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Dedication

We, the fellows of the 1997 Jacksonville State University Writing Project, dedicate this anthology to Gloria Horton, Deborah Prickett, Judy Ramsey, Buffy Smith, and DeAnne Williams.

Gloria Horton and Deborah Prickett taught us well, inspiring us to grow as teachers and writers.

Judy Ramsey, Buffy Smith, and DeAnne Williams demonstrated their many talents by supporting us throughout these five weeks.

We also appreciate Dr. Dee Taylor, Wade Webster, Susan Methvin, and Peggy Swoger for sharing their expertise and love of writing.

Foreword

Thirteen teachers from Alabama and Georgia came together at Jacksonville State University in the summer of 1997 for an intensive five weeks of process writing. The Writing Project's mission is to provide the necessary strategies to teach students to write. Along the way, we became better and more confident writers ourselves. We spent many productive and sometimes grueling hours finding our voices as writers. Sharing teaching ideas, we learned much from each other as well as from the expert guest speakers who came and inspired us.

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Daily Schedule

9:00 - 9:30	Announcements, Journal Reading, Refreshments
9:30 - 11:00	Presentations
11:00 -12:00	Writing, Research, Conferences
12:00 - 1:00	Lunch
1:00 - 3:15	Writing, Research, and Response Groups
3:15 - 4:00	Round Table Discussions

Special Events

Thursday, June 26	Field trip to Birmingham Arts Museum and Smithsonian Exhibit
Tuesday , July 1	Guest Presentation, Dee Taylor, National Council of Teachers of English Region 9 Director "Writing for the 21 st Century: Strategies That Work" Luncheon in the President's Dining Room
Thursday, July 10	Sampler Day Wade Webster, Adjunct Instructor, JSU "One Little, Two Little, Three Little Indians"
Tuesday, July 15	Alumni Refresher Peggy Swoger, Mississippi State University "National Board Certification: Thinking and Writing About Your Teaching" Luncheon in the President's Dining Room "Going to Jamaica"
Thursday, July 17	Poetry Workshop Susan Methvin, JSU Creative Writing Instructor
Thursday, July 24	Graduation /Reception

DEMONSTRATION SUMMARIES

Using Thematic Units in the Classroom

This presentation focuses on the use of thematic units in the classroom. Advantages and disadvantages are discussed. One thematic unit, *Medieval Times*, is used as the focal point of the presentation. Demonstrations on how one is able to build upon these units are shown. Hands-on activities include a dragon cinquain. Fellow teachers will write a personal cinquain about themselves. The demonstration concludes with everyone making a knight's shield.

Donna Calhoun

Halloween Unit

Writing in a variety of ways is the focus of this presentation. By using a thematic unit on Halloween, the teacher demonstrates how to incorporate quality literature into not only kindergarten classrooms, but in classrooms everywhere. The fellows discover that writing across the curriculum is not a difficult task to achieve. They rewrite the events of *Arthur's Halloween* by Marc Brown in their own miniature books and even develop their own stories to go along with a cooking activity involving goblin dough. Also included in this demonstration are activities for writing in math, science, and art. As young students are learning the writing process, thematic units and writing across the curriculum will help them to develop proper writing skills for future use.

Ginger Carrell

Introduction to the Electronic Classroom.

This presentation stresses hands-on tasks so that participants become more familiar with both the interconnectivity of the current state of the computer classroom and the procedures for operating multiple programs simultaneously. The participants gain familiarity with the Word for Windows 95 environment, with focus upon what is sometimes difficult for students to grasp, that where a file gets saved (subdirectory or floppy disk) is a crucial step. The presentation-design program, PowerPoint, is introduced next. Existing PowerPoint slide shows from the Stone Center server (from those prepared for the EH 102 class tutorials) demonstrate a variety of models that use the design templates, Clip Art, fades, and other transition devices. Participants then "brainstorm" in PowerPoint, composing one or more slides of a presentation with text plus ClipArt on a design template. They then access the World-Wide Web through the JSU English Department's pages, which provide useful pointers to resources for teaching

composition. Once participants find important sites and bookmark them, they learn how to save a personalized bookmark file so that they can carry it to another computer or another lab. Handouts give instructions for additional tasks: how to copy and paste from Netscape into Word or PowerPoint and where to go for sites which explain the format for MLA citations for electronic material.

Joanne Gates

Using Language Creatively with Riddles, Sayings, and Poems

Creativity does not have to be taught. Young children are creative, but too often, teachers discourage creativity in teenagers. The goal of this presentation is to help the older students continue their creative thinking. If high school students are not encouraged to be creative, they will find living difficult as adults. If the students can write why a particular saying has a special meaning for them, it will help them to think and reflect. Creativity is practiced by allowing the students to change the name of "Annabel Lee" and fit it into their own poem. This is an excellent opportunity for group work because ideas can be shared and improved. Variations can be made to fit other poems or subjects as well.

Darryl Gossett

Showing Writing

Showing Writing is another way of saying descriptive writing. This demonstration uses Rebecca Caplan's thesis that states that the ability to write well involves learning to use rich sensory images. Caplan maintains that students must first be taught how to write using the five senses. Regular classroom practice then follows in which students learn to evaluate their own descriptive images in student response groups or read-a-rounds. The demonstration provides examples of "showing" verses "telling" writing and lists examples of vague, image-poor words for students to learn to replace. Prewriting activities include webbing and a sensory observation free write. A writing activity was to describe a favorite pizza using vivid sensory images. A blindfolded partner walk was used as a springing off point to discuss how much we depend on our sense of sight and how, when our sight is taken away, our other four senses are heightened as a result. "Seeing" became more than just using the eyes.

Pamela Hausfather

Conservation Biology

The presentation on conservation is designed to help students realize that all human activity affects wildlife in some way. During the presentation, students are required to wrestle with environmental concerns and to think about different groups of people who have special interests to protect. Students design a town; they are asked to have as their main goal the protection of wildlife habitat as well as a sensitivity to the needs and wants of the citizens. Students gain an understanding of the difficulty land management organizations face in deciding the best way to use existing land, and realize that all actions ultimately affect everyone on the planet.

Kevin S. Holt

Speechless Interview

The Speechless Interview is an approach for teaching basic interviewing skills, improving the writing and punctuation of dialogue, and encouraging creative thinking. Working in pairs, the students are required to plan an interview; one student takes on the role of interviewer, while the other becomes the interviewee. The students determine the setting for their interview (talk show, news show, etc.) as well as the characters (famous people, fictional people, family, friends). However, the actual interview must be conducted silently; that is, the interviewer *writes* a question and the interviewee *writes* a response, all in proper dialogue form. Following the interviews, students share a favorite question and response with the class. As a follow-up activity, the students individually write a newspaper article about their interview, utilizing exact dialogue as well as paraphrasing.

