learning is more difficult than I originally thought. My own definition is based in part on my knowledge of Piaget and constructivism, with the understanding that human interactions, experiences, and ideas are the most powerful of learning situations, especially when in conjunction with one another. Thus, my definition of discovery learning is any learning where the students discover a logical answer, idea, principle, or issue on their own or through discussion with others by means of considering facts, experiences, and examples. Discovery learning, then, is in opposition to techniques that focus primarily on direct instruction with the instructor imparting knowledge to students as they relatively passively receive

the information. This seems simple enough—and my definition stands for the purpose of this research—but it turns out that there is some debate regarding discovery learning.

A brief look through scholarship regarding discovery learning reveals a number of things: Much of the work in discovery learning seems to revolve around math (Kersh, Dean, Hendrix) and science (Klahr and Nigam, Hammer, Davis). There is some speculation as to whether or not discovery learning can be adequately integrated into language arts classrooms (Peters, Evans), and there has been—and likely continues to be—argument within the language arts teaching community as to what specifically constitutes “real” discovery learning in the classroom (Rogers, Peters). My initial definition could use a closer look.

In the early 1970s, William Peters, an English Education professor at the University of Kentucky, speculated that many teachers who claim to use discovery learning in their language arts classrooms were not, in fact, using what he considered real discovery learning. What he refers to as “fictional discovery learning” (92) involves teachers pushing students to a predetermined answer by means which involve what he considers too much teacher interaction and control. By being too involved in the discovery process, he notes, the teacher leaves students to discover nothing at all, except perhaps how to “read the teacher’s mind to discover his predetermined answer” (93). In Peters’s estimation, the teacher should be involved only to explain the problem-solving task and play the role of an “advisor and continued initiator when and if things bog down” (93). In other words, the students do all their own thinking, all their own questioning, and all their own conclusion-drawing, with the teacher serving a peripheral role to keep the conversations moving with as little interference as possible. With this

notion, I have few issues. The students' learning experience will be more meaningful if they are doing the work themselves rather than teasing an answer out of an instructor.

In Peters's definition of discovery learning, though, it is reasonable to assume that the discoveries made by the students are not predetermined by teacher expectations. Rather, they are original ideas and conclusions—at least in the sense that the teacher would not know what conclusions the students might reach or by what means they might reach them. Peters admits that in order to complete his type of discovery learning, the questions or problem-solving tasks proposed in class must be worth the time and effort involved in the discovery process. In his example, “the problem is to understand Chaucer's summation of character” (93), and he admits the task may or may not be worthy of the time and effort of what he considers real discovery learning. Thus, the idea of using discovery learning to teach much smaller, less complex tasks such as sentence construction or use of MLA citations with quotations would be out of the question in his definition. This restriction is where I part ways with Peters.

The breadth of the type of task that might be considered discovery learning in Peters's estimation is too narrow. It seems that he considers discovery only that which is a new idea, or at least one that is not an instructor's intended endpoint for the students. But what constitutes a new idea? If a concept is new to the student, and she comes to an understanding of the concept by examining data and drawing a conclusion, does it matter that the conclusion was predetermined by the instructor? Is the student not still discovering the information for himself? Is it not still new to the student, even if the teacher—through leading questions and exercises and data—knew the concept or anticipated the answer at which the students would arrive? Are the students in Peters's

example not coming up with ideas that have likely been considered before and therefore are no more novel than those concepts “discovered” by students who receive more leading from their instructors? Why such insistence against discovering a predetermined answer?

Consider the types of discovery the students are really making, too. J. Douglas Stewart describes the type of discovery students generally make in classes as weak: “What is said to be discovered by the student is novel to him but not the teacher and what is discovered by the student does not constitute new knowledge” (62). To this end, it does not matter whether the teacher has in mind an answer at which the students should arrive; what matters is whether the teacher can adequately prepare students to come to that answer and understand how they got there. Thus, while Peters is correct that the teacher should be involved as minimally as possible during the discovery process so that the students may do the bulk of the thinking, reasoning, and drawing of conclusions, the nature of the task need not be extraordinary. In fact, it may be important that the task *not* be extraordinary for beginners in the discovery learning process.

Stewart further explains that several conditions have to be met for discovery learning to occur: whatever students are to “discover” must be discoverable, the students must be capable developmentally and by means of prior knowledge to draw the conclusions necessary, and “certain dispositions and abilities have to be developing for inquiry and discovery to take place meaningfully” (63). Herein lies the greatest truth and difficulty in discovery learning: the problem-solving task does not have to be monumental in scope, but whatever the task is, the students must be prepared for it.

The answer to preparing lower-level learners for and including them in higher-order thinking activities through discovery, I believe, lies in a scaffolded series of discovery levels. At the lowest level of discovery learning, which I refer to as *structured discovery*, teachers provide the greatest scaffolding: thorough and explicit instructions, pre-exercise thinking activities that require some writing prior to group work, questions that lead the students in the direction of the discovery, cooperative learning environments where students can pair their strengths with those of other students, and structured exercises and activities that teach the discovery process while nearly ensuring student success and therefore continued effort.

As students gain familiarity and proficiency with the process, they move into the mid-level discovery learning that I call *supported discovery*. In supported discovery, the teacher removes some of the scaffolds from structured discovery activities. The cooperative learning environment is still essential, but students in supported discovery will be more capable of entering the activity with fewer or less explicit directions, and they will need fewer leading questions, as they will be able to construct some questions of their own. The instructor will still be a facilitator who moves throughout the classroom to assist in furthering the conversations, but the certainty of success relies increasingly on the effort of the students rather than the structure of the activity.

The highest level of discovery learning in this system is *independent discovery*, wherein the learners need little direction, no leading questions, and only minimally structured activities. At this point, the students know and understand the discovery process well enough that they can hold stimulating metacognitive discussions without the benefit of structured instructions, teacher-initiated inquiries, or predetermined activities.



This level of discovery is the one Peters encourages and considers “real.” I submit that all three levels are real discovery, but structured and supported discovery allow students unfamiliar with the discovery process to build the skills necessary to become more successful independently. In working with struggling learners at the beginning of their secondary schooling experience, my students will need the structured discovery activities most, if not all, of the academic year.

Even with all this preparation, though, the question remains: Can struggling students learn by discovery?

#### Are Lower-level Students Capable of Discovery Learning?

Stewart explains that “discovery favors the well-prepared mind ... prior learning is logically necessary for discovery” (62-63). Students who are ill-prepared for discovery learning will not learn. Those without the requisite understandings coming in to the discussion or activity will not be able to participate and may not even be able to comprehend the conversation around them for lack of understanding. Peter Rogers, in his criticism of discovery learning as it is often presented, notes that the flaw in the general idea of discovery learning is the assumption that “enquiry skills are easily acquired and quite general” (3). He notes that the problems with inquiry and discovery in general practice are that the terms “misrepresent the nature of ‘enquiry’ because of an inadequate and over-simplified view of the nature of *knowledge*” (4). Rogers further notes that although different disciplines call for different types of knowledge and inquiry, inquiries across disciplines have at least two things in common: the requirement of critical thinking and the degree of difficulty. Inquiry is, in every discipline, hard work.

Hard work is sadly not often the forte of students who struggle. In a fascinating study out of Indiana University in the late 1960s, Ellis D. Evans found that achievement motivation and ability have a significant impact on discovery learning and incidental learning (incidental learning is that which is unintended in the course of instruction or study, but occurs in addition to that which is intended). The study detailed how intrinsic and extrinsic motivation affected learners of both high and low ability levels in complex discovery learning tasks. Unsurprisingly, students with high motivation and high ability were consistently successful in the complex tasks. Perhaps also unsurprisingly, students with both low motivation and low ability struggled to complete virtually any complex learning task, regardless of the reward. The researchers offered cash rewards to some subjects, notoriety to others, and nothing to a third group, and none of the factors moved students of low motivation and low ability to perform well. Students with low ability, however, showed a significant gap between those who had high motivation versus low motivation. In the high-ability group, this was not the case: the gap between those with high versus low motivation was much smaller. This indicates that remedial—low-ability—students who have little motivation will struggle mightily in complex discovery learning tasks, and as Rogers notes, inquiry at nearly any level is hard work. Low ability-low motivation students are likely to give up when presented with difficult or complex tasks.

The research is certainly discouraging in terms of what lower-level students might be able to accomplish with discovery learning; the criteria for discovery learning and the abilities and attitudes of lower-level students seem mutually exclusive. The problem with the evidence presented is that it considers only where students currently are rather than

where they could be. In spite of their shortcomings, however, I argue that not only are lower-level students capable of benefiting from discovery learning, but it is also of critical importance that their teachers use discovery learning activities to build their metacognitive awareness and higher-order critical thinking skills. What I propose is a means by which low-achievers can build academic stamina and develop their inquiry skills to a point where they can handle increasingly independent discovery learning of more complex tasks and concepts. It is not an easy solution to teaching students at the lower end of the ability scale, but what is best and what is easy rarely collide in the same sentence. For this population, though, the instructor cannot throw the students into groups and bid them, “sink or swim.” While their peers who achieve more academically might thrive in such an environment, the lower achievers will drown. My proposal is to build the students to an understanding of what discovery learning is and the role of members of group work in it through a scaffolded series of discovery learning tasks ranging from relatively simple tasks to more complex ones. In doing so, the students will come to a greater understanding of the power of metacognition as well as a greater understanding of the skills they are learning through discovery. The structured and supported discovery learning activities require considerable planning and provision of purposeful materials and inquiry modeling on the part of the instructor. The setup will be hard work for the instructor, but the payoff could be well worth the effort.

None of this can be accomplished, though, through problem-solving as complex and involved as that which Peters suggests is the only “real” discovery learning. Instead, the scaffolding activities take on a different shape than those suggested by Peters’s ideals. Whatever writing task the students are engaged in, students should “be engaged in

inferential problem-solving rather than in isolated drill or memorization” (“Cognitive Development” 285). In using discovery learning activities to further the progress of remedial writers, what can also be accomplished is the aforementioned scaffolding of student problem-solving and stamina in the face of difficult or complex tasks. The students need some proverbial hand-holding, but with consistency and certain student successes, a population accustomed to failure can begin realistically expecting success and hence develop a willingness to work for it.

#### Willing to Work for It: A Case Study

One of my previous students, Luke\*, was a slow writer. He struggled to maintain attention while in class. He did almost no homework. He understood only fragments of what he read, and so when I first started working with him, he had mostly given up trying to complete reading assignments. He was, to put it lightly, a bit of a mess.

For six months, I prodded, encouraged, and occasionally threatened Luke to little avail. At one point more than halfway through the school year, though, he wrote a fairly successful in-class essay. It was not the strongest essay in the class by any wild stretch, but Luke earned a C on his essay after managing—through great effort on his part—to stay focused and ask numerous questions of me as he wrote. The next week, he had another writing assignment due. The assignment was a set of revisions of reading response entries (students write reader responses most days in class over prompts about their reading or other topics), and Luke had not written any of the original entries. The class worked on the revision during one whole 90-minute block of time, and I worked furiously through the room fielding questions, offering suggestions, and encouraging greater analysis in the responses. Luke was starting from scratch: he asked a few

questions, and in 90 minutes, he managed to produce about four sentences. He did not turn in the assignment on time, but he did show up for the assigned academic detention required of students in my class who do not turn work in on time, where he asked more questions and wrote another sentence or two. He came to see me for an SRT pass (student resource time, which functions a lot like a homeroom-study hall) to go to the computer lab, and I agreed if he would come show me his progress halfway through SRT. Halfway through, he had finished one paragraph. I sent him back with some suggestions and encouragement.

He came to another academic detention—still required because he still had not submitted the assignment—and he asked more questions. He wrote a few more sentences. He got another SRT pass and wrote a few more sentences. He wrote some sentences at home. We high-fived when he was down to his last entry in the third day of academic detention.

Luke earned a B- on his journal revisions. We celebrated. He then became invested in writing a much longer piece—a character analysis—that was due only a week after he finished his journal revisions. He did not finish it by the due date, even with his newfound motivation, but rather than brushing it off entirely, he worked away, bit by bit, developing his argument. I am convinced that these successes stemmed from his initial success on the in-class essay and his connecting that success to asking questions and then plugging away at the next assignment little by little.

If a student like Luke can experience success and the accompanying motivation from success relatively spontaneously, can we not create experiences and activities wherein students will experience success in writing skills by design, come to a greater

understanding of the skills they need through that experience, and then develop—bit by bit—motivation to keep plugging away in increasingly more complex tasks? And along the way, is it not possible to also build these students' group-work skills? It might sound idealistic, but I think we can.

## Chapter 2

### The Structured Discovery Learning Exercise

In order to provide a frame of reference, it is important to understand the type of exercises and activities that I have developed for using discovery learning to promote collaboration and writing skills in lower-level learners. What follows in this chapter are some background information and explanation of content selection and a sample lesson with accompanying exercise and activities; the sample lesson is the activity I used with students to collect data on the efficacy of discovery learning in the lower-level English classroom. This is a structured discovery learning activity, but it could be adapted easily for students at the supported discovery level by eliminating the roles within the group and/or many of the specific group questions meant to lead students in the right direction.

The exercises, both in the following sample and those found in Appendices A-E, are built on the premise set forth by Lunsford in “Cognitive Development and the Basic Writer.” She offers several examples of exercises that involve high-cognitive function while teaching basic skills through discovery. Lunsford explains, “The best way to move students into conceptualization and analytic and synthetic modes of thought is to create assignments and activities which allow students to practice or exercise themselves in these modes continuously” (283). Lunsford’s models assume, however, that students are willing participants who need a different approach than they have been given in the past: they are struggling college students. The students in question in the present study, however, are high school students with not just low ability, but also frequently with low motivation. The exercises presented here are built around Lunsford’s models, but the activities that surround the exercises are more than that: they intend to help students who

struggle with developing their own understandings to effectively question, fully engage in the activities, conscientiously participate, and make their own meanings without the jargon of conventions. Many of these elements are present in various strategies for teaching writing endorsed in the composition field, though not always in combination as used here.

Not only is it agreed upon at my school, but it is a widely held, research-based position that teaching grammar or conventions in isolation at nearly any age, but perhaps especially with middle- and high-school students, is a bad practice (Hartwell 205; Dunn and Lindblom 44; Hillocks, *Research on Written Composition* 138; Weaver 26). While some teachers still cling to the idea of teaching “grammar” by first teaching parts of speech, then parts of the sentences, then diagramming sentences, and so on, most realize what Stephen Krashen proves in his research for teaching second-language learners: “even the best learners master only a small subset of the rules of a language” (86). By mastery here, he means an ability to articulate the rules by which they speak and write. Thus, while some may disagree with Jeanne Donovan’s suggestion that teachers may avoid teaching grammar because they personally dislike it (or at least that they fail to find it “fascinating”), few would disagree with her evaluation of the way grammar manuals and exercises are set up versus how students learn language: “grammar texts ... present language using the deductive mode: definition or rule, example, practice. In contrast, children learning language instinctively use the inductive mode; from the complex body of language which they hear, they construct their own set of rules” (64). Donovan’s suggestion is clear: presenting students with rules they are expected to memorize and apply to their writing makes little sense. But developing strategies whereby they can



discover the rules for themselves will foster greater understanding and transfer to student writing. Besides, the transfer to improved writing is really the goal, and learning rules in isolation from writing does little good: “communicating effectively is the road to success ... writers learn to communicate by communicating, not by memorizing rules” (Dunn and Lindblom 44). This has been a widely held belief in composition theory for decades.

Patrick Hartwell takes this concept a step further when he explains that certain concepts within conventions are clear only if known: “COIK.” He explains that while adults who are “hyperliterate” may believe they are merely following the rules of grammar when writing correctly, the truth is that the correctness in a hyperliterate individual’s writing is much more complex than a simple set of rules he follows. In order to follow the rules, the student must understand a complex series of rules that, for the hyperliterate among us, are largely understood through an understanding of the written word. Having read copiously, the hyperliterate individual is more aware of the complexities of conventions than those who do not and have not read so copiously. Connors and Lunsford—whose study of common student error is discussed in greater detail later in this chapter—point out that those who read little will not have “tacit visual knowledge of” (406) such conventions. Thus, another critical emphasis to foster student writing success is in reading. The discovery learning activities outlined in this study all incorporate reading as an essential step of the process.

In addition, losing the terminology is an important part of the process for lower-level high school students. Constance Weaver explains in *Teaching Grammar in Context* that “when explaining various aspects of grammar, usage, and punctuation to help students with their writing, minimize the use of grammatical terminology and maximize

the use of examples” (26). Most lower-level students struggle with terminology as well as writing skills, so adding more meaningless or mystifying jargon to the difficult task of writing is overwhelming to them. Jeff Anderson uses Harry R. Noden’s theories of image grammar to teach mechanics without labels, finding that his students are better able to understand and apply the concepts without the burden of having to learn the terminology; instead, he finds his students enjoy the freedom to create their own labels. The exercises presented here follow this premise, as well: although the purpose is recognition and correction of run-on sentences, the exercises do not name specifically phrases, clauses, the parts of speech, or other elements, and many allow students to give names to these elements.

#### Selecting Content (Conventions)

For the purposes of this pilot study, the content focus is conventions. My choice to focus on conventions is not for the love of grammar; rather, I studied my students’ ability to learn and transfer conventions because their struggles with conventions often interfere with the meaning-making in their writing. In addition, the standards in my state and requirements of the curriculum in my district dictate that I must address conventions. Still, selection of content is an important aspect of any means of teaching and learning. Thus, determining the means or methods for selecting content in a discovery learning system is a critical starting point.

Because this study focuses on conventions—concepts often defined under a very wide-reaching umbrella of “grammar”—defining *grammar* and distinguishing between grammar and conventions are important here. Patrick Hartwell delineates five different grammars commonly encountered in composition. The first is “the grammar in our

heads” (211), or the “tacit and unconscious knowledge” (211) of rules for putting language together. Although Grammar 1 is used by speakers regularly, few could explain or name the rules they are using. Hartwell describes Grammar 2 as a “scientific model of Grammar 1” (215), which is of interest to linguists but of little use to students. Grammar 3 is usage, and Hartwell is clear in noting that teaching the rules of usage results in little or no improvement in writing performance (219-220). Grammar 4 is likely what most people speak of when they refer to *grammar*, and Hartwell defines it as common school grammar (220-221). Finally, Grammar 5 deals with style, and Hartwell is careful to once again note that only through use of language is one able to master any grammar: “one learns to control the language of print by manipulating language in meaningful contexts, not by learning about language in isolation, as by the study of formal grammar” (225). Among different populations, the definition of grammar varies, and Hartwell covers most of the bases. A person’s definition of grammar may be more linguistic in nature, as in Grammar 2, or in reference to the sentence diagramming they did back in the good-ol’ days, as in Grammar 4; a group of people may discuss grammar at length without ever realizing that their definitions of what they are discussing are quite different.

For the discovery learning exercises I developed, I include style, usage, mechanics, and a few other skills because each is within the scope of lower-level students’ needs. Rather than referring to the skills as grammar—which may be misleading, really—I refer to them as conventions. In addition, I have added other writing skills that do not necessarily fit squarely in any of Hartwell’s categories of grammar, such as use of citations in research and developing setting. Still, this is a very

broad topic. One could write hundreds of pages regarding all the skills and concepts within this definition. So where does the well-intentioned writing instructor begin?

It is easy to say, *start with a pretest*. Pretests are a knee-jerk initial step of many contemporary secondary educators because proving student growth—a current hallmark of educator evaluation—requires that the instructor know where the students “are” at the beginning of the course, term, year, or semester in order to gauge growth throughout. But a writing sample would be an even better idea. Writing samples, instead of showing what students know about writing, show how well they can apply their understanding in their writing. It is this transfer or application of the writing skills that is important, which is why a writing sample is a better choice than a pretest. The writing sample is especially helpful to the new instructor who may not have the advantage of experience to rely on.

For those who do have the benefit of years of in-classroom experience, however, that experiential knowledge is a good starting point. Before I step foot in my classroom at the beginning of the year with a new crop of students, I have in mind a fairly accurate list of skills and concepts my students will need. I know which concepts are likely to be new to my students because I know what the standards in the previous grade are, and I know which skills the standards focus on in the freshman year. In addition, I know from experience what skills the students tend to struggle with year after year, so I can use those understandings as a guide, too.

Both experienced and novice teachers alike can also use research such as Robert Connors and Andrea Lunsford’s 1986 study of the most common formal errors made in college writing and the follow-up study in 2008 by Andrea Lunsford and Karen Lunsford. The writing sample is then a good navigational beacon once class begins. Regardless, as

Joseph M. Williams suggests in “The Phenomenology of Error,” all would-be errors in student writing—especially conventions—should be tempered with the understanding that many professional writers make similar “errors” without admonishment or correction. In addition, Lunsford warns that “the teacher who attempts to attack all error at once will only confuse and discourage the student” (“What We Know” 50). Thus, while a strong understanding of what specific skills and concepts to work on is important, it is equally important not to try to attack them all simultaneously or even within a single school year and to acknowledge the possibility of writing effectively even with certain errors of convention present. The focus in this study is on conventions whose misuse makes the writer’s meaning unclear rather than those that are easily understood or even overlooked by the reader: conventions which are crucial for students to gain command of if they are to become successful communicators. Without bringing students to an understanding of such conventions, important student ideas, arguments, and proposals are certain to be discounted, overlooked, or unfairly criticized not because of their merit but because of their lack of clarity or cohesion. Those conventions whose misuse most negatively impacts meaning-making are the ones writing teachers must focus on and the errors to which this method attends.

### The Standards

There are a number of Indiana State standards in writing that indicate directions for these discovery learning activities, but they are not exhaustive by any means. In 9.W.6.1, students should be building on their correct use of all parts of speech, and they should specifically focus on verb use, including the subjunctive. While there might be a language-expert throw-down over the importance (or lack thereof) of teaching the

subjunctive, few would argue that students need to know how to use the parts of speech when they write and speak, at least in terms of certain specific conventions. Again, though, that does not mean that they need to learn the parts of speech by name and function. Anderson notes that instead of using grammatical terminology such as participles, his students found success by telling students they were “playing with ... *-ing* verbs” (29) in their journals. He also found that their “playful forays into label-less grammar ended up in students’ essays, enriching them with concrete details and craft—a grammar instruction that actually improved writing” (29). Such usage could be introduced through structured or supported discovery learning, practiced in notebooks as Anderson does, and then applied in larger, formal writing assignments.

Of course, parts of speech and their use are not the only writing standards required in ninth grade. Students must also “Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters” (IDOE 5). In addition to using discovery learning, Anderson’s suggestion of “zooming in and out” (29) works here, as well: students isolate strategies and techniques used by authors to create the vivid pictures, practice their use in journals or other brief writing assignments, and apply that skill in larger, more formal assignments. The same could be said for parallelism, juxtaposition, tone, introducing quotations, transitions, and using a semicolon with a conjunctive adverb—all ninth-grade writing standards.

### Past Experience

In my experience, there are several grammatical skills lower-level students regularly struggle with, especially the lower they fall on the academic-success scale.

These students have trouble consistently writing complete sentences and avoiding run-on sentences. They struggle with homophones like *their*, *there*, and *they're* or *to*, *too*, and *two*, and with similar-sounding words that are not quite homophones, such as *accept* and *except* or *affect* and *effect*. The difference between possession and plurality mystifies many of them, so apostrophes end up all over the place. Comma placement—and, in fact, most punctuation use other than end punctuation—is also mysterious to them, and they tend to fall into two categories in terms of their comma usage: sprinklers and avoiders. Sprinklers use commas like confetti, pouring them from an imaginary shaker to land at random throughout their papers. Avoiders, on the other hand, because they lack the confidence or understanding to use them correctly, simply refuse to use commas at all, and create great bricks of text that readers struggle to make clear sense of—including experienced writing teachers who are accustomed to making sense of punctuationless writing.

Students at this level also tend to misplace modifiers and use pronouns in a way that leaves the reader wondering just whom or what the writer is referring to. These types of issues could and likely should be tackled closer to the end of the year, as they tend to be the more difficult ones to identify and solve. More straightforward conventions are better suited to the start-of-year activities that develop student confidence in group work and discovery.

### Lists of Researched Errors

In 1986, Connors and Lunsford put together a list of the twenty most common errors in formal college writing. In addition to compiling their list from 3,000 student essays, the researchers also determined which errors from the list instructors were most

commonly marking. Their findings were interesting in that several of the errors that are more likely to cause confusion in understanding were among those less likely to be marked than simpler errors that would be less likely to force a reader to guess at interpreting what the writer meant. For example, dangling or misplaced modifiers—errors that are likely to cause confusion—were marked by instructors only 29 percent of the time the errors were committed, but a confusion of *its* versus *it's*—a mistake much less likely to cause reader misunderstanding—was marked at the highest percentage of all the errors: 64 percent. This indicates that errors marked in student essays tend to be those that are easiest to spot and identify for students, not necessarily those that have the greatest impact on reader understanding (Connors and Lunsford).

In 2006, Lunsford repeated the study with Karen Lunsford, and found results that were in many ways similar, but in other ways strikingly different. One way in which language had changed is that, with the advent of word-processing technologies—including the now-ubiquitous spell-check programs available in virtually every word-processing platform—students make far fewer spelling errors but far more wrong-word errors. In addition, the second study noted a marked increase in argumentative and research writing, and with it, a marked increase in errors related to documenting and integrating source material into the essay. Hyphen use and capitalization were other errors that were new to the 2006 top-twenty list, too. One of the most interesting new errors on the list, though, was faulty sentence structure. Lunsford and Lunsford note that, “the rise in the number of these errors signals the cognitive difficulty associated with argument- and research-based writing, as might be expected to accompany a shift from personal narrative to argument and research” (798).



An interesting factor in the more recent Lunsford and Lunsford study is that the average length of the essays has increased dramatically. In the original Connors and Lunsford study, the average paper length was 422 words, which was almost double the average essay length of a similar study from 1930, and more than two-and-a-half times the average essay length of a similar study in 1917. In 2006, the average essay length was a whopping 1038 words: almost two-and-a-half times the average essay length from only twenty years earlier. Because essays have increased significantly both in length and complexity in the twenty years between the two studies, it would be foolish to think that student error would decrease in this time frame. And yet, Lunsford and Lunsford note that while the types of errors students most frequently make has changed in almost 100 years of studies on student error, the frequency of errors made has not changed significantly. In their adjusted comparison of errors per 100 words, the 2006 study showed only 2.29 errors, compared to 2.26 in 1986, 2.24 in 1930, and 2.11 in 1917.

With that said, the list of most common errors in conventions is an interesting one to use. While students' understanding of texts in the context of social media or other online content may be well developed, their ability to discern and replicate the types of writing valued in school—scholarly, professional, and civil writing—is significantly less developed. Students who are not avid readers of more scholarly texts struggle with writing conventions because of their lack of exposure to them. In another piece, Lunsford notes that “remedial writers are poor readers” (“What We Know” 51) and “teachers of writing must automatically and always be [teachers] of reading as well” (“What We Know” 49). The development of activities that have students continually reading and actively thinking about that reading is essential, which is why not only do the

discovery activities involve sets of sentences, but also sets of paragraphs and entire passages to expose students to as many examples of written conventions as possible.

Most of the errors in Lunsford and Lunsford's updated list are those I already target for my ninth-grade students, both because of state standards requiring instruction in their proper use (word use, documentation, punctuation, sentence structure) and because of students' demonstrated lack of understanding in those areas. Run-on sentences—the convention studied through discovery learning in this study—was fifteenth on the 2006 list. As with all of these conventions, it is up to the teacher to determine what the students are in greatest need of, when they need the instruction, and at what level in the discovery process they are.

#### Intentions and Conventions

As noted in Chapter One, it's all about activity in my classroom. While any one 90-minute class period may include elements of lecture—usually in the form of a mini-lesson—I generally have no fewer than three student-centered activities each day. Because many of my students struggle with attention issues, autism spectrum disorder, behavioral difficulties, and other impediments to learning, it is important that I allow them opportunities to move, interact, work independently, and change activities each class session. Few students respond well to a single 90-minute activity, and presenting information in this way is overwhelming for me as an instructor, as well. The cycle of activities in my classroom places the center and control of learning in different hands throughout the class. In mini-lessons, I model and explain, centering the learning experience on the instructor. In individual work, students are self-focused, and in collaborative work, students are able to respond to, evaluate, and question their own work

as well as that of their classmates. During both individual and group activities, I serve as a facilitator and observer, occasionally asking questions or making comments to keep students moving in a productive direction.

It may appear from the example activity that the focus of these exercises is merely an attempt to focus on writing conventions and mechanics without the labels of conventions and mechanics. Approaches to “grammar” instruction are sometimes met with skepticism and disapproval, with researchers focusing on mechanics pushed to the fringe of composition research. Even within my department in the high school where I teach—and it’s a large department with almost 50 instructors—there is division among theories of teaching conventions. These activities are not a skill-and-drill sequence disguised as something else, however. Rather, they are a means of addressing significant barriers struggling students often have in making meaning in their written work. Many of the students in the block class make regular mistakes in sentence structure that obscure the meaning of their writing, including writing run-on sentences that take several reads to decipher. While content is always the focus of written work in my classes and mechanics never constitutes more than ten percent of students’ overall score for any written assessment, if the content cannot be reasonably or easily discerned because the sentence structure is too confusing, I must address sentence structure. Having a way to address structure that is both effective and interactive is important if students are to apply their understanding beyond the block class.

The block students are often reluctant readers who are more familiar with the spoken word and the structure of casual conversation than written texts with more formal conventions. Their familiarity with digital texts and social media is often more

developed than their understanding of more scholarly writing, but fewer opportunities exist in the curriculum for them to show off that literacy. Exposure to the data sets in the discovery learning lessons gives them targeted exposure to the desired structures and styles with the purpose of analysis in order to come to the conclusion more quickly than avid readers who discover the patterns of well-structured sentences over time. Some of the data sets expose students to sentence structures that impede meaning (“In the book night u are introduced to Elis at the begging he was a boy from Transylvania...” ) as a means of leading them toward understanding the importance of constructing sentences for meaning. Often, students understand their own meaning and where natural breaks or pauses should be in their own writing, even if the reader cannot. Thus, if given the opportunity to evaluate and discuss such work, they should come to a better understanding of how to look for it and avoid it. While the activities may not lead all students to create better sentences every time, through the revision processes in class, they should at least be able to recognize confusing constructions and suggest corrections to their fellow students.

Further, the process tackles one or two issues at a time rather than trying to tackle them all at once. The focus of the first quarter—and thus the results of this study—are derived only from the activities that focus on developing clear, complete sentences that enhance meaning and encourage reader understanding. Because the focus is narrow, the students are less likely to be overwhelmed by the content and more likely to be able to make more significant strides in the area of concentration. In addition, prior to writing the multi-draft essay from which the results of the study are taken, students have one

other assessment that serves as an opportunity to develop and practice their sentence-development skills.

### Sample Lesson Sequence: Recognizing and Correcting Run-On Sentences

“Apply[ing] the writing process to . . . edit [and] to produce and strengthen writing that is clear and coherent” is one of the Indiana state standards in writing (9-10.W.4), and it makes for a clear example of how discovery learning activities can be applied to the types of skills and concepts presented in conventions, usage, mechanics, and style.

#### The Process – Individual Work

Students first get a data set worksheet (see Making Connections – Sentences 2 on page 39). There are instructions at the top of the page that guide students to look for how the sentences are put together (a hint to help them get started on the right foot) and to ignore spelling and word-choice problems. The teacher should indicate to students that they may make notes or marks on the presented paragraphs.

Students will then have several minutes to work through the data set. During this time, the teacher should be moving through the class quietly but constantly to ensure that students are on task and to field questions. It is important during this time that the instructor should not answer the questions *for* students, but instead provide them with uptake responses that echo student questions or responses and lead them toward explanations without providing answers.

When the students complete their observations of the data set, they are directed to respond individually to the passages as if they were a peer reviewer of each paragraph. This activity is intended to get students thinking about the data before they get into their groups so that they are more prepared to have a successful and productive group conversation; this step is essential for lower-level learners who lack confidence in

responding in off-the-cuff scenarios because it gives them something to contribute. The teacher continues to circulate as the students work through the questions, again keeping the students on task and fielding questions. During this activity, some students may write as little as possible in order to complete the activity early; the instructor should be watching for this eventuality and ask probing questions of these students to encourage greater depth of thought.

### The Process – Group Work

Because this activity comes early in the year before students have had a lot of experience with group work, the initial collaborative activity is pair-work rather than larger group work. Working in pairs forces students to participate because they cannot simply watch other group members interact, a significant problem observed in block classes in the past. It also presents a low-stakes interaction, since any comments or suggestions are made to only one other person rather than to a larger group. This is especially important for introverts who struggle to share with a large group.

Students begin with their elbow partner (the person who sits directly next to them in the classroom groupings) to compare and contrast the advice they came up with; although these instructions are written at the top of the page for pair interactions, prior to having students begin the activity, the instructor should explain the directions verbally, knowing that many of the students are struggling readers. The teacher should also explain that there are three rows on each chart in order for the pair to discuss and write comparisons and contrasts about each of the three passages.

After several minutes, when most student pairs have completed their first comparison, the teacher should direct students to switch partners. This switch can be

accomplished in various ways. Because student pairs will complete the activity at differing times, this will be the only whole-group switch. After the first switch, the instructor should circulate through the room and move student pairings as the pairs finish their work. This keeps all students working at their own pace. Some students will switch partners four or five times; others may trade partners only two or three times.

When students have had ample opportunity to discuss their suggestions with several other students, the teacher should direct all students to return to their original seats.

#### The Process – Return to Individual Work

After completing the pair-work, students should look through all of the data they have compiled. The teacher should lead the students to analyze what they discovered—both through their own and collaborative observations—to find two or three commonalities among the observations and then record those commonalities at the bottom of the group findings pages. Then, the students should use their observations and the list of commonalities to select one of the passages to revise and rewrite. This part of the activity, like the first individual activity, allows each student to do some of his or her own thinking and have something to share for the next group activity.

#### The Process – Small-Group

When most students are done or mostly done with the individual revisions, the instructor can begin placing them in small groups (approximately four students each) for another compare and contrast activity. Of course, in allowing students to select which of the three passages they wish to revise, student groupings will be in part dependent upon who chooses which passage. As the students complete their individual revisions of the



paragraphs, the instructor should try to take note of students doing particularly strong work and those who are struggling in order to balance the groups. Another option would be to group students with weaker responses together and then provide more support to those groups.

Once students are in their groups, the teacher should explain and emphasize the instructions to be intentional and thoughtful in selecting which revisions to use in the group rewrite. Students will be inclined to choose all the revisions of one student in order to complete the work quickly. It is also important for the instructor to remind students to number their sentences and explain the revisions; this explanation is crucial for the class discussion to follow.

As the students begin their group work, the instructor needs to circulate and ask questions of the groups, seeking explanations and understanding. It is important not to give the students the answers, but to ask leading questions and help students work through the revisions in their groups. Depending on the group dynamics, the instructor may need to offer greater assistance to certain groups than others.

#### The Process – Whole-Class Discussion

When the groups are mostly or completely done, the teacher may use a document camera to facilitate a whole-class discussion about each passage. Each group should offer at least one change and explanation for the change, and the class can discuss how well each change works and offer additional suggestions. Speakers for each group can be

selected by various means, though Numbered Heads Together<sup>4</sup> works well for encouraging every student to prepare to speak.

#### Application – Individual Reader’s Response

After completing the entire exercise, students may either write a reader’s response entry that contains a sentence using the new rule or revise an old entry to include such a sentence. If there is time, students might trade their response journals with an elbow partner to check their application of the rule. In addition, any writing assignment the students may currently be working on could be reviewed for these sentence-level errors.

The following pages are the packet that accompanies the activity. The packet could be given to the students all together or separated into individual pages to prevent students from trying to work ahead. In my use of the activity, I gave the students the whole packet at once and simply redirected students or pairs or groups who were working ahead.

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<sup>4</sup> Numbered Heads Together has each student in each group with a numbered page. When the instructor calls on the group, she can pull a number from a hat to determine which student will speak for the group. Because the groups do not know who will present, the students all work harder for understanding in order to be prepared if their number is called.

## Making Connections – Sentences

Read the following passages (they are from student essays). Ignore any spelling or word choice issues, and focus on how the sentences are put together.

### Passage A

In the book night u are introduced to Elis at the begging he was a boy from Transylvania who was 15 and had a normal life until the war started and he and his family were captured, in the power of light you find out the characterization at the beginning also it tells you that there are a boy and a girl trying to survive and it start to show as the story goes on that they are very brave. This show because “every few days David would go out to search for food” (Singer 119).

### Passage B

The poem that I read was called “ballad of Birmingham” it was about a young girl wanting to go downtown for once alone, instead of just going outside and playing she wanted to march the streets of Birmingham in the freedom march. When she asked her mother if she can go out downtown her mother’s tone changed. She was sad and scared because she would have never thought that her daughter wanted to do the street march, and because it was dangerous out all alone in the street march because there were “clubs and hoses, guns and jails...” I feel like the writer wrote that piece so that the mother in the poem can get her daughter to know that it is not as fun as she think it is, and that it really is dangerous out alone. The writer did not accomplish anything because at the end of the poem the mother lost her daughter but found her daughters shoe.

### Passage C

The mother and the twelve year old girl both had different experiences with the bombings, the twelve year old girl didn’t experience as much loss and sadness as the mother did, on the mother’s side she lost her child, so I’m guessing the girl was just scared and frightened and the woman just suffered from fear and loss of her loved one, the last words in the poem was sad when the mother found her child’s shoe and then said “o, here’s the shoe my baby wore, but, baby, where are you?”