Stephanie Kirby

A Whole Language Approach to Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*

The whole language approach to *Romeo and Juliet* encourages students to become actively involved and enables them to positively experience the play. Prereading activities help students organize their ideas or experiences and relate their ideas to the characters or situations of the play. During-reading activities encourage the students to become more involved in their own learning. Students will also explore the reading in greater depth. Postreading activities help resolve the difficulties students may have in understanding the play. These activities facilitate the development of a better understanding of the material they have read. Extending activities engage the students in

critical thinking, allowing them to apply what they know to alternative circumstances. As the students become proactive in their learning of the play, the level of comprehension is increased. By making this first exposure to Shakespeare pleasurable and successful, the students will be encouraged and will eagerly anticipate experiencing future Shakespearean plays.

Elizabeth Lixey

Integrated Reading, Writing, and Grammar Methods

Integrated language arts methods make instruction more meaningful to students and teachers. Such methods help students to recognize the importance of each major language arts doctrine: literature, writing, and grammar. Instead of separating the three units during the year, the integrated language arts classroom interrelates them through various writing activities and assignments. Through this integration, students are able to maintain interest in the lessons and are able to recognize important connections that might otherwise be lost in the traditional English classroom. The teacher benefits as well by being actively involved in the students' complete understanding of material.

Melissa Shields

Grab a White Chicken and Jump on the Wheelbarrow: Creative Techniques for Introducing and Defining Poetry in the Classroom

Designed as a "10-step program to help those addicted to the fear of poetry (or the teaching thereof)," this presentation emphasizes in-class writing exercises that force students to examine their ideas about poetry and language. Included are a number of activities with titles such as "Is Prose Merely Poetry on Steroids?--the Startling Answer," and an "Extraterrestrial Activity--Defining Poetry for a Space Alien."

Louise Sowa

Making *Romeo and Juliet* Fun and Relevant

The purpose of this demonstration is to share ideas with fellow teachers on how to correlate fun activities, current events, and critical thinking activities into a *Romeo and Juliet* unit. An in-depth discussion is initiated to make sure that all objectives mandated by the *Alabama Course of Study* concerning *Romeo and Juliet* are met, while at the same time, the subject matter is made relevant to the students' lives. A pre-reading assignment

is used that allows the student to cast celebrities to play the parts of Romeo and Juliet. A post-reading assignment is used that compares and contrasts one particular theme of Romeo and Juliet (i.e., students should always go to their parents with problems no matter how difficult that is) to a CNN news article about a teenager who gave birth at her prom and left the baby to die. In conclusion, all teachers are reminded to be cautious when discussing *Romeo and Juliet*, since teenagers may be prone to glamorize mass suicide, violence, and pre-marital sex.

Tim Stewart

Adjectives: Getting Students to Use Them Creatively

This demonstration introduces students to adjectives—what they are and how to recognize them through the use of a test frame. After students have a good understanding of adjectives, they are divided into groups of two. The students have a choice of doing an activity called “Snake Spit” or one called “Jazzing It Up.” The “Snake Spit” activity involves writing a letter to a pretend boss, using hard-hitting adjectives. The “Jazzing It Up” activity involves the development of adjective-rich paragraphs from the ideas presented in one sentence. Students then are encouraged to draw pictures on construction paper describing their paragraphs or letters.

Tabatha Treece

Approaches to Teaching Writing in the Early Childhood Classroom

The demonstration begins with a discussion on emergent literacy. Overheads are used to show examples of kindergarten students' work. After the introduction, the Writing Project fellows participate in several hands-on activities. First, they create an innovation on text using *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle. They use paper plates to make a caterpillar shaped counting book. Next, the fellows begin a Language Experience Activity. They complete the activity that precedes the writing portion of the LEA by making ice cream. After listening to selections of poetry, the fellows look at three types of formula poems. Finally, the fellows learn how to create dialogue cards and pop-up books.

Jennifer Webster



Donna Calhoun

**"All good writing is
swimming under water and
holding your breath--"**

--F. Scott Fitzgerald

The World Through My Mother's Eyes

As a mother, she saw things from the guardian point of view. She scouted the area for potential danger to those who were entrusted to her care. She was constantly on the "look-out" for anyone or anything that might cause a threat to those she loved. She was ever watchful. She was quick to point out the beauty of a sunset, a rose growing in the garden, the smile on a baby's face, a maple tree in October when the leaves are on fire with reds and oranges and yellow golds.

As I was growing up, her eyes helped me to see this and more. She saw the beauty and the flaws in the friends and dates I brought home. Mother's eyes saw more than mine. Perhaps, in some cases, I did not want to see what she saw. I loved to see the beauty but turned a blind eye to the flaws in my friends. She was not harsh in judgment, just adept at reality. She only singled out those flaws to warn me against making the same mistakes as my friends.

In 1986, mother's eyes began to see differently. She was having trouble reading. Her eyes would tire easily. At first, she could not thread a needle. Then she could not see to balance her checkbook. She was having trouble with the little things she had to cope with throughout the day. She was sure that all she needed was to have the prescription changed on her glasses.

She was devastated when she returned from the eye doctor. She had a condition known as macular degeneration. There was nothing that could be done in her case. Before long, she would be legally blind. Her eyesight was already deteriorating rapidly.

Second opinions yielded the same results. She would never be completely blind, but she would be legally blind for the rest of her life.

She kept her disappointment to herself very well. *How do you react to news that has been given to you that will affect your life and the life of those around you for the rest of your life?* She wept in privacy. She smiled whenever there was anyone around. She sought her God and the solace that comes when God alone can give you an answer. No, God did not restore her eyesight. But he gave her a window to heaven.

I asked her a few months later how she was able to accept the fact that she would never be able to see clearly, that she would eventually have to give up reading, which was her favorite past-time, driving a car, which she had only begun at the age of 42 (*she was 62 at the time, so she was able to drive only about 20 years*), working the crossword puzzle in the *TV Guide*. *How do you give up the things that make up a big part of your life? What keeps you from hitting something or breaking something? How can you deal with it with such apparent calmness?*

She looked at me sideways for several seconds. The sideways look was not because she was sitting beside me but because she was already adjusting to the effects of the disease. Macular degeneration affects the straight vision. It is like looking at a puzzle with some of the pieces missing. The peripheral vision is not affected as much as the frontal vision. So, she was looking out the side of her eyes to be able to see me more clearly. For several seconds, I had to endure that sideways look I would come to take for granted.

Finally, she sighed and bade me come with her. We went out to the front porch and sat on the steps. It was early evening, and there had not been much rain that summer.

The air was oppressively hot even without the sun. During the day, large oak trees kept the front of the house shaded and cool. At night, we would watch the leaves sway and relish the coolness their movement promised.

We sat on the porch for several minutes in silence. Then she pointed to a small opening in the leaves near the top of the tallest tree in the yard. It wasn't a very large opening, but it was almost a perfect square.

"Do you see that?" she asked me. "I call that my window to heaven. Every night I come out here and talk to God. Most of the time, I do all the talking. But I do listen and I get answers, although they are not always the answers that I want."