### Individual Work Instructions

If the writer of each passage was your peer editing partner and wanted to make his or her sentences easier to read, what advice would you give each about how to make their passages easier to read? Remember: *focus on how the sentences are put together rather than proofreading for spelling or word choice.*

Passage A Advice:

Passage B Advice:

Passage C Advice:

### Class Rotation Review Page

You are going to start with your elbow partner, and we will change partners four or five times. With each partner, you need to share what your advice to the writers would be and listen to the advice your partner came up with. In addition, for each partner, you need to write down what advice they had decided on in order to keep a sort of tally of sentence revision options for each passage.

Partner #1 (write name below)	Suggestions We Had in Common	Suggestions This Partner Had That I Did Not Have

Partner #2 (write name below)	Suggestions We Had in Common	Suggestions This Partner Had That I Did Not Have

Partner #3 (write name below)	Suggestions We Had in Common	Suggestions This Partner Had That I Did Not Have

Partner #4 (write name below)	Suggestions We Had in Common	Suggestions This Partner Had That I Did Not Have

Partner #5 (write name below)	Suggestions We Had in Common	Suggestions This Partner Had That I Did Not Have

Partner #6 (write name below)	Suggestions We Had in Common	Suggestions This Partner Had That I Did Not Have

### Commonalities

Below, write a list of suggestions that came up more than twice in your comparisons.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

### **Group Revision Page**

Choose one of the paragraphs to revise. While revising, you may adjust things like spelling, subject-verb agreement, and word choice, but your main concern should be adjusting the sentence structure so that the passage is easy for a reader to read and understand.

### **Individual Revision   A      B      C**

First, write out your revision on your own. Use what you learned in discussing the issues with your classmates, and look to your list of commonalities to develop your revised passage. Write it out below:

**Group Revision**

Now, with your new group, share your revision and listen to the revisions presented by the other group members. As a group, you need to decide which changes work best and which may not be as necessary or helpful. As you decide on each revision, you need to have reasoning behind why you changed what you did. For this reason, as you write out the final revision, number each sentence and write a numbered list that explains briefly your reasoning for making the changes you made.



## Chapter 3

## Study Methodology

## Research Questions

There are several questions that need to be answered through data collection and analysis regarding discovery learning in writing instruction. For this study, the skill in question is avoidance of run-on sentences that may obscure the writer's meaning or hinder the reader's understanding. I chose this skill because a significant focus of the quarter one curriculum is sentence structure, and run-ons are a frequent struggle of block students. The use of discovery learning in developing students' understanding of such aspects of writing conventions and style is relatively untested. Thus, the questions are numerous and wide-reaching:

1. Will use of discovery learning activities improve students' understanding of writing concepts and then transfer to their performance in written work?
  - a. Is any difference in student understanding and transfer notable enough to justify making significant adjustments to writing pedagogy to develop and include discovery learning activities?
  - b. Can differences in student understanding be linked directly to discovery learning instructional techniques?
2. Are discovery learners able to better write and edit for avoidance of run-ons at least in the early parts of the essay that they are more likely to have spent the most time revising?
3. How much does the skill (avoiding run-on sentences) affect student writing?
  - a. Does misuse or lack of understanding create problems for readers of students' work?

- b. Does use of run-ons early in the essay affect readability—or negatively bias a reader—more than use of run-on sentences that occurs exclusively or primarily later in the essay?
  - c. Does proper use or misuse affect student scores on written assessments?
- 4. After participating in a discovery learning activity, how well do students believe they understand the concept?
- 5. Does their recognition of their understanding or lack thereof reflect their actual understanding and ability to recognize and edit for the concepts in their own and others' work?

In order to best answer all of the research questions using both quantitative and qualitative data, I have chosen to use triangulation to combine several research methods to develop a stronger understanding of the results. Triangulation involves cross-verification of data through multiple sources. Such cross-verification is especially important in studies that include a great deal of qualitative data in addition to quantitative data—as this study does—because it allows for certain elements of the qualitative data to be explained or verified through quantitative data and vice versa. Application of this method of data collection and analysis provides a clearer, more accurate picture of the effects of the discovery learning pedagogy, as “the alternative perspectives serve to validate and illuminate each other, as well as to provide more complete descriptions of the phenomenon under investigation” (Morine-Dersheimer 5). The data analyzed should be more compelling when examined through various lenses (Hubbard and Power 124).

In the case of this research, the data sources are essays students wrote and revised, surveys students took regarding the activity, and evaluations of a representative sample of

essays by other teachers of similar students. I opted to compare student essays year over year in order to evaluate whether or not students who learn through discovery are better able to apply that learning than those who learn through another method. Use of student surveys indicates how students feel about their own understanding, and teacher surveys are used here to indicate what effect use of run-on sentences have on essay readability.

### Analysis of Student Essays

The first source of data is student essays. In order to answer question two and parts of questions one and three, it is important to compare the similarities or differences in skill proficiency between students who have and have not participated in lessons teaching those skills through discovery learning; in the instance of this study, similar groups of my students from two different school years will be used. In one year, I employed discovery learning techniques to teach students how to avoid run-on sentences in their writing, and in the previous year, I taught avoidance of run-on sentences, but not through discovery learning.

The data for this portion of the study compares student essays from the same first-quarter multi-draft essay assignment in two consecutive years, hereafter referred to as Group A and Group B. The assignment is an expository essay (see Appendix F) that students earn scores for in both classes. At this point in the semester, the Geography class is studying major religions and the effects of religious influence on culture. Each student selects a country he or she is interested in learning more about and then studies the life cycle and major religions of the people of that country. Based on the traditions surrounding the peoples' lives (birth, death, coming of age, marriage, child-rearing, etc.), students need to then infer how much influence religion has on the culture of the country

and then provide evidence that supports their inference. Students are required to quote from sources pulled from *AtoZ World Cultures*, one of the databases available to students at the school. They must use the quotations as evidence of the influence of religion on culture.

The assignment occurs in the first quarter of the school year; it is the first multi-draft essay the students complete in high school English. The students spend five weeks on the project (though not every class period of the five weeks is dedicated to the essay), using class time in both the English and the geography classrooms for completion of research, highlighting and annotation of sources, organization of information, development of claims, writing, revising, and submission through an online platform (see Appendix G). I introduced the discovery learning activity in a smaller, lower-stakes writing assignment prior to the multi-draft essay: journal revisions that focused on word choice and structure in *Romeo and Juliet*. That smaller, simpler assignment served as a practice for the students to look for and correct run-on sentences in a shorter text with fewer other cognitive demands like the research component.

Group A is comprised of 37 essays representing two classes of E9-GHW (the block) students from the 2014-2015 school year who did not experience any discovery learning activities as part of their preparation for the quarter one multi-draft essay. Group B is comprised of 37 essays representing two classes of E9-GHW students from the 2015-2016 school year whose preparation for the first quarter essay included the multi-faceted discovery learning exercise described in Chapter Two. Both groups are similar in size and student ability. The only variable, aside from the students themselves (a factor that will be discussed momentarily), that changed between the two years is the

introduction of the discovery-learning lesson targeting recognition and avoidance of run-on sentences in the B group. The course itself, the timing of the essay within the quarter, the teachers, the assignment, and the timeline did not change year to year. The students were different from one year to the next, but the type of student placed in the class, and the requirements to be placed in the class, did not change. The E9-GHW course and its placement requirements have been discussed at length in Chapter One, and the students placed in the class are of a relatively consistent ability and motivational range.

In Group B, four outliers were eliminated from the data pool. Two essays contained far fewer sentences than others (one was woefully incomplete with only 6 sentences comprising two weak paragraphs; the other had only 8 sentences—many of which are run-on sentences with three or more independent clauses—and was written by an English language learner whose run-on sentences are a product of his struggle with English as a new language rather than a specific difficulty with run-on sentences); one essay contained 59 sentences, far more than any other. In order to both even the number of outliers eliminated from either extreme of the scale and compare an equal number of essays from each group, I also eliminated the essay with the next highest number of sentences (42). Further, overall student grades for the first quarter have been lower in the B group (79%) than the A group (83.5%), and anecdotally, both the English and Geography instructors have noted that the B group students have shown less overall academic ability in quarter one than those in Group A the previous year. This difference will be discussed in the conclusions.

The first step in analyzing the student essays from one year to the next was reading through them and identifying all the run-on sentences. For the purposes of this

study, I was interested primarily in run-on sentences that show no appropriate connection (such as a coordinating conjunction) or complete division between independent clauses.

For example, the following student samples were flagged as run-on sentences in the study:

Choice of religion in North Korea is much like their culture they keep only what they know.

Italians are not hostile at all to other religions they do not really care if there are people of another religion they are still very welcoming and nice to all others.

If students used a conjunction to connect the sentence, but did not use a comma, I did not count the sentence as a run-on, as it showed understanding that there needed to be connection between the clauses. So sentences like the following were *not* included as run-ons:

Germans begin dating in their early teens and they can choose their own partner and they don't have arranged marriages.

By doing this the population will slowly grow down in China and then they won't have too many people in China.

If, however, there was a comma without a conjunction, I flagged the sentence as a run-on since the comma shows incomplete division rather than connection. Thus, the following sentences were considered run-ons:

Religion rules over Bangladesh, they do whatever their religion says to do.

Many aspects of Italian life is changed by religion, even though it isn't a daily thing it is still very influential to the public lives.

I read each essay twice: I marked run-ons in the first read-through, and then in the second read-through, I looked for and corrected any inconsistencies in my marking of run-on sentences.

After determining the run-on sentences in each essay, I tabulated the number of run-ons as compared to the number of total sentences. This provided the number necessary to determine the percentage of run-on sentences per essay. I counted each run-on sentence as a single sentence because they had been punctuated as such; similarly, I also counted sentence fragments as individual sentences since they had been used as complete sentences.

Once I tabulated the percentages, I divided the results into four categories delineating the severity of the students' use of run-on sentences. The top two categories represented students who had little difficulty avoiding run-on sentences in their essays. The first category comprises those essays with no run-on sentences, marked as "No Use." The next category is made up of essays containing "Mild Use" of run-on sentences: 1-5% of the sentences were run-ons. In general, students in the Mild Use category had only one run-on sentence; one longer essay contained two. In the last two categories, I included a broader range: "Moderate Use," comprised of essays containing 6-20% run-ons and the fourth category, "Heavy Use," made up of essays containing more than 20% run-on sentences. Moderate Use essays contained no more than five run-on sentences each, and therefore were made up of essays with two to five run-ons. Heavy Use essays averaged seven run-on sentences per essay, with a low of four in a brief essay (eleven sentences) and a high of eleven run-ons. In developing the last two categories, I wanted to create ranges that realistically represented moderate and heavy use of run-on sentences. Because all the essays with only one run-on sentence averaged 5% run-ons or less, I used 5% as the top end of that category. Five run-ons represented the sweet spot in averages between the two groups: in both groups, use of five run-on sentences is at or just

below 20% of the average essay, but six run-ons is just over 20% of the average. Thus, 20% became the upper limit for the moderate use category.

Finally, I reviewed the essays containing one or more run-on sentences one final time for the number of run-ons occurring in the first 145 words. Because the students in E9-GHW often lack motivation and academic stamina, I knew that it was possible that their proofreading and attention to detail in the early parts of the essay were likely to be better than in the later parts of the essay. For that reason, I counted the number of words in the shortest essay and halved its total word count. This way, no essay would be evaluated for more than half of its total length, but all essays would be evaluated within the same number of words. In counting the early run-on sentences, if a run-on sentence started within the 145 words but ended beyond the count, it was considered part of the first 145 words. The sentences affected by this decision were of similar lengths, and in all cases, at least one-third of the sentence came prior to the 145<sup>th</sup> word.

#### Analysis of Student Reflections

The second means of data collection and analysis, intended to answer research questions four and five, is through student survey responses. Only the Group B students participated in the survey because they were the only ones who had experienced the discovery learning activities in order to reflect on them. The survey was a brief online survey (see Appendix H) with nine questions. Respondents remained anonymous in an effort to elicit the most honest answers possible since students took the survey during class time with the instructor in attendance. Three of the questions were multiple choice, and six were open-ended; of those that were open-ended, two asked students to explain their response to one of the multiple-choice questions.



Prior to completing the survey, I told the students that I was collecting data to determine which classroom activities are effective and memorable, and they should give their honest opinions about how well they remembered the activity and how much they believed it helped them on the essay they had recently completed and received scores for. I also explained that their responses would remain entirely anonymous, so they could feel secure in being honest. All students went to the computer lab together to complete the survey.

The survey was designed in two pages, and after students completed and left the first page, they would be unable to return to it to change any responses. I designed the survey in this way because the first four questions have students identifying perceived errors in sentences taken from student essays (the sentences were taken from essays from previous years so that no student would recognize his or her own writing in the survey and they would not be my false attempt to replicate student writing). Once the students got to the second page, they were asked if they recalled the discovery-learning activity they completed in class and how much they believed it helped them in identifying and correcting run-on sentences in their own and other students' work. By preventing students from returning to the previous page, the first four questions that were intended to see how well students could identify and correct run-on sentences got more accurate results than they may have gotten had students been able to go back and look specifically for run-ons once they realized that was the focus of the survey.

In the first page of the survey, the sentences students analyzed for errors were chosen for deliberate reasons. The first sentence, "Muslims also make sure that the body is properly wished and carefully enshrouded, after they do so they make sure to bury it 24

hours,” contains several errors in addition to the run-on structure. Numerous errors is a feature that would be common in many students’ own essays or those they peer review. In this sentence, students have to navigate through several challenges in addition to identifying the run-on: a spelling error, an elided phrase, and a likely unfamiliar vocabulary word (enshrouded). The selection of this sentence was to determine how well students would still be able to identify the run-on when several other errors or distractions are also present.

The second sentence, “The culture of Israel is heavily ruled by Judaism even the judicial sector of the government is a Jewish court,” contains no error beyond the run-on. Here, the survey should reveal how well students recognize and correct run-on sentences when there are no other errors to distract them from the target mistake. On the other hand, the third sentence, “Children in Belize are very hard working; kids between the ages of eight and thirteen usually have jobs,” contains no errors. The purpose of a sentence with no errors is to determine whether or not students recognize the use of the semi-colon as an acceptable division between independent clauses. The class discussion and some examples of revisions of the paragraphs in the discovery learning lesson explored the semi-colon as a possible divider between independent clauses.

Finally, the fourth question uses an example sentence with one clear error most students should easily recognize: “The Govern Mint is not the only one restricted the people are, too.” In this question, the results should show whether students are able to see beyond a significant error in the sentence to the more subtle run-on sentence error. The combination of sentences should reveal a variety of information about how well students recognize run-ons: in the presence of other relatively subtle errors, in the

presence of no other errors, and in the presence of one easily recognizable error. It also examines whether or not students recognize appropriate semi-colon use, a skill discussed and practiced during and after the discovery learning activities.

The second page of survey questions focused on whether or not students remembered the discovery-learning activity, whether and how they felt they had benefited from it, and whether and how they felt their peer review skills improved from participating in it. For two of the three multiple choice questions, students were asked to explain their response in a separate question. By comparing the answers to these questions to the students' ability to recognize the run-on sentences on the first page of questions, it should be clear whether or not the students have an accurate assessment of their own understanding of the skill.

#### Analysis of Essay Evaluations

The final source of data collection answers the remaining parts of research questions one and three and is a qualitative analysis of eight student essays by three teachers familiar with the type of students studied. None of the three teacher-analysts was the classroom instructor for the students whose work comprises the data pool. Two of the three teacher-analysts (Arnold and Maggie<sup>5</sup>) also teach the English portion of E9-GHW block classes in the same school as the students and instructor involved in the study. The third teacher-analyst (Sophia) teaches regular English 9, and she also teaches English to freshman students not academically capable of handling E9-GHW; her lower-level classes are co-taught with a special education teacher present in the classroom at all

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<sup>5</sup> Teacher-analyst names have all been changed.

times<sup>6</sup>. These teacher-analysts were selected for the study because of their familiarity with the types of students in the block class and the expectations for writing proficiency within the course.

Arnold has been a teacher for sixteen years and has worked with struggling students the entirety of his career. Maggie has nine years of classroom teaching experience, is a certified reading specialist, and has also spent her entire teaching career working with reluctant learners. She has also worked as a one-on-one tutor of students with significant learning challenges. Sophia began teaching later in her life than Arnold or Maggie; while she is roughly the same age as they, she has taught for only 2 years, but she has also spent those years with students who face significant academic challenges. She notes that in her employment prior to becoming a teacher, she frequently worked with adults who have significant learning challenges similar to some of her current co-taught students, so her perspective on their needs reaches beyond their classroom learning needs. The analyses from these instructors is most likely to be most relevant to my own analysis because they teach students most like my own: block students or those just below the ability level of block students.

Each teacher evaluated eight student essays for readability and used two separate charts for explaining rankings of the essays (see Appendix I). The eight essays were taken in equal numbers from the four classes represented in the data: two from each class in Group A, and two from each class in Group B. In order to select essays that were representative samples from their individual classes, each essay in the sample was either

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<sup>6</sup> The co-taught classes are even smaller in size than the E9-GHW classes, and student assessments are not as challenging and expectations are not as high as those in the E9-GHW course. Co-taught students all struggle with significant and severe barriers to learning.

at or very close to the class average score for the assessment. In this way, the essays selected would be neither the best nor worst samples from their respective classes; they are average and therefore a fair representative for each class. The results of their rankings would help determine whether or not the students who participated in the discovery-learning activity—Group B—wrote more readable, easier-to-understand essays than those students who did not participate in any discovery learning writing instruction—Group A.

The essays were printed without names or identifying information, randomly assigned letter-identifications (Essay A, Essay B, etc.), and assembled in alphabetical order by letter-identification. The initial instruction sheet attached on top of the essay packet asked teachers to read the essays, mark whatever they wanted in terms of readability in red on the essays, and then rank the essays in terms of readability with explanations for those rankings. The instructions also indicated that when teachers had completed that initial analysis of the essays, they should then open the sealed envelope attached behind the instructions (but atop the essay packet) for further instructions.

The sealed envelope contained instructions for teacher-analysts to comment on each of the essays specifically for sentence construction, including a specific reference to run-on sentences. Having the separation between the envelope instructions and the initial instructions allowed teachers to comment on or mark anything they believed inhibited or enhanced readability and made clear whether run-on sentences were, in fact, a clear detriment to readability in the estimation of the panel. Comparison of the explanations of the ranking and the commentary on sentence construction with the marking on the essays themselves would reveal which markings were considered detrimental versus any marks

indicating proficiency. Adding the request to focus on sentence-level issues once the essays were ranked would provide additional information: Did teachers rank lower the essays with run-on sentences without even realizing it? Was the inclusion of run-on sentences a non-issue for teacher estimation of readability? To what degree are run-on sentences a factor in essay readability at this level? Would a teacher of students of lower writing ability consider run-ons as the same type of readability issue as those whose lowest-level learners are the block students?

Once the results of the three data sources were collected, I was ready to start analyzing the data.