"When I first learned that I had a problem with my eyes, I prayed that it was only temporary or that it could be fixed. God said no to both of those. But He did remind me that I had a lot of other things to be thankful for. I've already had a long life, and I'm thankful for that. I've seen a lot of things: all my children's faces, beautiful sunsets, the ocean, man walking on the moon. I can still hear, and I can think. I'll be able to get around by myself in familiar surroundings. I won't be totally blind, and I'm thankful for that. I've decided to be thankful for the blessings that God has given me than to whine or cry about what I've lost."

Mother still looks at me from the corner of her eyes. Her vision from the front is almost totally gone. She can still get around in the house and outside with help. She still has her wit and her wisdom. I thought for a long time that the qualities she found in my friends and the flaws she claimed to be able to see, as well, were only skin deep. I know better, now. Like her window to heaven, to talk to God, she had a window to the soul that let her see what was inside another person.

Writer's Block

I cannot think of a thing to write,
It bothered me all through the night.
I woke up at a quarter past three
Hoping something would come to me.

The house is dark--without a sound
No other waking soul I've found.
Everyone else is fast asleep,
Their minds are out in dreamland—deep.
While my mind wanders here and there
They sleep on—without a care.

Still I ponder what to write
Keeping me up half the night.
I think I'll write about a tree
Is my inspiration at half past three.
That did not work and I'm getting sore
As the clock on the mantle chimes "It's Four!"

I feel I'm only half alive
As the hands on the clock move closer to five.
I guess I must have writer's block
As I watch the hands go around the clock.
A subject is all I really need
And then I can complete the deed.
I take a shower at half past six
Still in this awful, terrible fix,
My page is still a void, a blank;
And writer's block is who I'll thank.



Ginger Carrell

**"A teacher affects eternity;
he can never tell where his
influence stops."**

--Henry Brooks Adams

Philosophy of Education

I believe that all children have the ability to learn. It is my responsibility, as a teacher, to see that all of these children acquire the knowledge they need to advance to their fullest potential.

At times, the job of a teacher resembles that of a door-to-door salesman. Sometimes, we may knock on the door of a child's mind and be welcomed with warmth and gratitude. Other times, we may knock on the door and nobody answers. Worse yet, the door may open a tiny bit only to be slammed in our face. The child who graciously accepts the knowledge we offer makes our job easier and more pleasant. However, it is the child who slams the door of his or her mind that needs us most.

I would like to relate a child's ability to that of a balloon. When a child is born, genetics blow some air into his balloon, and as with all things, a little luck may blow in, too. The amount of ability the child puts forth can make the balloon travel to great heights. The child gains much of this ability through the knowledge acquired from his teacher. We should make it a point, each day, to help our children soar.

I recognize that all children have different ways of learning. My classroom is one in which a variety of methods of presentation are used, so that all children may have the opportunity to get the most out of any lesson. Direct teaching, cooperative learning, and whole language integration are only a few of the techniques that I use.

I fully accept my responsibilities to the slow, fast, and average learner. My goal is to help all of my students learn while still enjoying school. In place of the same old worksheets, I use such approaches as recipes to teach math measurement and following

directions worksheets and experiments, instead of glossary definitions, to teach science. I have also designed several learning tools which I feel are important in my teaching career. For example, I have hundreds of creative activities with directions for their making and examples of each to be used in the classroom. I have a game card file with over 60 activities in it, most of which can be used in the regular classroom. Another tool that I frequently need is the vast selection of children's books that I have collected.

Children should not be forced to quietly learn from a cramped school desk. Freedom to explore and use their senses is essential in children's learning. This becomes evident when watching a child encounter an object for the first time. He will use all of his senses to help him understand what this new thing is.

Another important aspect of the classroom environment is parental involvement. It is important for a child to see his parents take an active role in that child's life. This way, the child will know that the parents care. For this very reason, I hope to enlist the help of all of my students' parents in such roles as aides for center time, resource people, and chaperones for special field trips.

A teacher plays a very important role in the life of the students, whether the importance of this role is known or not and whether it is wanted or not. The teacher must use the opportunities given in the day-to-day activities in the classroom to teach such things as manners, kindness, compassion, and understanding. These traits can be taught in those "unwritten lessons" which appear on our faces and in our actions. A teacher should never act in such a way to negatively impact on the life of the students. That teacher may be the only positive role model that a particular child sees on a daily basis, so we should make the most of our positions.

I want to teach knowledge in my classroom that gives a child some perspective, that may lead not only to wisdom of the mind, but also “wisdom of the heart.” I do not want my action to persuade children to lead a life of conceit, arrogance, and cynicism.

My experiences with children have had an extremely positive effect on me. I am more confident and secure about actually teaching a child than I am about anything else. The basis behind my style of teaching is to give and encourage in my students strong self-concepts and positive emotional feelings. I am excited, empowered with excellent ideas, and motivated to do my best. Most of all, I want my children to feel the same way about learning. Education is the most exciting career a person can go into, and I will enjoy it forever.

Talk Show Junkie

If I could,
each afternoon,
I'd sit with cold ice cream
and a silver spoon,
watching my talk shows
till the rise of the moon.

OK, I admit it.
I confess.
I'm a talk show junkie
though I've tried my best.
For if I do not see them
I simply cannot rest.

Have you tried them?
Just watched them once?
I must reveal
that I haven't missed one in months.

When it comes to all my faves
like Sally, Jenny, and Rikki Lake,
I lose all control and can't behave.
Their shows are really
all the rave!

Geraldo's got the celebrity news
and Maury says, "Opposites Attract."
Montel's guests are taking paternity tests
while Leeza's group has been attacked.

Springer really has the trash.
Those people can't be for real!
With shows like, "My brother is our pimp!"
What can be the deal?

It would be remiss
to forget to list
Oprah in this rhyme.
I happen to be one of the many
who helped her make a dime.

Secrets to Reveal

It's Time to Pay
My Teen is Out of Control
Get it Through Your Thick Head
because
You're Not All That When We're In Bed!

I give up!
It's just no use!
Talk shows really
light my fuse!

The Writing-Rich Classroom Environment

Picture, if you will, a class of kindergarten students. As you envision these little angels in your mind, let me introduce them to you. The children you are visualizing come mostly from single-parent families. They live in a low-income, poverty level housing project that is far below the means of what you or I have ever experienced. These are my students. They come to me every day eager to learn, and it is because of their situation that I insist on making their learning environment enjoyable. I take their limited knowledge and prior experiences to build upon that foundation. To accomplish this task, I teach with thematic units.

Units across the curriculum enable me to immerse my students in the subject at hand. We talk about it in all subject areas from math to art. This style of teaching introduces my students to quality literature while improving their still developing writing and reading processes (Cochran 5). Teaching students in this manner has been beneficial to both my students and me because it has helped us grow as writers.

Our growth in writing did not come immediately. It was a slow process that did not actually begin to take place until the second semester. At this time, I truly discovered what I had been taught about how children learn to write. "Students learn the writing process best through teacher-directed writing lessons" (Frank 5). Research shows that students who have writing modeled to them learn to write more than students who do not have writing modeled to them. In one such study, a teacher used parent volunteers to come into her classroom each morning and model writing during journal time. Those students who were not writing at all prior to this exercise were at least writing letters at

the end. And those students who were writing significantly began putting more structure into their writings.

Writing is a motor activity, and studies show that for children to use this skill properly they must first be focused on what they are doing (Clay 73). Once they are able to focus themselves, they begin to explore this new activity known as writing. As with any new object, the students will use their five senses to explore its characteristics. I watched my students as they developed these steps to becoming efficient writers.

As a teacher who now swears by a writing-rich classroom environment, I would like to share an especially interesting idea with you. In the book *Writing With Reason* by Nigel Hall, a teacher uses *The Grouchy Ladybug* by Eric Carle to spark writing in very young students. The grouchy ladybug writes a letter to the students, and they instantly begin to respond. The letters written by the students use a friendly letter format, and the students even begin incorporating other subject areas, like math, into their letters (Hall 82).

This is the type of writing-rich environment that I want to provide for my students. By doing so, I will enable them to become better, more confident writers in the long run.

Works Cited

Clay, Marie M. *What Did I Write?* Portsmouth: Heinemann Educational Books, 1988.

Cochran, Judith. *Launch into Literature.* Minneapolis: T.S. Denison and Company, Inc., 1990.

Frank, Marjorie. *Complete Writing Lessons for the Primary Grades.* Nashville: Incentive Publications, Inc., 1987.

Hall, Nigel. *Writing With Reason.* Portsmouth: Heinemann Educational Books, 1989.



Joanne Gates

"What's in the brain that ink may character?
What's new to speak, what new to register?
Nothing, but yet...
I must!"

--Shakespeare

Attribute All Sources!

Students need reinforcement for citing sources in **all** classes (including literature surveys and graduate seminars), not just in the research paper unit of the freshman composition class. Our department teaches in the freshman composition sections the MLA documentation style (or citation form), and students are expected to use that style through their academic work at JSU. Sometimes the accurate use of the form is a struggle even in the freshman sections where I devote a lot of time to it, so it should not be a shock, but it often is, that in other sections, class time needs to be devoted to review of the form and clarification of the style.

It is tempting for an instructor of a survey course to teach only from the class anthology and to require only page references when we are working from the same anthology. Yet when it comes time for the upper-level classes to turn in a critical paper, the citation styles students adopt are erratic to the point of being unacceptable, and often, there isn't time left to insist on a revision. For this reason, in the future, I will teach full MLA citation in every class, early in the semester, and train students to use it even for informal responses. I plan to develop a handout that I will use that is specific to each class. It will clarify what the proper citation form in MLA style is for any anthology we are using and state whenever it might be acceptable to use a shorthand version of the style when the anthology is the only source. When I review the MLA citation form for work due later in the semester, the rationale and methods of citation should be better embedded in my students' thinking and therefore in their finished documents. With this approach, students are reminded daily that they must know the full and proper form; they must distinguish between their use of editors' comments (in introductions and footnotes) and

the texts themselves. We need to show our students that we write for professional publication and consult handbooks when they are needed. When students observe their teachers engaged in the process of writing research documents, they will understand the importance of the strict adherence to the correctness of a citation style.

A more crucial area of teaching good reference form--that we as teachers may have lost in our attempts to reinforce the technical accuracy of citations--is that students also need to be taught the careful logic of attributing sources. In freshman exercises, I sometimes set up a scenario for students to imagine as they work on compositions that are compiled from a variety of sources. I ask them to imagine delivering their paper in an auditorium filled with an audience who has come to hear delivered the author's ideas on a topic. Each student is encouraged, even required, to back up his or her position with "experts" in the field, and these experts have even been invited to the event and are sitting, like a panel, ready to assist the student by reading the information that the student/presenter has selected to quote. Primarily to illustrate how to introduce the outside source, I have adopted what one of my very old teaching of rhetoric books calls a "signal phrase." "Signal phrase" is also the term used by the department's current standard handbook, Diane Hacker's *A Writer's Reference*, 3rd edition. The *Dolphin Handbook for Writers* calls the term an "attributor" and has an excellent section in its research paper chapters entitled "Composing an Attributor." (Chapter 15 of the forthcoming edition, which I reviewed prior to publication). The signal phrase, I explain to students, is the necessary bridge to announce to their audience that "this next part is coming from another source." Because I encourage the "I" voice, I state that this first person interjection functions as another sort of signal phrase, announcing the writer's own opinion, which, in the papers I assign, should be incorporated into the thesis and the

discourse. Make it clear, I inform my students, that what is coming next is "so-and-so's" opinion. Then announce where you agree, disagree, or are developing further his/her argument.

One easy, formulaic structure for the signal phrase is "According to [GIVE NAME]," followed by the information from the source. However, signal phrases can be very effective as complete sentences (and a complete sentence signal phrase is required before a block quotation). Signal phrases should, of course, vary in wording and serve the purpose of explaining how the author intends to use the material. Perhaps the writer wants to make the point that the very first published biography of Elizabeth Robins was released by a University Press in 1994. If it is important to the discussion, a writer should indicate that the first printing of Janet Malcolm's *The Silent Women* (subsequently published in book form by Knopf, 1994) was in the special double issue of *The New Yorker* (dated as August 23 and 30, 1993), where her three-part study of Sylvia Plath was accompanied by photographs and for which the issue's cover design was a stained glass illustration of Plath's epitaph poem, "The Edge." Not every detail of the time or circumstances of first publication will be important to every student writer's argument, but some important identifier such as the author's name, a title, a year, a journal title should occur in the signal phrase. Unfortunately, even in many published works, we can notice that the wording of the signal phrase is omitted. That should be because it is implied in other ways. But be warned! Professional writing in many disciplines encourages *no* signal phrasing, and students could find numerous examples of poorly attributed quotations and indirect quotations. In fact, this assumption that the punctuation or the parenthetical citation alone is enough to indicate material from sources is standard operating procedure in some publications. (Conversely, students have interpreted MLA citation form as an invitation to leave out the author in the parenthetical citation and give only page whenever they please and not, as MLA requires, only when the author is named

in the signal phrase.) Typographically, we should be able to see the equivalent of a signal phrase. But by insisting on direct signal phrasing (in words, not simply punctuation), I am clarifying the need to mimic the panel presentation model (and asking my students to imagine the paper heard, rather than read from the page).

The parenthetical citation, then, is the technical information at the end of ideas (sometimes exactly quoted) which leads us to the full citation and enables us to re-find the source exactly. It is not the **only** ingredient of giving proper credit; it should be seen instead as the publishing industry's economy, which allows the writer not to have to repeat the complete citation each time.

To reinforce signal phrasing, an instructor could stage a demonstration using the scenario based on my panel of experts brought to the auditorium to help the author present his paper. When I try this with freshmen, I write out quotations and their full source on separate strips of paper, distributing them to selected students who sit in the front as a panel. Then I improvise the voice of the author who carefully shifts between personal voice and the exact signal phrase needed to introduce the guest and put his expert material in the proper context. As I read the signal phrase (or introduction of my guest expert), I turn to the expert, gesture for him to take the floor, and the "expert" reads his or her piece having been properly introduced with the signal phrase. This works equally well in a Shakespeare class, where a character's situation must be part of a signal phrase, or in a survey where different authors' voices are cited from the same anthology. Just as the introduction of a direct quotation is crucial, the citation must not state simply "Riverside" or "Norton."