## Chapter 4

### Results and Indications

#### Results of Analysis of Student Essays

In determining the extent to which each student used run-on sentences in his or her essay, percentage of run-on sentences out of the total number of sentences in the essay was the fairest way to consider the data, as the essays varied widely in length. In the 37 essays in group A, the average number of sentences per essay was 26 with a significant standard deviation of 4.98; there was a low of 16 sentences per essay and a high of 39 sentences per essay. The standard deviation in Group B was even greater ( $\sigma=7.04$ ) with a low of 11 sentences per essay and a high of 41 sentences per essay. Group B averaged 28 sentences per essay, leaving them greater opportunity to develop run-on sentences.

Students in Group B showed better ability to avoid run-on sentences than those in group A, as shown in Table 1. While the difference between the categories is only two students, the difference shows a marked shift in upward skill development year over year. The number of students in the Heavy Use category was halved (down to two in Group B from four in Group A) with the introduction of discovery learning pedagogy, and the gains were in the top category: 17 students in Group B used no run-on sentences compared to 15 in Group A. The other two levels of run-on use saw no changes year-over-year. While it is unlikely that the two-student improvement in the Heavy Use category indicates the students jumped directly from Heavy Use to No Use, it does indicate a trend of improvement in the ability of students to avoid run-on sentences after learning about how to do so through discovery learning activities.

Table 1: Percentage of Essay at Varying Levels of Run-on Use

	No Use 0% Run-ons	Mild Use 1-5% Run-ons	Moderate Use 6-20% Run-ons	Heavy Use 21+% Run-ons
Group A (no discovery learning activities)	15/37 = 40.5%	9/37 = 24.3%	9/37 = 24.3%	4/37 = 10.8%
Group B (discovery learning: run-on sentences)	17/37 = 45.9%	9/37 = 24.3%	9/37 = 24.3%	2/37 = 5.4%

Additionally, the average length of the essays was greater in Group B, so even greater growth is indicated because students were writing longer essays which would have given them more opportunities to write possible run-on sentences. Group A students' essays included 56 run-on sentences out of a total of 962 sentences: 5.8% run-ons overall. Group B students wrote 54 run-on sentences out of 1,036 total sentences: 5.2% of the time. Thus, Group B saw a 10% decrease in overall run-on-sentence use. When figured based on the average number of sentences per essay, Group A averaged 1.50 run-on sentences per essay, while Group B averaged only 1.18 run-on sentences per essay, a 21% decrease in use per essay.

Group B also showed a marked improvement over Group A in the number of run-on sentences used within the first 145 words of the essay (see Table 2). Almost half of the students in Group B used no run-on sentences within the first 145 words, indicating that they were likely able to avoid run-ons or revise for them successfully at least in the early parts of the essay; their later use may be more indicative of academic fatigue than lack of understanding. Of the ten essays with no run-ons in the first 145 words, nine of them contained only one run-on total and the other one contained only two run-on sentences. This indicates that those students in Group B who fall into the Mild Use



Table 2: Number of Run-ons Used Within First 145 Words

	None	One	Two	Three	Four
Group A (No discovery learning activities)	4/22 = 18%	11/22 = 50%	4/22 = 18%	2/22 = 9%	1/22 = 5%
	4 Mild	5 Mild 4 Moderate 2 Heavy	3 Moderate 1 Heavy	1 Moderate 1 Heavy	1 Moderate
Group B (Discovery learning: run-on sentences)	10/21 = 48%	7/21 = 33%	2/21 = 9.5%	2/21 = 9.5%	0/21
	9 Mild 1 Moderate	6 Moderate	2 Moderate	2 Heavy	

category do not use that run-on early in the essay. In contrast, students displaying Mild Use of run-ons in Group A (all of whom used only one run-on sentence in their essays) did so within the first 145 words 56% of the time. Because Group A's use of run-on sentences occurs early in their essays more than half of the time, it is more likely that their use is due to a lack of understanding rather than academic fatigue, as indicated in Group B.

The same indication occurs in the students whose use is moderate (see Figure 1): in Group B, 11% had no run-ons in the first 145 words, 67% of the student essays contain only one run-on in the first 145 words, 22% contained two run-ons in the first 145 words, and none contained three or four early in the essay. Group A, on the other hand, saw 44% of Moderate Users with one run-on in the first 145 words, 33% with two, and 11% each with three or four. Even with Moderate Use, Group B students are much more likely to have no more than one run-on early in the essay (78%) than those in Group A (44%).

In addition, in only two cases—9.5% of run-on users—did Group B students use all of their run-on sentences in the first 145 words. Eight Group A students—36% of the run-on users—used all of their run-ons within the first 145 words. All of these findings

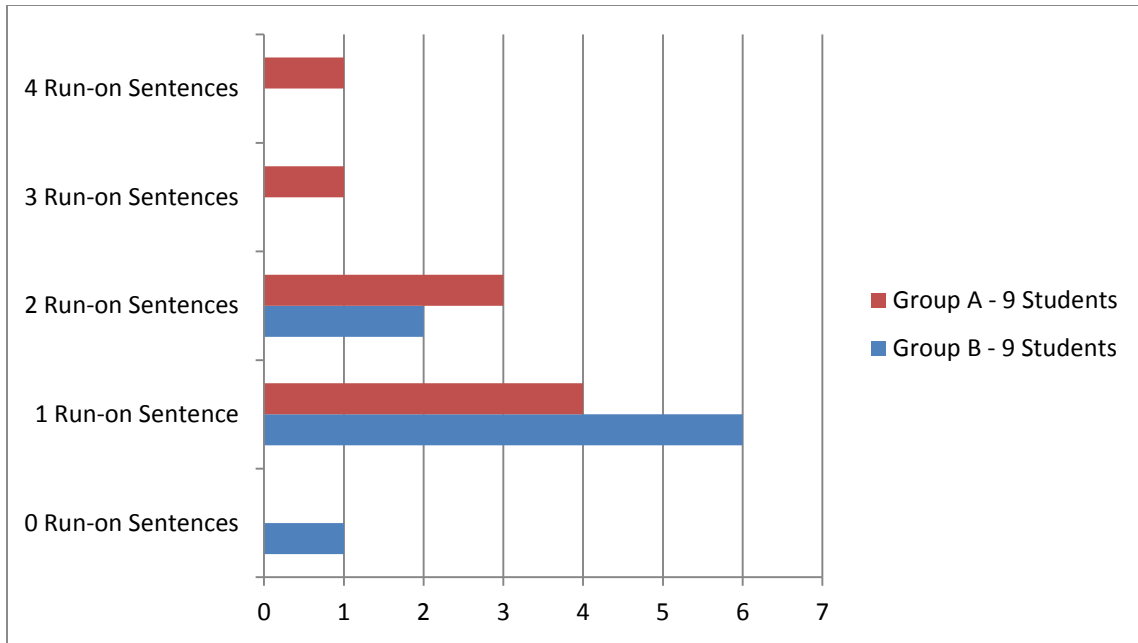


Figure 1: Number of Run-on Sentences Used Within First 145 Words Among Moderate Users of Run-on Sentences

indicate that Group B students are more likely to use run-on sentences because of academic fatigue in their writing or editing process than because of a lack of understanding of the concept. The reverse is true for Group A students: their use of run-on sentences is more likely due to a lack of understanding than to academic fatigue.

The lighter use of run-ons in the first 145 words may explain another difference between the two groups of students: Group A showed a 4-point score difference between mild and non users, and Group B showed no difference. In other words, Group A students' scores increased when they used few or no run-on sentences, and Group B students' scores did not see such improvement (see Table 3). It is possible that, because Group A students were more likely to use one or more of their run-on sentences early in the essay, the perceived readability or quality of the work was diminished in the mind of

Table 3: Average Essay Score (out of 100) as Related to Frequency of Run-on Use

	No Use 0% Run-ons	Mild Use 1-5% Run-ons	Moderate Use 6-20% Run-ons	Heavy Use 21+% Run-ons
Group A (no discovery learning activities)	81.2 (95 high; 66 low)	84.5 (92 high; 75 low)	78.8 (92 high; 60 low)	77.3 (82 high; 66 low)
	82.4		78.3	
Group B (discovery learning: run-on sentences)	78.8 (92 high; 67 low)	76.6 (90 high; 65 low)	80.3 (89 high; 69 low)	66 (80 high; 52 low)
	77.7		77.7	

the grading reader, and therefore the scores reflected that indication. This possibility and others will be discussed in greater detail in both the “Results of Analysis of Essay Evaluations” section of this chapter and the Conclusions chapter.

#### Results of Analysis of Student Reflections

In addition to the qualitative data indicated by the students’ performance in written assessments, understanding students’ own reflections on their understanding is another facet of the data triangulation. Tabulating student reflection data requires responses directly from students regarding their perceived understanding and evidence of whether or not their perception is accurate. Because the survey focuses on student understanding and recall of the discovery learning activities, only Group B students took the survey. In the first four questions of the student survey, students were asked to identify what the error or errors in a sentence were and how they would fix them. The results showed several interesting trends (see Figure 2).

First, students were much better able to identify a run-on sentence when there were no other errors present in the sentence. In the sentence with no other errors, 64% of

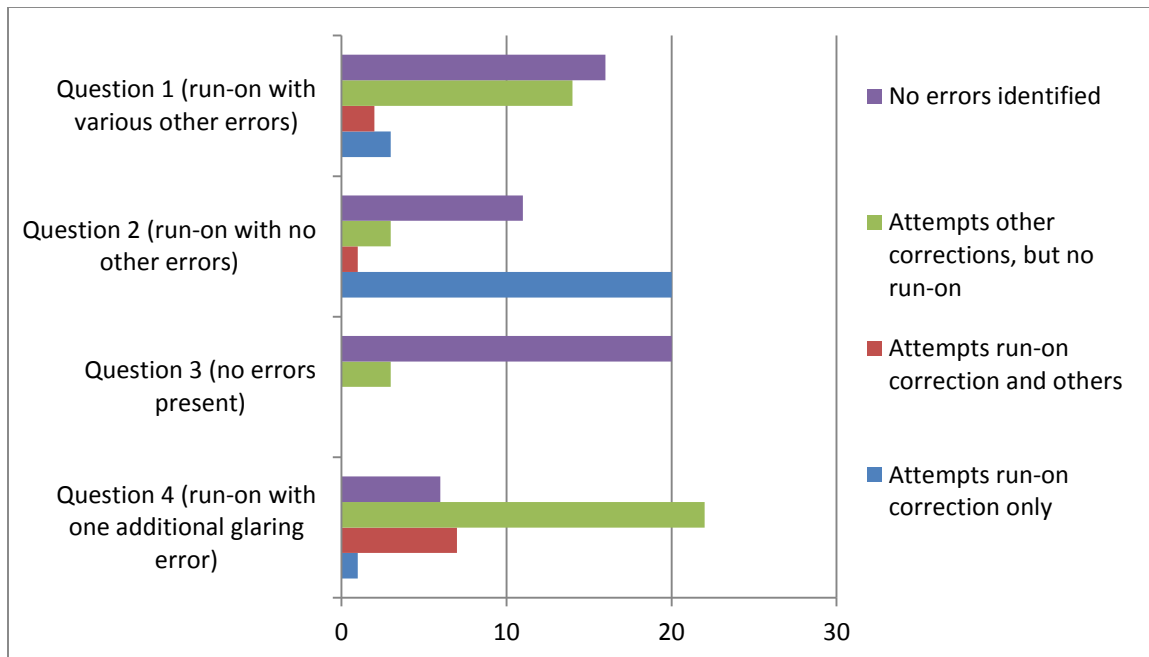


Figure 2: Students' Ability to Identify Run-on Sentences and Attempt Correction in Isolation

students were able to identify the run-on as an error. In the sentence with several other errors, only 14% of students were able to identify the run-on. In the sentence with only one other error—but an error that should have been clearly obvious to most students (*government* spelled *Govern Mint*)—only 22% of students were able to identify the run-on. This indicates that in the face of other errors that are more easily recognizable to the students, run-on sentences may be too subtle or of lesser significance to students for identification.

Next, of the students who did recognize the run-on sentences in questions 1, 2, and 4, most of them did not correct them in a way that would avoid being flagged as run-ons for the purposes of this study in an essay. Of the 34 identifications of run-on sentences, only in 9 instances (27%) did students offer a solution which corrected the run-on. Almost all the incorrect revisions involved adding a comma and nothing else

(thus creating a comma splice). In fact, in question 3, a correct sentence using a semi-colon, almost one-quarter of the respondents suggested changing the semi-colon to a comma.

In all of the sentences containing errors, a significant number of students indicated that they saw no errors or did not know what was wrong with the sentence. In question 1, 43% of respondents indicated no error present; in question 2, 30% indicated no error present; and in question 4, 17% indicated no error present. Overall, when errors were present in the example sentences, 30% of the time students indicated the opposite: they believed no errors existed where there were, in fact, errors. The results of the first four questions indicate that the students seem to have significant difficulty recognizing run-on sentences unless the run-on is the only error in the sentence, and even when they do recognize the run-on, they are unlikely to correct it according to the standards students developed in the discovery learning activity for this study.

Interestingly enough, the students mostly remembered the discovery learning activity and did not believe that their grasp of identifying and correcting run-on sentences was so tenuous. Almost three-quarters of respondents remembered the activity (see Figure 3), and over half of the respondents believed that the activity helped them find and correct run-on sentences in their own work (see Figure 4). Finally, 83% of students believed that participating in the discovery learning activity helped them revise their classmates' work for run-on sentences in peer reviews (see Figure 5).

In addition, students had the opportunity to explain their responses to questions 6 and 8. Students skipped these response explanation questions more often than any others on the survey, but the remaining responses showed wide variety in why students believed

the activity did or did not help them in their own writing as well as what was most or least helpful about the activity for learning to peer edit. Because several students did not respond to the questions and because some students offered more than one reason for each question, the results of each explanation request do not line up neatly with the original number of responses to the referenced question. Breakdowns of responses for questions 7 and 9 can be found in Table 4 and Table 5, respectively.

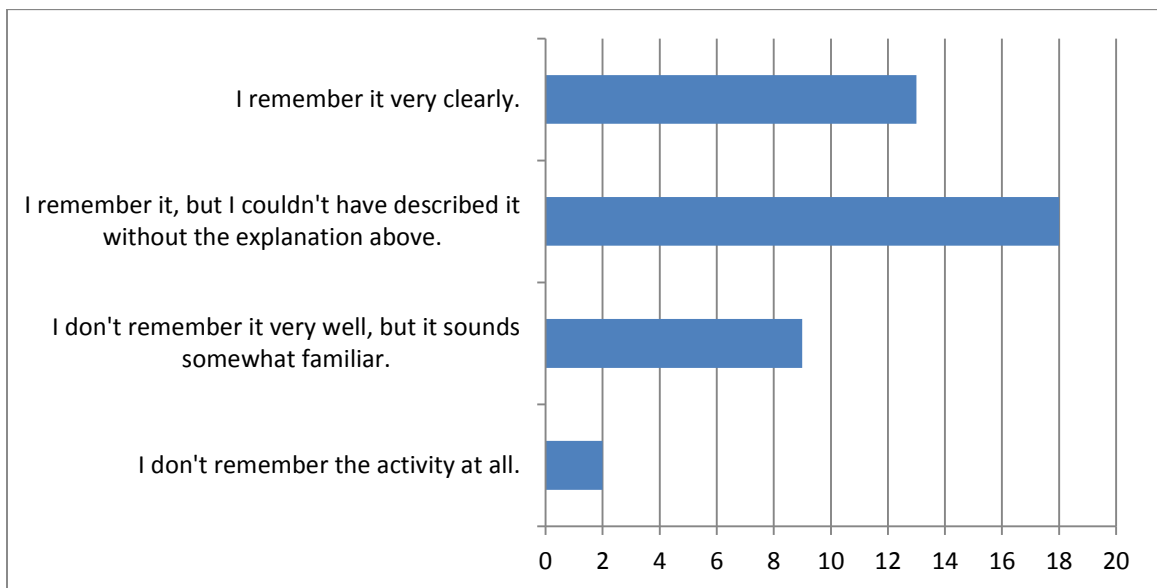


Figure 3: Responses to Question 5 (How well do you remember the activity?)

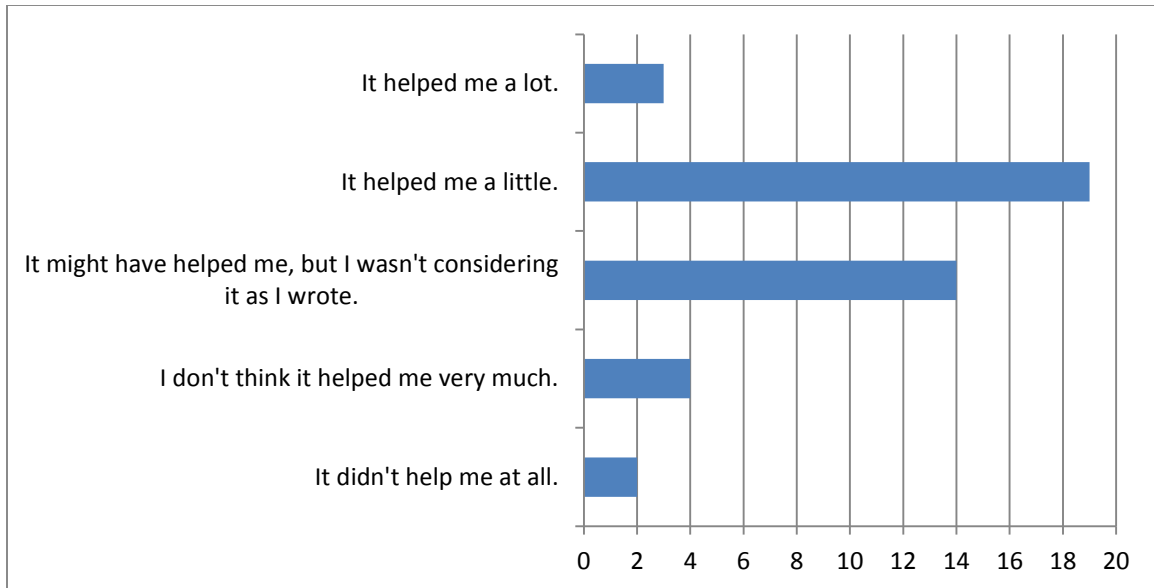


Figure 4: Responses to Question 6 (How much do you think that activity helped you in your own writing to correct your own sentences that might have needed to be broken up into multiple sentences?)

Table 4: Explanation Breakdown of Responses to Question 7 (Explain your response to Question 6.)

Reasons the Activity Was Not Helpful		Reasons the Activity Was Helpful	
Reason Given	Number	Reason Given	Number
I already understood run-on sentences OR My essay didn't have run-on sentences	7	It made me look at sentences individually for run-on sentences	4
There were too many errors to find the run-ons	2	The examples helped me	4
It was confusing	1	I had forgotten about run-on sentences	2
My group caused problems for understanding	1	Made me think beyond spelling and grammar	1
Others did the work for me, so I didn't learn it well	1	Getting feedback in a group helped me	1
There was not enough teacher explanations	1	<b>NOTE: Two students offered unclear explanations, and four noted that they didn't remember why; neither of these responses could be clearly categorized under helpful or unhelpful.</b>	
It was boring	1		

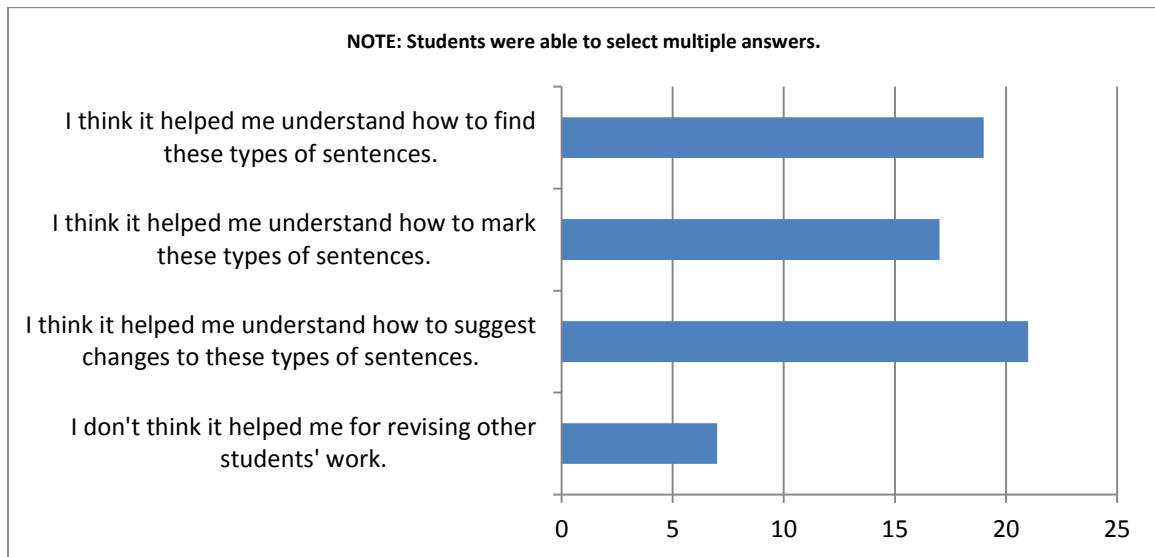


Figure 5: Responses to Question 8 (How do you think this activity prepared you to edit other students' papers for sentence construction?)

Table 5: Explanation Breakdown of Responses to Question 9 (Explain your response to Question 8.)

When Helpful	Explanation	Number
Helped with Group Rewrites of Essays	Comparing my work with partners was helpful	3
	Group collaboration resulted in better suggestions	2
	I liked doing corrections together before revising	1
Helped with Peer Reviews	It made it easier to mark errors in others' work	2
	Made the second opinions more valuable	1
Helped with Own Writing	Seeing others' mistakes helps me avoid them	3
	I like seeing what not to do in addition to what to do	2
No Explanation Given	<i>(In this category, some responses were those that did not answer the question or did not make sense.)</i>	9
It Helped Others	I already knew the material, but I believe other students benefited from the activity	2
Never (The Activity Did Not Help Me)	I don't remember it	3
	My peers were unhelpful	1
	I didn't understand the activity	1
	It was boring	1



There is a clear discrepancy between the students' ability to recognize and correct run-on sentences in the survey questions and the students' self-perception of their ability to recognize and correct run-on sentences in their own and others' work. Some of this discrepancy is explained through their relatively consistent ability to recognize run-on sentences when the run-on is the only error in the sentence: the students don't recognize that they consistently miss run-on sentences when there are other errors present. Some, too, may be explained through the difference in stakes of the two activities: the writing and revision of the essay was a high-stakes assignment because the essay is worth roughly one-third of the students' quarter grade in the English half of the course and twenty percent of the Geography quarter grade. The survey was guaranteed anonymous and not taken for a score. More than anything, though, the discrepancy indicates that students may believe they are more proficient or capable in certain skills or concepts than they really are.

#### Results of Analysis of Essay Evaluations

Finally, in addition to quantitative data for determining level of understanding year-over-year and qualitative and quantitative data in student reflections, qualitative analysis of essay readability year-over-year is the third branch of the triangulated data collected and analyzed. The first part of this data had instructors ranking the eight essays from most readable to least readable. The instructions for this portion of the data did not specifically have the teacher-analysts looking for run-on sentences or other sentence-level errors, but instead asked them for an overall readability ranking and then comments to explain those rankings. The teacher-analyst rankings are shown in Table 6 with a breakdown of overall rankings, as well. Essays from Group A are shaded in the table.

Table 6: Essay Evaluation Rankings

Group A essays are shaded; Group B essays are unshaded.

Rank →	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Maggie	Essay E	Essay B	Essay H	Essay A	Essay G	Essay D	Essay C	Essay F
Arthur	Essay B	Essay D	Essay C	Essay H	Essay E	Essay G	Essay A	Essay F
Sophia	Essay B	Essay D	Essay C	Essay F	Essay E	Essay G	Essay H	Essay A
<b>Overall</b>	<b>Essay B</b>	<b>Essay D</b>	<b>Essay E</b>	<b>Essay C</b>	<b>Essay H</b>	<b>Essay G</b>	<b>Essay A</b>	<b>Essay F</b>

The results of the teacher-analyst evaluations shows that Group A students—those who did not participate in the discovery learning activity—scored more consistently at the bottom of the rankings. In fact, Group A essays ranked in the bottom half 67% of the time, while the opposite was true of the Group B essays, which were in the top half of the rankings 67% of the time. In the initial evaluations, Arthur’s explanation of both of his bottom choices—Essays A and F—included mention of run-on sentences being a distraction from the meaning of the essay. Maggie also mentioned sentence structure as a barrier to understanding in Essay F. None of Sophia’s initial evaluation explanations involved specific reference to sentence structure or run-on sentences, except a mention that Essay C used long-winded sentences; she also commented that the long-winded nature of the sentences did not negatively affect readability.

In the second part of the evaluation, teacher-analysts were asked to comment specifically on the sentence structure within each essay. In Maggie’s evaluation of sentence structure, she mentioned run-on sentences being a factor in both of her bottom-ranked essays (Essays C and F). Arthur deferred to comment further on sentence structure, as his initial comments had revolved around sentence construction as a primary factor in readability. These two teacher-analysts commented that the bottom two essays

in their rankings contained run-on sentences that negatively affected readability. In Arthur's evaluation, the use of run-on sentences was part of his initial reasoning to place the essays at the bottom of the list. In Maggie's evaluation, run-ons were likely part of what she referred to in part of her initial comment about Essay F: "Sentences/language difficult to follow." It is also likely that run-on sentences were a factor in a portion of her initial comment about Essay C: "Unclear paragraph topics and explanations," as she notes in the second set of comments, "Run-on sentences are confusing. Combine that with word choice issues and general ideas, and the paper as a whole is lost." Run-on sentences were a clear detriment to readability for these two teacher-analysts.

Sophia's comments on sentence structure were more of an outlier, as she focused primarily on the formality of the structure, noting several times that the sentences were structured like teenage conversations. Between the two essays she ranked lowest, she noted that Essay H "rambled on," a characteristic sometimes noted in run-on sentences, and that Essay A had "too many errors to have proper flow." Because her comments had a significantly different focus than those of either Maggie or Arthur, I spoke with her about potential differences in her expectations of students based on her student population. In this conversation, she revealed that with her co-taught students, her main focus is in getting them to communicate appropriately for audience and purpose: formality and meaning are key. Issues like sentences construction are lower on the priority scale for her because simply getting her students to communicate appropriately is so difficult. Thus, her comments focused on those elements more prominent in co-taught writing instruction and evaluation and less on sentence structure issues like run-ons.

## Chapter 5

### Conclusions of the Study

The most significant question of the research was whether or not discovery learning techniques used to teach writing skills—and specifically convention skills such as run-on sentences—impact student learning and transfer of that learning to their written work. The data indicates that the answer to that question is yes with certain caveats. Student essays from the classes who participated in the discovery learning activity targeting run-on sentences contained 10% fewer run-on sentences overall and 21% fewer run-on sentences per essay than those in the classes that did not participate in discovery learning. Half as many students in the discovery learning group exhibited heavy use of run-on sentences as those in the non-discovery learning group, and the discovery learning group showed a greater percentage of students who exhibited no use of run-ons than the non-discovery learning group.

More convincing—and perhaps more significant—in terms of run-on sentence avoidance is the evidence regarding student use of run-ons within the first 145 words of the essay. Students who had participated in the discovery learning activity had a much lower incidence of using run-ons within the first 145 words of the essay than those who did not benefit from discovery learning. Because the student population in question is primarily made up of struggling and reluctant learners, academic fatigue is often at play in their work. Reduced use of run-ons in the early part of the essay indicates that students were able to avoid run-ons early in their writing or recognize and correct for them early in their revision process, but as their academic stamina wore down, their use of run-on sentences increased (or their ability to edit for run-ons decreased).

Early use of run-on sentences proves problematic in essay readability. In the eight representative essays given to teacher-analysts to evaluate, only one contained more than one run-on sentence in the first 145 words: Essay F, the last-place finisher in terms of readability. Because it was part of the sample, the essay had to have scored at or close to the average score for the class (it scored a 78), meaning that there had to be enough evidence and meaning present in the content of the essay to score in the Needs Improvement range of the rubric rather than the Unsatisfactory range. Still, two of the three evaluators scored it dead last in their rankings, citing run-on sentences as a significant reason it was difficult to follow. In Sophia's rankings, where she focused little on sentence construction and significantly on meaning and formality, Essay F placed 4<sup>th</sup>. It is probable, then, that an essay that begins with multiple run-on sentences may prejudice even an experienced reader against its overall readability and perhaps even content, making detection and correction of early run-on sentences that much more important in order for students to communicate successfully.

Interestingly, while the data indicate that readability improves with fewer run-on sentences and improves significantly with few run-on sentences early in the essay, the average essay scores between the two classes do not show an improvement in grades with the improvement in avoidance of run-on sentences. In fact, the average scores for Group B are lower than those for Group A in both the No—Mild Use category (77.7 versus 82.4) and the Moderate—Heavy Use category (77.7 versus 78.3). Anecdotally, the B group is academically weaker than the A group, and this appears to be true in the case of the sample essays, as well. Only 10% of each student's overall essay grade is related to "grammar," the category under which use of run-on sentences falls. Therefore, if

students are using numerous run-on sentences, their scores are likely to only be affected by a few percentage points—generally no more than four. Differences in scores based on more limited run-on use would be subtle at best. But if Group B is weaker academically, as their instructors indicate, their scores would be affected much more by weaknesses in argument development and use of evidence and quotations, categories that make up 70% of the overall essay grade. (The remaining 20% of the essay is scored based on language formality and introductions and conclusions.) So while the difference in scores between Group A and Group B do not reflect improvement in spite of lower incidence of run-on sentences, the score imbalance may reflect improvement in run-on sentence avoidance, but that improvement would be masked by lower overall scores in more valuable categories on the rubric.

A more telling comparison, then, is that of each group's own scores between mild or non-users and moderate or heavy users of run-on sentences. In Group A, the average score of mild and non-users is 82.4, and the average score of moderate and heavy users is 78.3. This difference indicates a 4.1-point drop in score among students who use run-on sentences more frequently. It is possible that difference in score could be attributed almost entirely to run-on sentence use alone: because students in Group A were more likely to use run-on sentences early in the essay, when the grading reader would be gaining an initial impressions of the essay, it is likely that run-on sentences in Group A would see greater penalization than those in Group B, where they are used less frequently at the beginning of the essay.

This change is evidenced in the lack of a score drop between mild and non-users and moderate and heavy users in Group B. The gap between the scores is nonexistent in

Group B, indicating that their lower scores were almost certainly due to issues other than run-on sentences, and that perhaps early avoidance of run-on sentences—even among moderate and heavy users of run-ons—improves readability. The similarity in scores between the frequencies of run-on use in Group B might also indicate that other “grammatical” issues were so widespread among the group that they were not earning all of the points in the grammar strand of the rubric, anyway, and therefore decreased use of run-ons could not improve their score because of the presence of other types of errors that fall under the grammar category (fragments, capitalization issues, other punctuation issues, homophone misuse, etc.).

Group B’s potential detrimental use of other errors connects directly to the student survey data. The survey results produced an important question: if the Group B students have shown improvement in avoiding run-on use, why do they have so much difficulty identifying and correcting run-ons? Through the discovery learning activity, the students produced several revisions of run-on sentences, and those revisions were shared with the class and discussed. This discussion and the sample revisions the students came up with included various options for fixing run-on sentences: semi-colons, periods, commas with coordinating conjunctions (I did not use the term “coordinating conjunction” in class in order to avoid overwhelming students with terminology they don’t need in order to execute the correction). Several groups had chosen to fix the run-on sentences with commas but no coordinating conjunction, a strategy we discussed and practiced avoiding at length, but apparently, this is one area where the discovery learning activity fell short.

When the students were able to identify the run-on sentence, 68% of the time they offered a comma alone as the way to correct it. This number is similar to the percentage

of run-on sentences students wrote that used a comma without a coordinating conjunction: 61% of the run-ons exhibited by Group B were comma splices. The high percentage of comma splices indicates that perhaps the students recognize run-on sentences more frequently than their writing shows: if they are correcting run-ons with comma splices, they are simply replacing one run-on with another. But the recognition of needing some sort of punctuation in order to separate the clauses is a step in the right direction, and comma splices are easier—generally—for readers to understand than run-ons with no punctuation at all, so meaning-making is likely still improving in these cases. Further, this step in the right direction is one that the students who benefited from the discovery learning activity took more often than their counterparts the previous year: in Group A, the percentage of comma splices among the total run-on sentences was 46%. Thus, Group B students were 25% more likely than Group A students to have recognized their run-on sentences but then have corrected them with another form of run-on. Data from the surveys indicate that this is a strong possibility among the Group B students.

The students' "correction" of run-on sentences with only a comma explains other things about the student survey data, as well: why the students believed they had improved more than their corrections indicate, why many students tried to change a correct semi-colon to an incorrect comma, and why some students may not have recognized the run-ons that contained only a comma to divide the clauses. The data from the student surveys paired with their percentage of comma splice use in their essays indicates that they believe they know how to solve run-on sentences. Over half of the students believed the activity helped them in avoiding run-on sentences in their own work, and 83% believed that it helped them in identifying and correcting run-ons when



peer editing others' work. Of the 1,036 sentences written in Group B, 30 of them, or 2.9%, were comma splices the students likely would have believed were complete, correct sentences. These sentences were certainly overlooked by most students in both their reviews of their own work and their reviews of others' work because they believed them to be correct sentences.

Their belief that a comma alone solves a run-on sentence explains a good deal of the data in the sentence-correction page of the survey, as well. The sentence presented in the first question was a comma splice with other errors present. It was the only comma splice presented for correction, and only 14% of the students recognized the run-on. Of course, the presence of other errors also accounts for students missing the run-on error, but in the other two run-on sentences, more students were able to recognize the run-on regardless of the presence of other errors. In addition, the belief that a comma splice fixes a run-on sentence also explains the responses to question 2, wherein the only error was the run-on sentence that contained no punctuation dividing the independent clauses. In question 2, 60% of students were able to identify the run-on as a problem in the sentence (and 95% of the students who correctly noted the presence of a run-on error did not try to correct anything else in the sentence), but only three (14%) of them were able to correct it. Without a doubt, all 16 students (76%) who offered a comma alone as the solution believed they had corrected a run-on sentence (two students noted that the sentence was a run-on, but offered no clear solution).

The students' comma-splice solution also explained, to a certain degree, their inclination to change the correct semi-colon in question 3 to a comma. Twenty-five percent of the students suggested changing the semi-colon to a comma in their responses.

Eleven percent suggested eliminating the semi-colon and replacing it with something other than a comma, and 75% of those students suggested making the two independent clauses separate sentences, thus fixing what wasn't broken, but not breaking it in the process. Because many of the students have developed a misunderstanding about how to correct run-on sentences, run-ons continue to appear in their writing, and they are likely to suggest comma-splice creation in their peer reviews. The good news, however, is that students are more likely to recognize unpunctuated run-ons after completing discovery learning activities—especially if the run-on is the only error in the sentence—than if they did not participate in discovery learning. Clearly, though, additional follow-up—perhaps in the form of another discovery learning activity—is necessary to ensure that the students not only improve in recognition of such errors, but also in correction of them.

It is important in examining these results that the reader be aware of a few issues of time and content that may have negatively impacted the results. First, my selection of passages for students to use as examples may have contained too many errors for the students to be able to clearly develop an understanding of the negative impact of run-on sentences on expository writing. All three samples the students studied to discover run-on use were littered with other errors. As my instructional assistant and I worked the classroom during the initial activities, it was clear that students were most quickly and most often noticing the distractions in the passages other than the run-on structure. Both she and I asked leading questions intended to point students in the direction of locating the run-ons (questions such as, “Is there anything else the writer does that makes the passage hard to follow?” or “Is that the only thing making it hard to understand?”), which virtually all students—and later student pairs—were able to do. Because the passages

had had several obvious surface errors such as the use of *u* instead of *you*, and because their surveys later in the study made it clear that surface errors make the structural errors much more challenging for the students to recognize, it is possible that selection of passages with fewer other distracting errors would have resulted in clearer understanding for the students.

Also, while it may have been advantageous to consider student responses to the original exercises as another component of the study, I was more focused on the outcome in student writing than the results in the process. Because both my instructional assistant and I were working the room during the original activity to check for understanding and use leading questions to help students discover the sentence-level errors, and because the eventual sharing and discussion of the rewritten paragraphs indicated the success of the activity at that time, I opted not to collect and evaluate all of the student activity sheets.

Another possible weakness in the study is the timing of the lesson in relationship to the anticipated skill use in the essay. Students participated in the discovery learning lesson more than a week before they would begin writing the essay in question and more than three weeks before they would complete the final peer review—the one that focuses on conventions, including avoidance of run-on sentences. While there was a revision assessment wherein students practiced their run-on avoidance skills, and that fell directly after the discovery learning activity, there was little review or practice of the skill between that assessment and the essays used in this study. Ideally, additional opportunities for review and practice of the skill should have been implemented earlier in the writing process for the essay. My original intention had been to see if the students

would retain and transfer their learning, but it is possible that the gap in time was greater than many students could span for this particular skill.

The conclusions must be tempered, too, because the sample size of both groups is relatively small, and therefore small changes from one year to the next make a significant difference. The decreasing trend in run-on use from Group A to Group B was represented by the shift of two students. In Group B, two fewer students were heavy users of run-ons; two more used no run-ons. This is a relatively small number of essays on which to base significant findings. Still, the results of the study indicate that improvement in avoidance of run-on sentences is possible through use of discovery learning pedagogy and that additional use of discovery learning in the writing classroom should be studied for further verification of results.