The bibliography, or "works cited" list is useful only when it conforms to the MLA parenthetical style and when that style is consistently followed. Some students have difficulty grasping that the "short form" of the parenthetical citation must be traceable to the alphabetical list. This should be easy when all citations are authored and

the parenthetical short form begins with the author's last name. The unauthored articles which are alphabetized by title should have as their short form a shortened version of the title of the article. They should know that the general domain such as "Internet," or *Newsweek* is unacceptable as a parenthetical citation. (As I teach computer-assisted sections of composition, I already spend some time covering the necessary components of a work in electronic format.) MLA encourages shortening a long title when an unauthored article is cited in parenthesis. The best formula for this is to retain in the short version of the title some semblance of the way the title has been alphabetized. (The parenthetical short version of the title should be locatable in the alphabetical list.) Anthologies from which more than one work is cited need a citation of their own: they are alphabetized by editor, and each anthologized piece must then be listed by author of the piece, with a reference in each to those anthology editors. Verse and verse plays require line numbers for good citation form.

My handout will encourage crediting all sources for information and provide a broader statement on what constitutes plagiarism. Some classes will be working with a film adaptation of a novel or play, and it is important to know the proper form for these. (While director and details of a film or videotape are important, MLA wants these genres listed by title.) In some classes, I may even demonstrate with a proper credit for a Cliffs Notes citation. Students seem to ignore that these guides and summaries have authors, too. (I do applaud those teachers who "ban" such guides, but there are occasions when students will be using them, anyway.) Students must learn to distinguish between when a resource like this is paraphrasing and when it is providing commentary. Many of Cliffs Notes' own citations of a primary text are not properly cited, and it is best to point this out—perhaps warning students away from over-reliance on these aids--rather than face such a problem after the student has relied on it too exclusively. I already make it a practice to credit sources that are part of my presentations. For instance, I include the

exact URL, or Uniform Resident Locator of the Internet address of a site that I used to teach the epic conventions in *Rape of the Lock*. Sometimes I will refer to alternate editions of a text. Sometimes I will credit a production for giving me an idea about an interpretation. This reinforces the "logic" of proper crediting.

Just as the APA, MLA, and *Chicago Manual of Style* present different formats for citation--thus requiring us to shift our documentation formats as we work in different disciplines or when we submit a cross-disciplinary article to different journals—so, too, are there appropriate shifts employed in how complete we need to be when insisting on citations that appear in a common text. From my previous experience, though, I have determined that the best way to handle this is to re-teach a complete citation style early in a class, announce and publish what exceptions to that style can be made for purposes of a particular assignment, and then to re-teach the formal style when a critical paper requires it at the end of semester.

The Joys of Okra

Okra oozes when cooked and cut
"Yuck, slimy!" seems to be the
typical reaction of a non-native
Southerner (and some locals, too).

But my husband and I are
late bloomers,
discovering each other
and the joys of Southern gardening after
turning forty.

And we've decided
the only way to appreciate
okra is to grow your own!

Slow to get established, the little round, rabbit-dropping-like pellets of seeds need some soaking before being poked into soil.

If planting early, give it time; don't make the mistake of giving up and plowing up your unsprouted rows. Cool springs will trick you into thinking that you may just have to replant. It may sit sprouted for weeks, waiting for warmer temperatures to leap out and up into a real patch of hazy yellow blossoms.

All its later stages of maturing are just as fickle. Thin, water, weed, and fertilize when necessary.

Pick daily, for once it gets its growth (and the summer days are scorchers), there's no stopping okra. Its stages--from blossom, to little knobby pod, to just right for pickling, to over big for cutting up for soup, to tough and stinky and only good for compost--will come in fast succession.

Eat combined with other garden delights, squash and tomatoes, peppers (the hot ones add some punch to the bland bore of just okra).

An okra patch well-picked will keep producing, the stalks keep reaching skyward, new pods will reassert their tender delicacies.

When grocery stores and vegetable stands offer only a brown, bruised, and wilted supply, your home grown will taste better. Freeze a batch when you've got too much to eat.

Avoid the prickly parts of the crown, use a knife to slice off clean (twisted pods will

shred the stalk). Pick with gloves on, avoiding stray ants who may have discovered the tastier pods first.

Get used to it crooked, even curled around itself, deformed. Crooked okra is still usually edible; think of it as a miniature cornucopia of taste.

Okra takes on a life of its own if it feels like it. Some stalks produce low down, and hide pods under their broad leaves. Others will thin out and rise toward the sun, giving out fruit as they work their way up. With the right conditions, you might be reaching up to bend down those stalks that grow above your head and outstretched arms.

When Opal blew through that rain soaked October (we still remember the Hurricane of '95), others lost pecan trees and big pine branches. We had our okra uprooted, the ten-foot stalks falling heavy with their late fall weight.

Relish the rhythm of elongated Southern summers, expect okra stalks to yield till almost frost. In Minnesota, it probably has snowed; but here in Alabama, you are still finding stray pods popped out on stringy stalks, enough for a mess of green in mid-November.

Tired of its non flavor? Add it to gumbo, to spicy hot lentil soup. Fry it in cornmeal, crispy on the outside, or all the way through.

Be glad for its heartiness. When the beans get diseased and the squash vines dry up (when worms get half a cabbage head at a time), you will still have some okra.

When the birds have put a peck in each of your red tomatoes, looking for water, you can still eat okra.



Darryl Gossett

**"Words are like diamonds.
Polish them too much and all
you get are pebbles."**

--Bryce Courtenay

The ABC's of Fatherhood

Almost always
Boys become
Classic clones
Developed derived
Energized everlasting
From fathers
Giving guidance
Holding hands
Inspiring interceding
Judiciously journeying
Keenly knowing
Looking longing
Making molding
Negotiating novel
Omniscient opportunities
Pending pilgrimages
Quaintly questing
Regenerating reason
Searching secularly
Tempting theology
Unaware unwilling
Visually vexed
Welcoming witnesses
Xeroxing xeroxes
Yesterday yearning
Zealously zooming ...

Buyer Beware

My aunt Margaret loves tomato sandwiches. She can easily afford the supermarket prices but prefers to find the best buys for tomatoes during their peak season. One of these excursions has been an often repeated topic at many of our family reunions.

As almost everyone from the South knows, the tomatoes grown on Chandler Mountain are of an exceptional quality and taste. I don't know about soil and climate, but I do know the tomatoes are good. Margaret had stopped at one of the many roadside markets to look for a good price on Chandler Mountain tomatoes, her favorite kind. While she examined one basket after another, she asked the old man who seemed to be in charge, "Are these Chandler Mountain tomatoes?" "Are they what?" was his response. Margaret went into detail about the texture, juice, and color expected of the best tomatoes. "And Chandler Mountain tomatoes are the best I've found to meet those requirements." The man realized his mistake and spoke quickly, "Yes, ma'am. Them there's Chandler Mountain tomatoes." She realized this man was a good salesman and decided to pass on the tomatoes. A couple of tables away were piles of bananas. Margaret looked at several stalks and more to herself than to anyone else asked, "Are these bananas any good?" The old man began to think he had made a sale to this woman and readily announced, "Yes Ma'am. Them there's Chandler Mountain bananas."