Overall, this initial study indicates that discovery learning can help students develop certain writing skills. While this pilot study is relatively small and would require a larger, more comprehensive study to verify that discovery learning leads to improved learning in the writing classroom, its results are promising. The evidence indicates that a single discovery-learning lesson can improve student understanding, but that follow-up activities may be necessary for more complete understanding. A discussion of additional activities that pair well with discovery learning are in Chapter 6. In addition, it would be interesting to study the use of discovery learning in more abstract writing skills such as use of dialogue for character development or use of quotation introduction and explanation for proving claims. A variety of additional discovery-learning activities, as mentioned in Chapter 6, may be found in Appendices A-E.

## Chapter 6

### Supplementing Discovery Learning in the Writing Classroom

The sample discovery exercise is a good starting point for the types of activities and exercises necessary for lower-level students to start discovering writing conventions and transferring use of those conventions in order to positively impact the meaning of their writing. And the evidence shows that discovery learning does positively impact student learning and transfer. While the scaffolded system of discovery learning I propose is a good basis for teaching remedial writers, there are additional methods endorsed by composition experts and backed by research that can be employed effectively alongside the discovery learning activities. In this section, I will explore additional possibilities to supplement and enhance writing instruction that pair well with discovery learning.

#### Reading

The Connors and Lunsford study “shows a proliferation of error patterns that seem to suggest declining familiarity with the visual look of a written page” (406). In other words, students who are repeatedly making the most common errors are likely those who are not well read. In Lunsford’s piece “What We Know—and Don’t Know—About Remedial Writing,” she repeatedly emphasizes the importance of reading instruction in helping to develop the writing skills of remedial students, she laments the removal of reading instruction from writing courses, and she notes that “especially in the remedial classroom, the reunion of reading and writing instruction is a consummation devoutly to be wished” (51). She found that with increased attention to students’ reading skills, their

writing skills also improved, and use of reading for improvements in writing should be a focus in the writing classroom.

In my own classroom, we do regular read-alouds paired with discussions. Most of the time, I read a chapter, story, or article aloud—passage by passage—stopping to discuss meaning, word choice, use of conventions, and various other elements. As a class and in small groups, students offer their opinions, questions, and observations. These group read-alouds serve several academic purposes: (1) They push students to interact with written texts in a way they are generally unused to doing, (2) they encourage higher-order thinking in reading, (3) they allow students a safe space to ask questions, making inquiry a requirement rather than an embarrassment, and (4) they expose students who would otherwise not complete the reading to the text in a meaningful way that virtually assures understanding of at least the segments we read together.

One way that reading skills could be used to help students with their writing (aside from simply exposing them to written texts that offer examples of convention use) is in selecting passages and pieces from which particular skills might be drawn. Barbara Stanford suggests a similar approach. She explains that “many struggling readers conceive of the task of reading as calling words, not making meaning [and] for these students, the primary task is to shift the focus to making meaning” (61). By helping students shift from simply reading the word to constructing meaning, students will be better prepared to start making sense of the text before them. Stanford’s primary purpose in her piece is helping students make meaning of their reading through understanding the grammatical structures that underlie that meaning, but I argue that through discovery tasks that use reading passages, students can develop the understanding with little

instruction and improve their reading skills at the same time. She suggests an activity using a dialogue-heavy text to help students understand the visual cues on the page to determine who is speaking. Her activity, which includes both having students recreate the scenes in small groups reading aloud and annotating the passages to indicate which character is speaking, could be adapted as part of a dialogue-punctuation discovery activity (See Appendix B).

In addition, teachers can use texts that include examples of writers using the type of writing skills the teacher wants students to work on as examples. The truth is that designing some of the more complex discovery activities could become very time consuming if the teacher is doing all of the example writing. Instead, instructors can use passages from materials they are already using in class or add passages that enhance their core texts and serve as examples of the skills and conventions the instructor is hoping to lead them to understand. For example, the parallelism exercise in Appendix C includes Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech, which complements my third-quarter anchor text, *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee. When reading the passages, instructors need to help students develop their inquiry skills by asking questions: How does the pattern/convention work? Where else do you see examples of the convention? Is this the only use for this particular punctuation, word, etc.? Then, "students look for examples, not the right answer; they evaluate *why* and what effect the concept or strategy has on the writer's message and craft. Students take a thinking stance rather than a right-wrong stance" (Anderson 34). Not only does this increase the amount of reading and inquiry the students are doing (and presumably improves their reading strategies by

means of working with the text in various ways in class and through the activities), but it decreases the amount of writing the instructor has to do to create the activities.

Real-world writing can also be an excellent example of how writers break the rules and continue to write effectively. Joseph Williams's piece "The Phenomenology of Error" intentionally contains scores of "errors" to illustrate this point: few people notice the errors until Williams notes at the end of the piece that they exist. Students who struggle with writing tend to believe that their goal in academic writing is to be error free rather than to make meaning, and showing them that experienced writers do not always follow the rules can be liberating for them. This should not be taken as a means to avoid helping students who make errors that confuse their meanings, however. As Lunsford notes, "most remedial students are greatly concerned with error and view the teacher's avoidance of it as a general cop-out or a tacit admission of defeat" ("What We Know" 50). In my experience, as well, most of my high school freshmen—but overwhelmingly so in the block—want to focus on error rather than content. Even in very early drafts, they want to focus on spelling, punctuation, and word choice rather than the meaning and whether they are adequately expressing the ideas they intend. In the numerous revisions and peer editing activities we do in class, only the last one allows students to consider these errors unless previous errors impair meaning. Addressing error while not overemphasizing it is an important balance with lower-level writers.

### Corpus Use

Another possibility for limiting the amount of original material an instructor might need to develop in order to create the scaffolded discovery activities is Dilin Liu's idea of using linguistic corpora for grammar instruction. As Liu explains, "a corpus is a



collection of linguistic data, spoken and/or written compiled primarily for the purpose of research” (354). Initially, using a corpus might be a good tactic for an instructor looking for examples of a particular type of language use in the real world rather than having to come up with samples of her own. There are several free online corpora, and Liu lists three: Brigham Young University’s COCA (Corpus of Contemporary American English), *Time* Corpus, and BNC (British National Corpus). A brief overview of each corpus finds that they are relatively easy to use and provide an extraordinary number of results per search. For finding real-world samples of language and convention use, corpora offer a tremendous resource.

The concept of using corpora also might be of interest to teachers whose students have begun to truly grasp the inquiry skills of discovery learning so that they might be able to use them independently. Liu notes that “corpus use is especially helpful for learning lexicogrammatical usage rules and patterns” (357) and “such corpus-based learning is very effective because it engages learners in active ‘discovery learning’” (358). An issue with using corpora for high school students is in the complexity of becoming familiar enough with the method to do meaningful research in a timely manner. Because COCA contains over 400 million words, the search results can be staggering. Even *Time* Corpus and BNC are 100 million words each. With students who are easily overwhelmed, a simple search of *gonna* resulting in 25,850 results would be too much. They might either take the first twenty results (which may or may not meet the needs of whatever they are investigating) or give up entirely. Liu notes that his college-age students felt overwhelmed, but “if students devote the time and are persistent, they can devise workable solutions” (372). If the students have found the confidence and

persistence through the discovery process to do this type of research, it might be a worthwhile opportunity, but considering the aptitudes and attitudes of lower-level high school freshmen, corpus use may be limited to the instructor finding examples for students to investigate.

#### Reduced Emphasis on Error Correction

As previously mentioned, attempting to work on all errors in remedial student writing will only lead to exhaustion in the instructor and destruction of confidence and defeat in the writer. While the set of conventions covered by the scaffolded discovery system are broad, marking student papers for all of them every time would be futile. Instead, the instructor should focus on two things when marking student essays: (1) the errors that cause confusion for the reader, and (2) errors in the conventions that the class has worked on through the discovery learning system as a means of reinforcing that learning. Virtually all of my feedback in error correction is limited to these two foci. In addition, rather than marking errors by type or explanation in student drafts, Hartwell cites Richard H. Haswell: “students correct 61.1% of their errors when they are identified with a simple mark in the margin rather than by error type” (223). This suggests that students can find their own errors when given clues as to their whereabouts and that additional identification may not be necessary. By marking errors in this way, students are also less likely to be disheartened by a draft hemorrhaging the instructor’s red ink.

Another strategy for reducing emphasis on error is to focus most peer review sessions on content rather than proofreading or editing. My students revise several drafts for content before they are allowed to shift their focus to conventions and style. By focusing most of the students’ energies in the first few drafts and peer reviews on

whether or not the content makes sense and is convincing, students should begin to recognize the importance of content over correctness. In addition, focusing so squarely on content should also help students to recognize when their errors are causing reader confusion and why those types of errors are most important to address. Only the very last peer review should be dedicated to proofreading, and then it can—and probably should—be focused primarily on specific areas that students have worked on in class in the discovery learning activities and practiced in their reader’s response notebooks.

### Writer’s and Reader’s Notebooks

Anderson, in his suggestions of zooming in and out on conventions, has his students keep writer’s notebooks where students write down the concepts they are learning and then play with those concepts in their own writing. He notes that students in his classroom “combine three types of instruction: *separated*, *simulated*, and *integrated*” (32-33). The students’ writer’s notebooks provide a means by which students experience the simulated type of instruction: they practice the conventions they learn in separated instruction in the notebooks. Thus, the students have an immediate application of the skills or concepts they have learned.

In my classroom, students have notebooks in which they respond to prompts about the reading they are doing or other topics of interest in class. One of the required assessments in my district’s ninth-grade curriculum is a quarterly word-choice and structure “journal” wherein the students write evaluations and analyses of the word choice and structure in the readings they have completed. For my lower-level students, they have several notebook entries to choose from for each of the four required entries in the assessment, and the students have the opportunity to select their best entries and

revise them before submitting them for a score. These notebooks provide an excellent opportunity for students to simulate the conventions they learn by discovery in groups, and the practice students did in locating and correcting run-ons in this study was a journal revision assessment. Because we write in them nearly every day (more often when we are working our way through an anchor text; less often when we are primarily focused on a longer writing piece), they offer an excellent opportunity for students to practice their skills in a format that is safe for mistakes but also that will eventually be revisited for a larger assignment.

### Studying Grammar Through Grammar Issues

Dunn and Lindblom, who are highly critical of teaching standard English grammar, have a few additional suggestions that might be of use to the remedial high school writing classroom. One of their suggestions is to keep a “Grammar-Controversy Archive” in which both the instructor and the students could contribute articles, essays, or other pieces that discuss grammatical issues. In reading through them, students will come to a better understanding of some of the language issues they may not currently even be aware of. Another suggestion Dunn and Lindblom provide is exploring unfamiliar or other grammars or Englishes. This suggestion is particularly interesting to me, as most of my students are middle-class white kids who know little of Englishes other than standard American English. A third idea presented in the article is teaching students to use style manuals rather than trying to teach them the rules contained within. Because college-bound students will certainly need to use style manuals in their post-secondary writing, this is an excellent suggestion.

## Food for Thought

Discovery learning has significant promise as a pedagogical method for developing improved writing in struggling readers and writers. This study focuses on the use of discovery learning in helping students come to a better understanding of and ability to use conventions. But discovery learning is not a method for teaching conventions only. While I have proven its value with run-on sentence reduction and correction in lower-level students, that is only one example of its potential use in writing pedagogy. The point and purpose of my analysis and development of this method of teaching and learning for writing was to provide a method that would work for struggling students learning the basics of sentence construction through advanced students trying to develop stronger evidence or argument. It could be adapted for use in creative writing classes, technical writing classes, and writing across the curriculum. Because the method pushes metacognition, collaboration, and using evidence or data to develop hypotheses or draw conclusions, its application potential in the field of teaching writing is broad.

It is perhaps most important, however, in high school writing curricula and with students at nearly any level who struggle because in both cases, writing instruction is sometimes reduced to boring, predictable, formulaic shortcuts to “good” writing like the tired five-paragraph essay. Often with younger, less experienced, and more resistant writers, teachers are tempted to try to help their students by giving them a formula that allows the students to do little independent thinking and instead has them pressing information into forms from which they then generate a written assignment. Such instructors are not bad people or lazy teachers; often they are seeking any means possible to get their students to produce written work that makes any kind of sense and is put

together in a way that is possible to follow. Sometimes they are desperate for something that will help their students get words on the page. Others may just want their students to follow the rules regardless of whether or not those rules produce good written work.

Discovery learning is a method by which these teachers could begin helping their students let go of formulas and fill-in-the-blanks formats and start thinking for themselves rather than trying to please the teacher by guessing what she wants.

Like any educational initiative, though, discovery learning is not a stand-alone approach. It should be integrated into writing curriculum as part of a progressive, interactive program for writing improvement. Progress should include several methods and approaches that foster metacognition and increase student independence. An all-discovery, all-the-time approach would be taxing for students and teacher alike, but as part of a balanced program aimed at encouraging creative and collaborative thinking in order to develop greater understanding of writing concepts, discovery learning could become a cornerstone for composition pedagogy.

## Appendix A: Semicolons Activity

## Making Connections – Sentences 1

*Read the following set of sentences (examples from [grammarly.com](http://grammarly.com) and [grammar.yourdictionary.com](http://grammar.yourdictionary.com)). Pay attention to how the sentences are put together, and make notes on the text of anything you notice that might be of interest. Sentences are correctly written.*

Mark and Suzanne rarely agree on anything; however, they still work well together.

I needed to go for a walk and get some fresh air; also, I needed to buy milk.

Reports of the damage caused by the hurricane were greatly over-exaggerated; indeed, the storm was not a hurricane at all.

The students had been advised against walking alone at night; however, Cathy decided walking wasn't dangerous if it was early in the evening.

I'm not all that fond of the colors of tiger-lilies; moreover, they don't smell very good.

Jason did not study; hence, he failed the test.

You can go when the chores are done; otherwise, you will miss the party.

We took blankets for the picnic; also, Sally brought food.

The rain was pouring down; still, no one left the beach.

You start cooking the steaks; meanwhile, I will make the dessert.

*Before you get into your group, respond to the following questions in the space below.*

1. What do all of the sentences have in common?
2. Are there differences among the sentences other than meaning or purpose?
3. If you were trying to figure out why the sentences are put together as they are, what questions might you ask? (Try to come up with at least two.)

### Group Discussion Sheet – Secretary

In your group, each person has a role: Secretary, Questioner, or Devil's Advocate.

Secretary: This person will write down all of the ideas, explanations, and examples for the group. This person is responsible for making sure that he or she writes down what the group decides in an accurate and neat manner. *Other members of the group should be writing notes, as well, but the writer's notes will be submitted at the end of the activity.*

*ALL MEMBERS OF THE GROUP ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR DEVELOPING RESPONSES TO THE QUESTIONS. IF THE QUESTIONER FAILS TO RESPOND TO QUESTIONS, THE DEVIL'S ADVOCATE NEEDS TO ELICIT A RESPONSE FROM HIM OR HER.*

Group Notes:



## Group Discussion Sheet – Questioner

In your group, each person has a role: Secretary, Questioner, or Devil's Advocate.

Questioner: This role assumes responsibility for making sure every person in the group contributes something to the group. Questioners should ask the questions below, and they should also keep track of who has responded to each question and who has not. If someone has not responded, it is the job of the questioner to ask that person directly and help elicit a response from all members of the group. *Other members of the group may also ask questions as they feel the need, but the questions below are the responsibility of the questioner.*

*ALL MEMBERS OF THE GROUP ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR DEVELOPING RESPONSES TO THE QUESTIONS. IF THE QUESTIONER FAILS TO RESPOND TO QUESTIONS, THE DEVIL'S ADVOCATE NEEDS TO ELICIT A RESPONSE FROM HIM OR HER.*

### Questions:

Questions may be asked out of order, depending on the needs of your group.

- What did you write down as your response to the first question (What do all of the sentences have in common)?
  - What similarities or differences are there among your responses?
  - Which responses do you feel most confident about? Why?
- What did you write down as your response to the second question (Are there differences among the sentences other than meaning or purpose)?
  - What similarities or differences are there among your responses?
  - Which responses do you feel most confident about? Why?
- What questions did you have for the third individual response?
  - As each person asks his or her questions, work as a group to respond to those questions and develop answers for them based on the evidence in the data set.
- What types of words are involved in the similarities among the sentences? (Feel free to come up with your own name for the type of words; you don't need to know to "proper" term.)
- What types of words are *not* involved in the similarities among the sentences that you think might be useful in these sentences? Why might those words not be there?
- How could we write a rule that explains what is going on in the sentences?
  - Consider as you develop your rule or rules what language you will need to use in order to clearly express your rule to others who might use it.
- If we were to have to teach others how to write sentences such as the ones above, how might we do that?
- What is one example of your own creation that follows the rule(s) we've written?

## Group Discussion Sheet – Devil’s Advocate

In your group, each person has a role: Secretary, Questioner, or Devil’s Advocate.

**Devil’s Advocate:** The devil’s advocate should bring up possible oppositions to responses. This person’s job is not to be cruel, but to question validity and seek evidence from the respondents. For example, if someone says, “I think Romeo is kind of a wimp,” the devil’s advocate might respond by saying, “He kills Tybalt. How can a skilled swordsman be a wimp?” The question requires the original respondent to develop some evidence.

*ALL MEMBERS OF THE GROUP ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR DEVELOPING RESPONSES TO THE QUESTIONS. IF THE QUESTIONER FAILS TO RESPOND TO QUESTIONS, THE DEVIL’S ADVOCATE NEEDS TO ELICIT A RESPONSE FROM HIM OR HER.*

### Sample Oppositions:

- You say that \_\_\_\_\_, but couldn’t \_\_\_\_\_ also be true?
- What if \_\_\_\_\_? Does your suggestion work under those conditions?
- How can you prove that explanation?
- Can you explain that idea further?
- If \_\_\_\_\_ is true, then can \_\_\_\_\_ be true?
- How does \_\_\_\_\_ (circumstance or condition) affect that theory?
- What has to happen for \_\_\_\_\_ to be so?
- I hear what you’re saying about \_\_\_\_\_, but what about \_\_\_\_\_?
- Could \_\_\_\_\_ also be true?
- Does the presence/absence of \_\_\_\_\_ affect your theory?
- Are there any exceptions to the idea(s) you present?

**Remember:** These oppositions are merely examples. You need to select oppositions that make sense based on the responses provided within your group. It’s tempting to just check off the oppositions in a list-like fashion, but resist that urge. Develop oppositions by listening carefully to your group members’ responses and then using those responses to question the evidence.

## Appendix B: Dialogue Activity

**Making Connections – Writing Dialogue**

On the reverse of this page, you will find the first brief segment of a short story by Ray Bradbury called “No Particular Night or Morning.” The story comes from a collection of Bradbury’s stories called *The Illustrated Man*. The works cited entry is at the bottom of the page it is on.

The excerpt is primarily made up of dialogue (conversation) between two characters, Hitchcock and Clemens. As you read the passage, think about how Bradbury develops the conversation and how he lets the reader know who is speaking. When you are finished, write below three things you think are necessary to consider when writing dialogue between characters.

1.

2.

3.

## No Particular Night or Morning

HE HAD smoked a packet of cigarettes in two hours.

"How far out in space are we?"

"A billion miles."

"A billion miles from where?" said Hitchcock.

"It all depends," said Clemens, not smoking at all. "A billion miles from home, you might say."

"Then say it."

"Home, Earth. New York. Chicago. Wherever you were from."

"I don't even remember," said Hitchcock. "I don't even believe there is an Earth now, do you?"

"Yes," said Clemens. "I dreamt about it this morning."

"There is no morning in space."

"During the night then."

"It's always night," said Hitchcock quickly. "Which night do you mean?"

"Shut up," said Clemens irritably. "Let me finish."

Hitchcock lit another cigarette. His hand did not shake, but it looked as if, inside the sunburned flesh, it might be trembling all to itself, a small tremor in each hand and a large invisible tremor in his body. The two men sat on the observation corridor floor, looking out at the stars. Clemens's eyes flinched, but Hitchcock's eyes focused on nothing; they were blank and puzzled.

"I woke up at 0500 hours myself," said Hitchcock, as if he were talking to his right hand. "And I heard myself screaming, 'Where am I? Where am I?' And the answer was 'Nowhere!' And I said, 'Where've I been?' And I said, 'Earth!' 'What's Earth?' I wondered. 'Where I was born,' I said. But it was nothing and worse than nothing. I don't believe in anything I can't see or hear or touch. I can't see Earth, so why should I believe in it? It's safer this way, not to believe."

"There's Earth," Clemens pointed, smiling. "That point of light there."

"That's not Earth; that's our sun. You can't see Earth from here."

"I can see it. I have a good memory."

"It's not the same, you fool," said Hitchcock suddenly. "There was a touch of anger in his voice. 'I mean see it. I've always been that way. When I'm in Boston, New York is dead."

106

When I'm in New York, Boston is dead. When I don't see a man for a day, he's dead. When he comes walking down the street, my God, it's a resurrection. I do a dance, almost. I'm so glad to see him. I used to, anyway. I don't dance any more. I just look. And when the man walks off, he's dead again."

Clemens laughed. "It's simply that your mind works on a primitive level. You can't hold to things. You've got no imagination, Hitchcock old man. You've got to learn to hold on."

"Why should I hold onto things I can't use?" said Hitchcock, his eyes wide, still staring into space. "I'm practical. If Earth isn't here for me to walk on, you want me to walk on a memory? That hurts. Memories, as my father once said, are porcupines. To hell with them! Stay away from them. They make you unhappy. They ruin your work. They make you cry."

"I'm walking on Earth right now," said Clemens, squinting to himself, blowing smoke.

"You're kicking porcupines. Later in the day you won't be able to eat lunch, and you'll wonder why," said Hitchcock in a dead voice. "And it'll be because you've got a footful of quills aching in you. To hell with it! If I can't drink it, pinch it, punch it or lie on it, then I say drop it in the sun. I'm dead to Earth. It's dead to me. There's no one in New York weeping for me tonight. Shove New York. There isn't any season here; winter and summer are gone. So is spring, and autumn. It isn't any particular night or morning; it's space and space. The only thing tight now is you and me and this rocket ship. And the only thing I'm positive of is me. That's all of it."

Clemens ignored this. "I'm putting a dime in the phone slot right now," he said, pantomiming it with a slow smile. "And calling my girl in Evanston. Hello, Barbara!"

The rocket sailed on through space.

Bradbury, Ray. "No Particular Night or Morning." *The*

*Illustrated Man*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1951.

Print.

**Group Discovery Sheet**

With your group members, you are now charged with the task of developing a set of rules for how to write dialogue. Your rules need to come with explanations (why it is done this way) and examples of your own creation. When you are done, your rules will be subject to critique by other groups, so be sure that they are based on evidence from the text and you are able to explain and justify them.

**Step One: Sharing Your Individual Work**

Each person in the group should share his or her three things from the front of the Writing Dialogue Sheet. As each person reads his or her list, the person to the reader's right should write down the list below, but pay attention not to write the same idea or thought twice (each person will read once and write once):

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.
- 11.

**Step Two: Drawing Conclusions**

Using the list of considerations your group developed and your copies of the short story passage, brainstorm what the guidelines for writing conversations between characters might be. Develop at least five guidelines that you can prove based on Bradbury's writing. (You can't use the ones we came up with on the board.)

Guideline #1:

Evidence from Bradbury:

Guideline #2:

Evidence from Bradbury:

Guideline #3:

Evidence from Bradbury:

Guideline #4:

Evidence from Bradbury:

Guideline #5:

Evidence from Bradbury:

**Step Three: Write Your Own Scenario**

In this step, your group needs to quickly develop a scenario and two characters who would be having a discussion in that scenario. It can be mundane (a man talking to the clerk at the grocery store) or ridiculous (two dogs discussing what the moon is made of).

Characters:

Scenario:

**Step Four: Write Your Own Example**

Now that you have your scenario and characters, give this sheet to one person in the group to start the dialogue. That person should write the first statement by one of the characters using the guidelines your group developed. Then, the first writer should pass the paper to his or her left. The next person will write the other character's response (again, using the guidelines you developed). This will continue until all members of the group have contributed *three* character statements or responses.

**Step Five: Review Your Own Work**

When the whole dialogue is completed, someone in the group should read it aloud, and the whole group should look at the text to make sure it follows your guidelines. Make any adjustments you believe are necessary. Polish the piece so that you feel confident in the next step. When you are satisfied with the dialogue, number each exchange for easy reference.

**Step Six: Critique Another Group's Example**

Trade examples with another group. As they read through and evaluate your work, you will read through and evaluate theirs. Read the example aloud, then use your list of guidelines to determine if the other group has set up their conversation appropriately so that it is easy to follow and understand. Write your comments about each exchange (constructively critical) below:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

11.

12.



## Appendix C: Parallelism Activity

I am happy to join with you today in what will go down in history as the greatest demonstration for freedom in the history of our nation.

Five score years ago, a great American, in whose symbolic shadow we stand today, signed the Emancipation Proclamation. This momentous decree came as a great beacon light of hope to millions of Negro slaves who had been seared in the flames of withering injustice. It came as a joyous daybreak to end the long night of their captivity.

A

But one hundred years later, the Negro still is not free. One hundred years later, the life of the Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination. One hundred years later, the Negro lives on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity. One hundred years later, the Negro is still languishing in the corners of American society and finds himself an exile in his own land. So we have come here today to dramatize a shameful condition.

In a sense we have come to our nation's capital to cash a check. When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men, yes, black men as well as white men, would be guaranteed the unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note insofar as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check, a check which has come back marked "insufficient funds." But we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt. We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation. So we have come to cash this check -- a check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom and the security of justice. We have also come to this hallowed spot to remind America of the fierce urgency of now. This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take the tranquilizing drug of gradualism. Now is the time to make real the promises of democracy. Now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice. Now is the time to lift our nation from the quick sands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood. Now is the time to make justice a reality for all of God's children.

It would be fatal for the nation to overlook the urgency of the moment. This sweltering summer of the Negro's legitimate discontent will not pass until there is an invigorating autumn of freedom and equality. Nineteen sixty-three is not an end, but a beginning. Those who hope that the Negro needed to blow off steam and will now be content will have a rude awakening if the nation returns to business as usual. There will be neither rest nor tranquility in America until the Negro is granted his citizenship rights. The whirlwinds of revolt will continue to shake the foundations of our nation until the bright day of justice emerges.

But there is something that I must say to my people who stand on the warm threshold which leads into the palace of justice. In the process of gaining our rightful place we must not be guilty of

wrongful deeds. Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred.

B

We must forever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline. We must not allow our creative protest to degenerate into physical violence. Again and again we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force. The marvelous new militancy which has engulfed the Negro community must not lead us to a distrust of all white people, for many of our white brothers, as evidenced by their presence here today, have come to realize that their destiny is tied up with our destiny. They have come to realize that their freedom is inextricably bound to our freedom. We cannot walk alone.

As we walk, we must make the pledge that we shall always march ahead. We cannot turn back. There are those who are asking the devotees of civil rights, "When will you be satisfied?" We can never be satisfied as long as the Negro is the victim of the unspeakable horrors of police brutality. We can never be satisfied, as long as our bodies, heavy with the fatigue of travel, cannot gain lodging in the motels of the highways and the hotels of the cities. We cannot be satisfied as long as the Negro's basic mobility is from a smaller ghetto to a larger one. We can never be satisfied as long as our children are stripped of their selfhood and robbed of their dignity by signs stating "For Whites Only". We cannot be satisfied as long as a Negro in Mississippi cannot vote and a Negro in New York believes he has nothing for which to vote. No, no, we are not satisfied, and we will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.

I am not unmindful that some of you have come here out of great trials and tribulations. Some of you have come fresh from narrow jail cells. Some of you have come from areas where your quest for freedom left you battered by the storms of persecution and staggered by the winds of police brutality. You have been the veterans of creative suffering. Continue to work with the faith that unearned suffering is redemptive.

Go back to Mississippi, go back to Alabama, go back to South Carolina, go back to Georgia, go back to Louisiana, go back to the slums and ghettos of our northern cities, knowing that somehow this situation can and will be changed. Let us not wallow in the valley of despair.

C

I say to you today, my friends, so even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream.

I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal."

I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.

I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of injustice, sweltering with the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.

I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.

I have a dream today.

I have a dream that one day, down in Alabama, with its vicious racists, with its governor having his lips dripping with the words of interposition and nullification; one day right there in Alabama, little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers.

I have a dream today.

I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.

This is our hope. This is the faith that I go back to the South with. With this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day.

This will be the day when all of God's children will be able to sing with a new meaning, "My country, 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing. Land where my fathers died, land of the pilgrim's pride, from every mountainside, let freedom ring."

D And if America is to be a great nation this must become true. So let freedom ring from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire. Let freedom ring from the mighty mountains of New York. Let freedom ring from the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania!

Let freedom ring from the snowcapped Rockies of Colorado!

Let freedom ring from the curvaceous slopes of California!

But not only that; let freedom ring from Stone Mountain of Georgia!

Let freedom ring from Lookout Mountain of Tennessee!

Let freedom ring from every hill and molehill of Mississippi. From every mountainside, let freedom ring.

And when this happens, when we allow freedom to ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, "Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!"

Instructions:

Follow along with the text as you listen to the speech. Each time the speech enters one of the shaded sections, pay close attention to the structure of the section. Underline or make note of anything in the setup or structure that seems important to the meaning or focus of the speech (this applies to any section; not just the highlighted sections).

---

Questions:

After the speech is done, look back through your annotations. Think about the following questions:

- What did you highlight or underline, and why?
- Which structural features of the text did you notice? What do you think the purpose of that or those features were?

Now, select one of the highlighted areas (circle the one you choose): A    B    C    D

Answer the following questions about your passage specifically:

What word or words seem particularly important in this passage?

In regard to the word or words you chose above, what makes you think those words are important?  
What evidence from the text can you use to support your theory?

Are there any patterns you can find in the passage? If so, what are the patterns?

### Group Discussion Sheet – Questions

In your group, consider all of the following questions. You will have representatives from several different passages in your group, so every response needs examples from all the representative passages. Before you start, consider how you might best approach this discussion. Would it be best to discuss your findings and then decide as a group what the findings indicate? Would it be best to try to use one of the passages as a representative passage, determine your conclusions about the data, and then look for examples in the other passages? Should you hypothesize your conclusions first, and then have each member of the group find examples in his or her passage that prove that hypothesis? Do you have another idea?

Regardless of how you decide to approach the discussion, respond to the following as a group:

Structural Element(s) Identification	
What structural element do the passages have in common? Describe it briefly.	Examples
	A:
	B:
What name could you give to this structural element?	C:
	D:

Structural Element(s) Hypothesis	
What is the purpose of this structural element? Why is it there? How does it affect the message or the purpose of the speech? How can you tell?	
Examples:	
A:	B:
C:	D:

## Appendix D: Quoting Activity

**Making Connections: Using Sources 1**

Read the following passage. It is the introductory paragraph of an article entitled, "Sports and Antitrust: Should College Students Be Paid To Play?" by Lee Goldman, a law professor at the University of Detroit, and it was published originally in the Notre Dame Law Review, Volume 65, Issue 2, on June 1, 1990.

Amateur athletics at the major college level is big business. It is marketed, packaged and sold the same way as many other commercial products. Last year's National Collegiate Athletic Association ("NCAA") basketball tournament generated over \$70 million in gross receipts. Final Four participants received direct payments of over \$1.3 million. Merely making the tournament earned invited schools almost \$275,000. Football revenues were similarly lucrative. During the 1988-89 season, bowl games generated \$66 million, \$53 million of which was distributed to participating schools. The sale of television and radio rights to regular season games provided additional income to NCAA member schools. A successful college athletics program can also generate substantial indirect revenues. Schools can convert their athletic programs' prestige and notoriety into generous alumni donations and increased enrollment.

Now read through the following passages that use Goldman's introduction as a source.

A

It is clear that NCAA basketball is a big business. More than twenty-five years ago, NCAA schools were raking in millions of dollars for competing successfully in national tournaments. For example, schools participating in the 1988 Final Four "received direct payments of over \$1.3 million" (Goldman 206). In the twenty-six years since then, the payments have surely only increased.

B

College football can be tremendously lucrative for successful schools. Lee Goldman, an attorney who graduated from Stanford and taught at the University of Detroit, explains that "During the 1988-89 season, bowl games generated \$66 million, \$53 million of which was distributed to participating schools" (206). Considering that the year in question is more than two decades in the past, it is safe to assume that those figures have only increased.

C

Colleges and universities with successful athletics programs drive additional revenue into the schools. Not only do universities benefit directly from NCAA payments and shares in television and radio rights, but "A successful college athletics program can also generate ... generous alumni donations and increased enrollment" (Goldman 206). By bringing in additional donations and students, successful sports programs prove indirectly beneficial to a university, as well.

In the boxes to the left of each paragraph, write one observation you have about each passage's use of Goldman's work. In this case, you are not looking for how well or poorly the original text is used. Rather, try to figure out what the rules of using a source text are based on what has been done in the passages. Make note of differences between the three passages that quote Goldman.

### Group Discussion Sheet – Question Keeper (#1)

As Question Keeper, your job is to use questions to keep the conversation moving. The first thing you'll need to do as question keeper is develop a list of questions **with the help of your group**. Your end goal is to figure out what rules govern quoting and citing quotations in your writing.

Working with your group, develop a list of at least six questions that you'll need to answer in order to figure out what the rules for quoting are.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

As you work to try to answer your six questions, write down any additional questions your group members or you asked in order to get to the answers you needed. (For example, if this activity were about semicolons, and one of your six questions was *What comes before and after a semicolon?*, questions you might need to answer to get to that response might be *What kinds of words come right after the semicolon?* and *Does it matter what words come before the semicolon?*)

**Group Discussion Sheet – Rule Master (#2)**

As Rule Master, your job is to keep track of the rules your group develops. Once you have started answering your questions, your group should start to figure out what you think the rules are for quoting a source. If you write some rules that you later decide are probably incorrect, strike through them with one line (~~strike through them like this~~). Write your rules in such a way that they will be easy for the average student to understand.

Rules:

1. (example) When you use the exact words of your source, you have to put quotations marks " " around those words to show that they are not your own words.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.



**Group Discussion Sheet – Captain of Examples (#3)**

The Captain of Examples needs to keep track of the examples your group comes up with as responses to the questions and as you develop your rules. Make sure you label the examples in a way that makes it easy to reference the rule or question they pertain to.

(example)

For rule #1, “received direct payments of over \$1.3 million” shows the quotation marks around Goldman’s exact wording.

Group Evidence/Examples:

## Appendix E: Creating Place (Content)

## Passage #1:

The Essential Boca Raton – that area south of Clint Moore Road from the ocean to the Everglades – boasts 48.5 square feet of occupied store space for every man, woman and child. The national average is 18 square feet. The area is home to 15 percent of the county’s population but 21 percent of its retail store space.

“People in Boca Raton love to shop,” proclaimed Lenore Wachtel of the Federation of Boca Raton Homeowner Associations.

She’s right. It’s a shopper’s paradise. And there’s no end in sight, market analysts say.

And so it is that developer Bill “Build Me An Interchange” Knight has emerged from the shadows to unveil plans for yet another regional shopping mecca.

If the mall becomes reality, it will rise from a pasture owned by Knight along Congress Avenue in the city’s northwest corner.

Knight has been seeking a lucrative use for his land – a use that will best capitalize on the Interstate 95 interchange, now under construction between Linton Boulevard and Yamato Road, that conveniently and not coincidentally empties directly into his pasture.

Chalk it up to the wonders of deep-pocketed lobbying. Knight was able to convince then-Gov. Bob Martinez and state highway bigwigs that the interchange was needed for the giant office park and hotel complex he was going to build. But when the demand for office space died so did Knight’s plan.

So he next tried to lure a major sports franchise, such as the Miami Heat. When that brought no takers, he finally hit on a winner: 1.3 million square feet of luxury mall.

What connect does the writer want the reader to make in regards to the retail space in Boca Raton? What is the reader’s initial impression of Boca Raton?

What purpose does the nickname the writer assigns to Bill Knight serve? What does the writer think about Bill Knight based on this nickname?

Why did Knight want an interchange? What impression does the reader get of Knight here?

How does Knight capitalize on his land and lobbying efforts when the office park and sports franchise ideas fail?

What impression does the reader get of Boca Raton based on this piece?

Passage #2:

I came to Miami in the early '80s, when the Cocaine Cowboy era was still going strong and Miami's image — not without reason — was horrible. Time magazine had published its now-famous cover story *Paradise Lost*, encapsulated by this cheerful sentence: "An epidemic of violent crime, a plague of illicit drugs and a tidal wave of refugees have slammed into South Florida with the destructive power of a hurricane."

Which was, more or less, true.

The bad publicity took its toll: Tourism suffered because people were afraid to visit Miami. I wrote an essay about this for the Herald's Sunday magazine, *Tropic*. To promote it, we gave out bumper stickers that said:

*Come Back To Miami – We Weren't Shooting At YOU*

Readers loved those bumper stickers. But not everybody down here thought it was funny. Miami's civic leaders — the politicians, the tourism people, the Chamber of Commerce — hated the jokes and the bad publicity. They were openly jealous of Orlando, with its Mouse-tastic attractions and safe, antiseptic, family-friendly image. Our leaders wanted Miami to be more like that. But Miami wasn't Orlando, not even close. Bad things kept happening down here.

Then, in 1984, *Miami Vice* happened.

Theoretically, this should have been our civic leaders' worst nightmare: People were avoiding Miami because they thought it was infested with violent drug criminals, and then along came a hugely popular TV show that presented Miami as a place that was ... infested with violent drug criminals!

But here's the thing: *Miami Vice* made Miami look *cool*. Yes, many drug busts went down on the show, and many fatal shots were fired. But they were fired by Don Johnson and Philip Michael Thomas! Who were hot! And who wore designer jackets! Over pastel designer T-shirts! And designer linen pants! And designer Italian loafers WITHOUT SOCKS!