Margaret decided a bologna sandwich was exactly what she wanted for her lunch. As she made her way to the car, the old man shouted after her, "I've got some good Chandler Mountain kiwi, too."

The Magical Tuit

As a child playing in the dirt pile under a large oak tree, I never dreamed I would one day be in pursuit of a tuit. I did not have a need for a tuit. The only time restraints I had were breakfast, lunch, supper, and bedtime. Even though I had an excellent imagination, I could not picture myself as ever needing to adjust my time limits. The priority in my life was playing, and I made sure I had enough time for that. Everything else was number two and, depending on my mood, could be easily pushed back to number three.

As I got older (not wiser), I began to hear people talk about “getting their priorities in order.” I thought these people must be crazy because I didn’t know the word “senile” yet. Most of these people who kept using that phrase about “priorities” were ancient. They were all on the back side of twenty-five. What happened to these people when they grew up? Should I expect this to happen to me? Hey! I had my priorities straight. I would play, and if I had time after playing, I would do something else. I could sense that it was my definition of “something else” that caused problems for these elderly people. My “something else” consisted of eating or sleeping, but to the serious seniors, this “something else” was beyond any of my wildest nightmares.

If I had fully understood the significance of these older people’s revelations, I could have begged my mom and dad for a tuit for my birthday. I would have written letters to Santa demanding a tuit. Oh, if only I could go back in time...

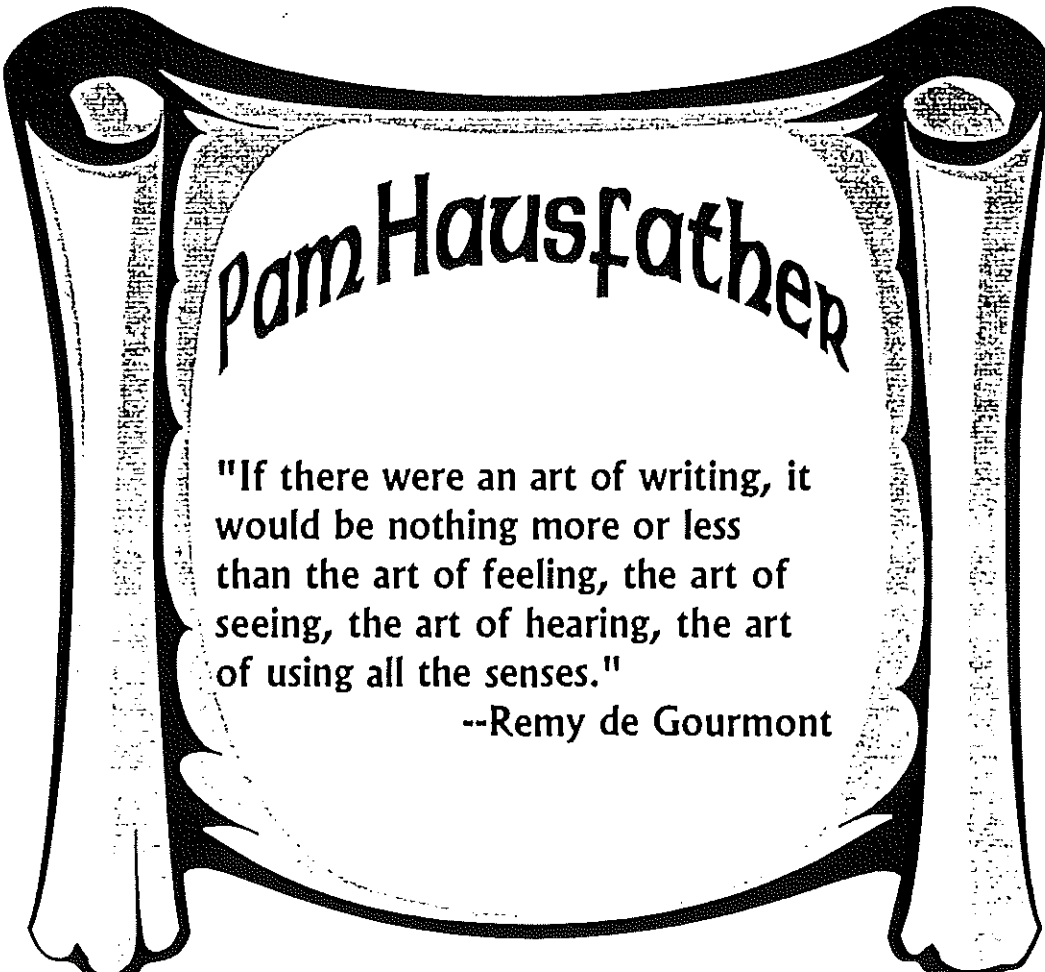
I have searched Wal-Mart, catalogs, and even Gregerson’s groceries without success. My continued quests make Indiana Jones look like a novice. Flea markets and

local yard sales are my haunts these days. The size of the tuit does not matter anymore. The price of the tuit does not matter anymore. The color of the tuit does not matter anymore. The shape—well—the shape is the only thing that matters. The square will not work. The oval will not work. The triangle will not work. If I can only find that tuit with the correct shape, I will be happy and a successful man. I will not have to postpone events and chores. I will write that novel. I will build that house. I will teach my children. I will thank my parents with a hug. I will love my wife and show it. I will help others.

All of these things will be accomplished easily if I can only find my magical tuit. I've said it. Many people have said it. Perhaps, you've said it. I can do anything, "When I get a round tuit."

A Mandatory Writing Sentence

Write a page report. Write a two page essay. Do this. Do that. Gimme, gimme, gimme. Write, write, write! Right? Why do I have to write something meaningful when I'm not in the mood? It would be so simple to fill up the page with meaningless words and phrases. "The poet marches to a different drummer." Well, this writer dances to a kazoo. Who can say if my views are wrong simply because he or she does not understand them? I can be so vague and never touch anything of substance that the reader is left wondering, "Should I pity this child or report him to the authorities to be sentenced to a lifetime of writing?" Does it matter what words I put on this paper? Does it matter in what order my phrases are placed? Will I have a remote "T.V. clicker" on my cloud when I get to heaven if I cross all of my *t's* and dot all of my *i's*? People who interpret writings are similar to those laboratory scientists who spend billions of our tax dollars trying to determine if frogs really did have wings would they not bump their butts when they jumped. It has been reported that confession is good for the soul and that writing is good for the mind. Who proves these sayings? Is it the same poor character who is still trying to prove that butter beans are good for the heart? Talk about a tough job. Maybe writing a page full of words is not that difficult after all. Things could be worse. A roofer nails on the last shingle, and he knows that he is finished. Not so with the writer. When is the writing complete? The actual writer has to decide if the mission has been accomplished. What was my mission? Oh, yeah! A page of words and phrases has been attained without touching on any serious matter. My pencil. My mind. The pencil is sharper and has a better point.



Pam Hausfather

"If there were an art of writing, it would be nothing more or less than the art of feeling, the art of seeing, the art of hearing, the art of using all the senses."

--Remy de Gourmont

A Reflection...

Often, when I desire solitude and a place to sit surrounded by nature, I walk to Swan Lake at Berry College. There are rarely lakes as pristinely beautiful as this one, its emerald water fringed with soft tufts of tall grass. A family of swans swims here. The swans' graceful, arching bodies are mirrored in the smooth water. The lake's grassy banks are gathering places for Canadian geese on their way to places further south. Their quacking sounds fill the air with jabbering, as each one talks of places it has been along its journey.

Swan Lake is not large. It is roughly the size of an Olympic swimming pool, but almost perfectly round. A few silvery fish dart near the lake's bottom where dusky, green shadows of plant life lurk. Lily pads float majestically on the water's surface, their open petals catching the sun's rays. On a hot summer's afternoon, the lake's surface lies still. Sitting by its edge, I can see reflections of clouds, sky, and trees--tall, stately pines reaching high toward wisps of clouds, all framed in blue..

If I bend over, I can view my own image—my tired-looking face gently framed by the other images in the water. A boy is fishing across the lake from where I sit. He calmly casts his line into the water, and a slow ripple of circles radiates in my direction. The ripple finally reaches me, altering my focus. My face breaks apart and then comes back together. I experience peace and renewal.

The Mother

(A Monologue)

"I'm not actually afraid of . . . dying, I mean I'm not afraid of . . . pain. I think I can handle that. And I'm not afraid of being . . . in a different place . . . not knowing exactly what that place is going to be like. But I am afraid of leaving my kids. I'm worried. . . . I'm going to miss them so horribly. It tears me apart . . . to think I'm never going to see them again. And they're so young. I mean Beth is only seven. Ellie is four and Bo is . . . just a year. They've spent so little time with me. How, . . . how are they going to remember me? The little ones won't even know what I look like. Perhaps they'll feel a certain warmth when my name is mentioned, but other than that, I don't think they will have any . . . vivid memories of their mother. And that's hard for me, because I wanted so much to be a good mother. And to give them things . . . that I never got, to guide them, to give them my love. I'm worried that there'll be no one there for them when I'm gone. Hhhh . . .

And I'm worried about John. I know that my . . . dying is going to be devastating for him. It's easier to be the one who passes on than the one who is left behind, I suppose, and, . . . he's going through a terrible time. He's not dealing with my cancer really well, and I know he's somehow going to have to figure out how to take care of the kids. Um . . . he could hire a nanny, but that's really expensive. I don't know, you see, if he will be able to afford it or not on an occupational therapist's salary. Aunt Bebe has volunteered to help with the cost, . . . for a few years, I mean, of hiring a nanny, and I'm grateful to her for that. I do hope that John, as much as I hate to say this, . . . I don't want to share his love, but I do

hope he finds someone after I am gone whom he can love and that he remarries. Someone to . . . be a mother figure to the kids, because as I said, . . . a full-time nanny can't take the place of a . . . mother."

My Student

Like a puppy
Loving and excitable
He frolics heart before mind.
Rushing in
Rushing through, not lingering.

Sometimes playful, often feisty
He is emotion
Quickly changing.
I reach out to guide
And quiet him.

He rushes out
Not accepting
Me...my help.
I represent control.
Controlling whom?

Myself...once a puppy,
Emotion, rushing, changing.
Now matured, calmed, changed.
Controlled actions and emotions,
Mind before heart.

Like relations
We are connected,
Similar natures deep inside.
We can feel this
Special closeness.

Rushing back now,
He has become weary,
Will I accept him as he is?
Can I guide him and affirm him
Without trying to use a leash?

Peer Response Groups A Researched Position Paper

Imagine this scene:

An observer entering this particular English classroom will see student desks pushed together to form circles of activity. Small groups of three, four, or even five students are reading and discussing each other's writing. Students each have a copy of the work being shared. Their voices rise and fall in volume as they vigorously try to question writers as to that exact meaning the writers are attempting to convey. The atmosphere in the room is one of trust. Writers feel comfortable communicating their inner feelings and reflections with others in their groups. Students reviewing the written pieces are careful to point out those images and ideas that the writer has effectively used before making suggestions for improvements.

By using well-structured peer editing groups, a teacher can transform writing into an exciting social activity. The classroom scene we have just witnessed is typical of those classes where process writing is taking place. Students, having been taught techniques for peer editing, are diligently reviewing each other's work. The atmosphere here is one of cooperation, and students are actively participating. Because there is a strong sense of community, students are finding enjoyment in composing purposeful text. They know that they must formulate their images carefully so that the ideas they wish to express can be correctly communicated to the reader.

For student writers to experience an audience for sharing their work is important. This audience need not always be the teacher. It can be an audience of students' peers who, when properly trained, can function independently from the teacher. Having such

an audience gives students a reason to write well. When students know that their papers will be shared with an encouraging group of their peers, they will tend to write with a clearer purpose and enjoy writing more (Koff 146). In forming peer review groups, the distance between the writer and audience is narrowed, and this proximity gives the writer a more intimate knowledge of those persons for whom he or she actually is writing. In writing groups, students' voices tend to become more clearly focused, as students write to communicate with fellow students who, according to Peter Elbow, are perceived as less threatening than the teacher (125). Because a peer review group consists of persons who may share similar areas of difficulty in composing text, the writer feels relatively safe hearing constructive feedback about his or her own work.

Students must be trained in appropriate ways to evaluate each other's writing. They need to learn how to be both positive and tactful in editing each other's work, but at the same time be able to point out weaknesses. Teachers can help students become effective peer editors by discussing actual student texts to be looked at by the class as a whole. By using student texts to teach specific writing issues, teachers can personalize what often otherwise is dull grammar and usage drill. To avoid embarrassing students, the teacher should use papers from other English classes when making corrections in front of the class. This way, student authors may remain anonymous. After a few whole group training sessions, teachers can form small, heterogeneous groupings of three, four, or five students. In these smaller peer groups, students can practice the editing techniques they have learned in the earlier whole class lessons. Teachers must move back and forth from whole group lessons to small group practice sessions, continually striving to increase students' autonomy in the editing of students' own work. During whole class

lessons, teachers can also, for example, ask a group of volunteers to simulate both productive and unproductive writing review techniques. Such a modeled demonstration can serve to further reinforce desired peer reviewing skills.

One of the better peer response strategies that can be modeled for students is that of Peter Elbow. Elbow's method has students working in small groups, at first evaluating what the writer is trying to say and then how the writer expresses his or her message. The responders concentrate on the writer's meaning before they edit the actual mechanics of the work. According to Elbow, the reader should point out both the most and least successful images and then summarize the meaning of the work in his or her own words. Next, the reader should tell how he or she is affected by reading this work and show, through the use of metaphors, what kinds of emotions the work evokes. In going through procedures such as these, the peer editor can help the writer learn exactly how his or her message is being received and where the message is strong or weak. For Elbow's review method to be successful, students need to take their responsibilities as peer editors seriously (85-92).