The premise was ridiculous, of course — "undercover" Miami police officers Sonny Crockett and Rico Tubbs, looking nothing like any undercover police officers anywhere ever, driving around

What initial impression does the writer give the reader about Miami in the 1980s?

Aside from safety, why was Miami's crime a problem?

What purpose does the mention of the bumper stickers serve?

What city did Miami want to be more like and why?

Why should *Miami Vice* not have helped Miami's image?

Why did *Miami Vice* help Miami's image?

in flashy, insanely expensive cars and boats, emitting melodramatic dialogue and inevitably ending each episode taking down a drug kingpin — in *Miami Vice*, three out of every four Miami residents were drug kingpins — in a hail of bullets, accompanied by a hip (for the '80s) music soundtrack.

And guess what? Everybody loved it. Including Miami. *Especially* Miami. For one thing, the city looked pretty good, in a seedy, tropical, lush, degenerate, Eurotrash supermodel way. It looked *cool*.

It also looked exciting. Miamians began to see the fact that we weren't Orlando as a good thing. Orlando was a place where you went to stand in line in the heat with your whining kids for 73 minutes to ride around in spinning teacups for 73 seconds. Miami was a place you went without your kids (maybe even without your spouse) to drink mojitos and smoke cigars (or maybe something else) and stay up all night and *have an adventure*. If it felt foreign, disorganized, a little out of control, even a little dangerous ... hey, that was cool. That was Miami.

Why were people in Miami—especially perhaps civic leaders in Miami—happy about *Miami Vice*?

How did the show change how Miamians compared themselves with Orlando?

What final impression does the reader get about Miami? In what ways is this impression similar to or different from the initial impression and why?

## Passage #3

The day had begun with only a light, cool breeze and a rim of broken raspberry clouds out toward the Bahamas. Stranahan was up early, frying eggs and chasing the gulls off the roof. He lived in an old stilt house on the shallow tidal flats of Biscayne Bay, a mile from the tip of Cape Florida. The house had a small generator powered by a four-bladed windmill, but no air-conditioning. Except for a few days in August and September, there was always a decent breeze. That was one nice thing about living on the water.

There were maybe a dozen other houses in the stretch of Biscayne Bay known as Stiltsville, but none were inhabited; rich owners used them for weekend parties, and their kids got drunk on them in the summer. The rest of the time they served as fancy, split-level toilets for seagulls and cormorants.

Stranahan had purchased his house dirt-cheap at a government auction. The previous owner was a Venezuelan cocaine courier who had been shot thirteen times in a serious business dispute, then indicted posthumously. No sooner had the corpse been air-freighted back to Caracas than Customs agents seized the stilt house, along with three condos, two Porsches, a one-eyed scarlet macaw, and a yacht with a hot tub. The hot tub was where the Venezuelan had met his spectacular death, so bidding was feverish. Likewise the macaw—a material witness to its owner's murder—fetched top dollar ...

By the time the stilt house had come up on the block, nobody was interested. Stranahan had picked it up for forty thousand and change.

He coveted the solitude of the flats, and was delighted to be the only human soul living in Stiltsville. His house, barn-red with brown shutters, sat three hundred yards off the main channel, so most of the weekend boat traffic traveled clear of him. Occasionally a drunk or a total moron would try to clear the banks with a big cabin cruiser, but they did not get far, and they got no sympathy or assistance from the big man in the barn-red house.

What is the reader's initial impression—based on the first paragraph only—of the place where Stranahan lives?

What does the name of the area indicate to the reader?

What does the description of the former owner's demise and subsequent auctioning of his possessions inform the reader about the area and people who live there?

What does this last paragraph indicate about living in Stiltsville? What does it indicate about Stranahan?

Passage #1 from John Grogan's social commentary newspaper column "Boca Responds to the Call of the Mall" from the South Florida newspaper *Sun Sentinel* <[http://articles.sun-sentinel.com/1993-08-16/news/9301300109\\_1\\_store-space-shopping-mall-regional-shopping-mecca](http://articles.sun-sentinel.com/1993-08-16/news/9301300109_1_store-space-shopping-mall-regional-shopping-mecca)>

Passage #2 from Dave Barry's comedy newspaper column "Miami Needed a Shot in the Arm from *Miami Vice*" from *Miami Herald* <<http://www.miamiherald.com/living/liv-columns-blogs/dave-barry/article2260892.html>>

Passage #3 from Carl Hiassen's novel *Skin Tight* (3-4), set in Biscayne Bay, Florida.

## Making Connections – Developing Place

Remember that setting is not just about describing what a place looks like. In the samples you read today, much of the description of setting or place relies not on physical descriptions—though there is some explanation of the place itself—but on other attributes of the place as a means of allowing the reader to develop an understanding of the place.

Now that you are in your group, follow the set of directions below. Each group member is the Director for the passage he or she read, and a Conversationalist for the passages he or she did not read. Do the whole set of directions for each story, but finish the whole set before moving on to the next story.

### Step One: Reader Discussions

Listen to the passages as they are read on youtube. The Director should pause the video each time indicated by PAUSE on the screen. With each pause, the Director should ask the question that corresponds with that part of the text. If the Conversationalists are unable to respond to a question, the Director may get the discussion started with his or her written response but should wait to see what other group members think first.

With each question, the Director should address each group member, looking for evidence. The types of questions the Director might ask are below, but additional questions may be added at the Director’s discretion. This process should continue through all of the questions.

<i>Example Questions:</i>	
What makes you think that?	Is that the only way it could be interpreted?
What does the writer say that proves that?	What else might that passage mean?
How does the text support your opinion?	Is that a reasonable conclusion?
What do you think might happen next?	What words in the passage prove that?
What do you think this place looks like based on this description?	If the writer had used different words, would the effect be the same? Explain.

### Step Two: Determining Purpose

When all three passages have been read and discussed, go back to each one, and try to determine what its purpose is. Is the writer trying to inform? Entertain? Persuade? Compare or contrast? Define? Evaluate? As a group, decide what you believe the purpose of each piece is, and write a brief reason for your decision below.

	Passage #1	Passage #2	Passage #3
Purpose			
Reasoning/ Explanation			

Step Three: Developing Strategies

Now that you have discussed the features of the three passages and determined their purposes, develop a list of strategies these authors employ to develop a sense of place in their texts. You will start by listing the strategies and examples of them from the texts here on this page, but when you’ve developed at least three strong, well-reasoned strategies, you’ll get a big post-it note to write the strategies and examples on, and your group will need to present the strategies to the rest of the class.

I recommend that you develop at least five strategies with examples in case one or two don’t work out or have been used by other groups.

What It Is (Explain)	How it Affects Understanding of Place or Setting	Example(s) From the Text
Strategy 1		
Strategy 2		
Strategy 3		
Strategy 4		
Strategy 5		



## Appendix F: Assignment Sheet

## Culture and Religion Essay

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### Assignment:

Students will write a well-documented five-paragraph research paper about a country and how much religious practices/beliefs influence their culture.

Students must use three to five credible sources as evidence. Each essay will contain well-chosen and properly documented quotations. *All essays must be submitted to turnitin.com and have 5% plagiarism or less in order to receive credit.*

### Process:

1. Students will select a country they wish to research
2. Using school databases, students will then select, read, and highlight two or three sources about the country's cultural norms (customs, traditions, language, dress, music, etc.). All students will use AtoZ World Cultures to study the country's cultural norms and religion in order to draw conclusions about the importance of religion.
3. Write WC entries for and select quotations from every source using worksheet guides.
4. Identify how much religion affects the cultural norms of the country based on the evidence you've gathered.
5. Using the quotations and inferences as a guide, write a rough draft of the body paragraphs (three body paragraphs: religion, culture, and the inference paragraph about how much religion affects culture); print for peer editing.
6. Edit and revise the draft of body paragraphs.
7. Write the introduction and conclusion. Add to revised body paragraphs; submit to turnitin.com for revisions.
8. Makes additional necessary revisions (time in class).
9. Proofread the entire document; in-class peer editing, too.
10. Complete final revisions, and submit final draft to turnitin.com

### Requirements:

- Use at least two pages from AtoZ World Cultures.
- Write in correct MLA format, including heading, title, in-text documentation, font, spacing, and works cited page.
- Include at least three quotations, all properly documented and not plagiarized.
- Use formal language and tone, including third person and no contractions. Use standard grammar.
- Submit essay to turnitin.com and revise until plagiarism is 5% or less.
- Final draft will be due to turnitin.com by 4 p.m. on \_\_\_\_\_.
- ***REWRITES AFTER ESSAYS ARE GRADED ARE ALLOWED FOR IMPROVED SCORES, BUT ONLY ESSAYS TURNED IN ON TIME WILL BE ALLOWED TO REVISE FOR AN IMPROVED SCORE.***

### Format:

Introduction (with thesis)

Paragraph One: (Culture)

Paragraph Two: (Religion)

Paragraph Three: (Influence of Religion on Cultural Norms)

Conclusion

## Appendix G: Timeline

### Timeline of Discovery Learning Activity and Religion and Culture Essay Process

In order to best understand this timeline, it is important to note that students see each teacher every other day, but the teachers work in conjunction with one another so that during certain parts of the process, students are working on the project and getting instruction for the process every day.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
English <i>Non-essay activities</i>	Geography Religion Unit content	English Discovery Learning Activity: Run-on Sentences	Geography Religion Unit content	English Journal-writing revision assignment begins
Geography Religion Unit content	English Run-on sentence peer review activities with a journal-writing assignment, <i>Other non-essay activities</i>	Geography Religion Unit content	English <i>Non-essay activities</i>	Geography Computer Lab: Using school databases, Finding/printing the necessary articles within <i>AtoZ World Cultures</i>
English Introduction to highlighting source materials effectively, <i>Other non-essay activities</i>	Geography Highlighting source articles, Using highlighted segments to begin drawing conclusions	English <i>Non-essay activities</i>	Geography Using highlighted materials to draw conclusions, develop claims, and select quotations	English Developing an outline or other organizational tool, using quotations in body paragraphs
Geography <i>Non-essay activities</i>	English Editing body paragraphs for content, Developing introductions and conclusions	Geography <i>Non-essay activities</i>	English Computer Lab: Writing Day with access to instructor and instructional assistant	Geography <i>Non-essay activities</i>
English In-class peer reviews for content	Geography <i>Non-essay activities</i>	English In-class peer reviews for copy editing (sentences emphasized)	Geography <i>Non-essay activities</i>	English Essay due, <i>Other non-essay activities</i>

## Appendix H: Student Survey Questions and Answer Options

### *Page One Questions*

Question 1 (open-ended)

**What, if anything, is wrong with the following sentence? How would you fix the error(s), if there are any?**

**Muslims also make sure that the body is properly wished and carefully enshrouded, after they do so they make sure to bury it 24 hours.**

Question 2 (open-ended)

**What, if anything, is wrong with the following sentence? How would you fix the error(s), if there are any?**

**The culture of Israel is heavily ruled by Judaism even the judicial sector of the government is a Jewish court.**

Question 3 (open-ended)

**What, if anything, is wrong with the following sentence? How would you fix the error(s), if there are any?**

**Children in Belize are very hardworking; kids between the ages of eight and thirteen usually have jobs.**

Question 4 (open-ended)

**What, if anything, is wrong with the following sentence? How would you fix the error(s), if there are any?**

**The Govern Mint is not the only one restricted the people are, too.**

### *Page Two Questions*

Question 5 (multiple choice; select only one option)

An image of two pages from the discovery learning activity was above this question.

**Several weeks ago, we did an activity where we reviewed and revised some paragraphs. First, you read the paragraphs and responded as though you were an editing partner for each paragraph. Then, you paired with another student to compare your suggestions. Then you switched partners two more times for the same**

**comparisons. The image of two pages of that activity is above. How well do you remember the activity?**

- I remember it very clearly.
- I remember it, but I couldn't have described it without the explanation above.
- I don't remember it very well, but it sounds somewhat familiar.
- I don't remember it at all.

Question 6 (multiple choice; select only one option)

**In the activity, most groups came to the conclusion that the sample paragraphs contained sentences that needed additional periods because they contained more than one complete sentence. How much do you think that activity helped you in your own writing to correct your own sentences that might have needed to be broken up into multiple sentences?**

- It helped me a lot.
- It helped me a little.
- It may have helped me, but I wasn't considering it as I wrote.
- I don't think it helped me very much.
- It didn't help me at all.

Question 7 (open-ended)

**Please explain your response to Question 6. If you thought the activity was helpful to you, why did you think that? If it wasn't helpful, how could the activity have better helped you?**

Question 8 (multiple choice; select as many options as apply)

**Part of the activity was comparing your responses to others' responses and then working in groups to revise the original paragraphs. How do you think this activity prepared you to edit other students' papers for sentence construction? (Choose as many options as you believe apply.)**

- I think it helped me understand how to find these types of sentences.
- I think it helped me understand how to mark these types of sentences.
- I think it helped me understand how to suggest changes to these types of sentences.
- I don't think it helped me for revising other students' work.

Question 9 (open-ended)

**Please explain your response to Question 8. If you find the activity helpful, what did you feel was most helpful? How was it helpful in some ways but not others? If you found the activity unhelpful, can you suggest a way that it might have been a better help to you in peer reviews?**

## Appendix I: Essay Evaluation Instructions for Teacher-Analysts

### Essay Evaluation Instructions

Thank you for helping me with this data collection. I appreciate your time and consideration for this project.

Below you will find the instructions for evaluating the eight attached essays. Four of these essays are from E9-GHW students from 2014-2015, and four are from E9-GHW students in 2015-2016. The essays scored at or very close to the average grade for each student's own class, so these are "average" representations of each class.

Please follow the instructions carefully.

#### Instructions for Evaluating for Readability

1. Read through all eight essays. You may mark anything that affects the essay's readability as you go, but please use a red pen for this first read-through.
2. Determine which essays are most readable (easiest to understand, containing fewest errors that confuse meaning or disrupt the reader) and which essays are least readable (most difficult to understand/follow, containing most errors that confuse meaning or disrupt the reader).
3. Rank the essays in order of readability (1 being the most readable, easiest to understand; 8 being the least readable, most difficult to understand).
4. Comment briefly on why you ranked each essay as you did.
5. Open the attached envelope, and follow the instructions therein.

#### Readability Ranking Chart

Rank Essay	Comments (Why you ranked this essay as you did)
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	

### Envelope Instructions

After you have completed the rankings for readability, please review the essays briefly one more time. This time, please comment on how well the student has constructed his or her sentences. Are the sentences themselves easy to follow or do they ramble? Does it sound like a conversation at Starbucks rather than a formal essay? Do run-on sentences in the essay make it difficult to follow? Any commentary you are willing to provide based only on sentence construction would be very much appreciated. You may write your comments directly on the essay in blue ink, or you may use the attached chart below. If your comments on the previous readability chart included this information, please feel free to skip this step.

### Sentence Structure Commentary

Essay A	
Essay B	
Essay C	
Essay D	
Essay E	
Essay F	
Essay G	
Essay H	

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## Curriculum Vitae

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### Education

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Indiana Wesleyan University

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### Teaching Experience

English 9 Teacher, Carmel High School (Carmel, IN), 2012—present

Courses Taught: English 9, Language Arts Lab 9, English 9—Geography/History  
of the World Block (Interdisciplinary Course)

Instructional Assistant, Carmel High School (Carmel, IN), 2011—2012

Self-contained Classroom for Students with Emotional Disabilities

English 12 Teacher, Churubusco High School (Churubusco, IN), 2000—2003

Courses Taught: English 12 (Technical, Academic, Honors), AP Language and

Composition, Speech, Themes in Literature, Theatre Arts

English 9 Teacher, Bishop Dwenger High School (Fort Wayne, IN), 1999—2000

Courses Taught: English 9, World Literature

### **Awards and Honors**

Joan and Larry Cimino Award for Excellence in Intercultural Communication, IUPUI

“Moving Students Toward Acceptance of ‘Other’ Englishes,” April 23, 2016

Keynote Speaker, Indiana Teachers of Writing Conference

“Writing Yoga,” Sept. 26, 2015

Guest Speaker, Teaching Writing: Issues and Approaches (IUPUI Course W500),

Sept. 24, 2015

Panel Speaker, Graduate Student Orientation, IUPUI Department of English, August 12,

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Peter Bassett Barlow Award, IUPUI

“Simple Improvement: Evidence of and Suggestions for Changes Necessary to the

Carmel High School English 9 Curriculum,” April 14, 2015

Kneale Award in Pedagogy, Graduate Level (Second Place), Purdue University

“Simple Improvement: Evidence of and Suggestions for Changes Necessary to the

Carmel High School English 9 Curriculum,” April 15, 2015

### **Conference & Professional Presentations**

“Encouraging Transfer in Basic Writers Through Discovery Learning”

Conference on College Composition and Communication (part of a session

entitled *Articulation and Transfer From High School Through College*), April 8,

2016

“Reading and Writing in the Content Areas Without Grading Until Your Eyes Bleed”

Carmel High School Professional Development Day, March 10, 2016

“Personal Development for Professional Growth: Staking the Time Vampires of Writing Instruction”

Indiana Teachers of Writing Conference (collaborative presentation with Erin Lehman of Ivy Tech Columbus), September 26, 2015

“Working With Weebly”

#C4: Connect, Collect, Create and Collaborate Conference, July 15, 2015

“Redirecting Redirection: Understanding Directive Use in Secondary Classroom Activities”

IUPUI Research Day (Poster Presentation), April 17, 2015

“Interdisciplinary Courses for Struggling Secondary Students”

Northeast Literacy Council’s Best Practices Showcase, February 28, 2015

“Technology Rewrites: Revising with Online and Tech-based Tools”

#C4: Connect, Collect, Create and Collaborate Conference, July 14, 2014

## **Publications**

“Moving Students Toward Acceptance of “Other” Englishes”

*English Journal*, Accepted for publication: Issue 105.6, July 2016.

*The Grammar Guru*

Current Publications (regional weekly newspaper publisher): Weekly column exploring conventions, punctuation, spelling, and general use of English language: Feb. 2010 – May 2012.

#### Other Publishing Experience:

Reviewer, *Journal of Teaching Writing*: Feb. 2016 - current

Managing Editor, Reporter, Features Writer, Current Publications:

July 2009 – May 2012

Copy and Content Editor (Freelance), Bottom-Line Performance, Inc.:

July 2011 – Aug. 2012

#### **Course Development**

Carmel High School:

English 9—Geography/History of the World Block

Interdisciplinary course targeting skills-based learning for struggling readers and writers.

Churubusco High School:

AP Language and Composition

First English AP course offered at Churubusco High School; designed according to AP standards.

Themes in Literature: Isolation and Rebellion

High-interest, text-heavy course designed as a credit recovery opportunity for students who failed a semester of English.

Theatre Arts

Previously offered at the school, this was a redesign of a course that had not been offered for several semesters for lack of an instructor.

#### **Professional Organization Affiliations**

Teacher Consultant, Hoosier Writing Project (Affiliate of National Writing Project)

Member, National Council of Teacher of English

Member, Conference on College Composition and Communication

Member, Indiana Teachers of Writing