Students must be held accountable for active participation in their editing groups. The teacher can designate a leader whose job it is to keep students on task and focused (Reichardt 144). Ideally, such a leader is able to get students refocused if they bog down in unproductive, extraneous talk. Students can also be expected to fill out a teacher-designed peer response form and turn this in at the end of each editing session. The use of such a form will require students to respond thoughtfully, using designated feedback as to both the strong and weak points in a peer's writing. Having to turn in a completed form will compel most students to be serious in finishing the editing work at hand.

Through the regular use of correctly structured peer review groups, an English classroom can be transformed from an environment where writing is considered dull and solitary to an enlivened community of students composing meaningful text. Writing becomes a social activity, and students learn that good writing is something that can be learned from each other. Writing, like a muscle, must be exercised to become stronger. By participating in peer review groups, students learn to strengthen their writing muscles through dialoguing with others. Students become aware that the transmission of meaning through text requires a clear sense of their audience, in this case a live audience of their peers. When teachers spend enough time carefully preparing students to be successful in peer review groups, students often enjoy writing more, and their learning to write is enhanced.

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The Waitress

Ceiling fans . . .
Spinning, unceasing
Automation
Laughingly
Mocking
Her.

She . . .
Limping, shuffling
Life
Plodding forward
With thrusting
Steps.

Her body . . .
A bent, rigid
Shell
Straining to continue
With ever-diminishing
Motions.

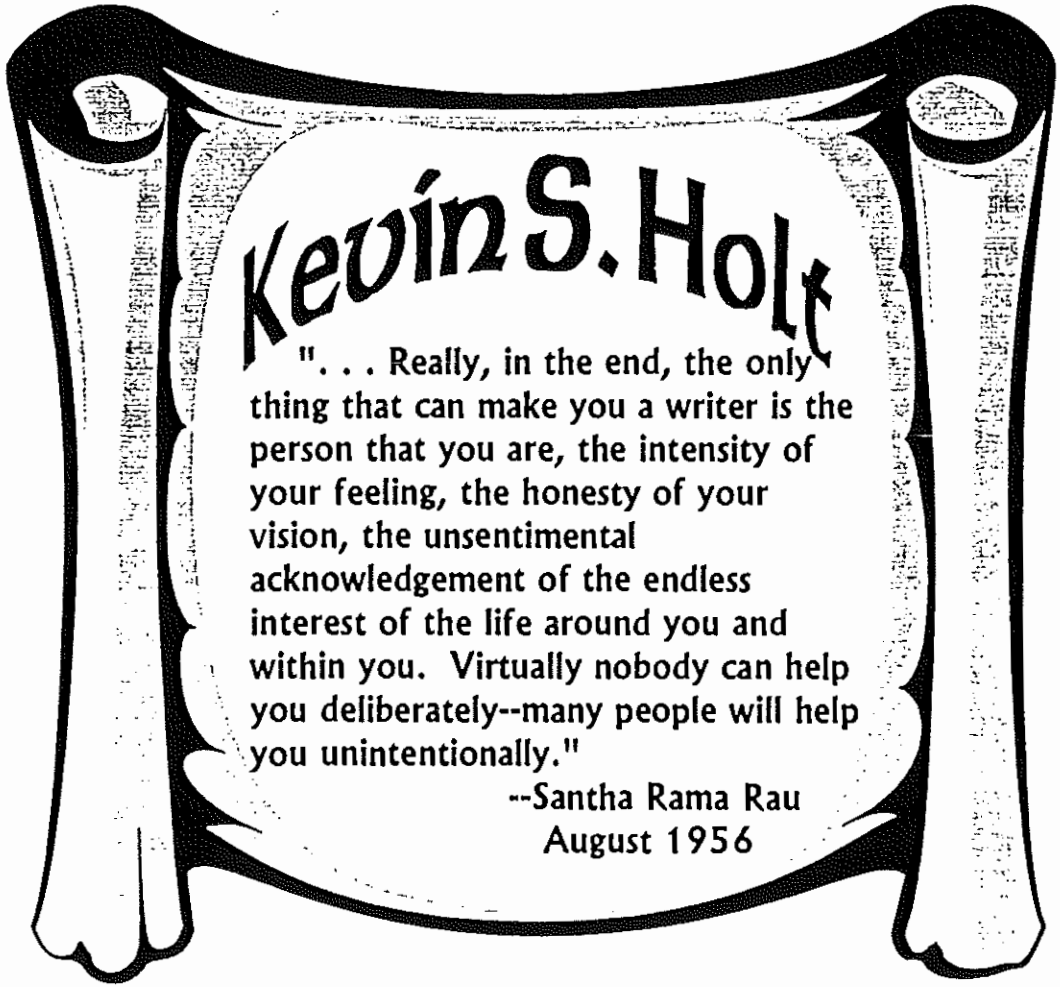
Her face . . .
Gaunt, sagging
Features
Heavily lined
With tired
Obsolescence.

Her mouth . . .
A puckered, sunken
Line
Drawn inward
With life's
Inevitability.

She . . .
Hearing the fans'
Laughter,
Looks up
With recognition
Remembering?

Her life . . .
Brief, dream-like
Moments
Whizzing by
With an uneven beat.
Fading . . .

The fans . . .
Dance, whirl
Seemingly faster
Mechanisms
Heartlessly
Droning on.



Kevin S. Holt

"... Really, in the end, the only thing that can make you a writer is the person that you are, the intensity of your feeling, the honesty of your vision, the unsentimental acknowledgement of the endless interest of the life around you and within you. Virtually nobody can help you deliberately--many people will help you unintentionally."

--Santha Rama Rau
August 1956

The Coca-Cola Carton

I pulled on the heavy glass door just enough to prop it open with my foot.

Wedging between the door and its frame, I pushed it open far enough to get myself and the carton of empty Coke bottles I was trying not to drop inside the store. I was no longer a little kid. I was big. I would be seven in just eight more months and was certainly big enough to go to the store by myself. I felt the cold air inside the store all over my body. It was a comforting change from the hot, humid air outside. The door pinched shut with a screech and blocked out all of the light from outside. I had to pause a minute to let my eyes adjust.

"Hello," came a voice from somewhere inside. I recognized it as the voice that belonged to Mr. Mac.

"Hi, Mr. Mac," I said as my eyes began to focus on a dark, overweight man. His round belly was covered with a pair of shiny, mint-green polyester pants that were pulled up too high and held there with a thick black belt with a big shiny-silver buckle. "Mac" was scratched across it in cursive handwriting. His pants were pulled up so high they almost covered his entire chest and left only a small bit of his knit shirt showing--a shirt with a stripe in it that matched his pants almost exactly.

"Hello," he said again in case I didn't hear him the first time. Mr. Mac sort of wheezed and giggled all of the time and had to talk loudly so you could hear him over his own noise. I used to be afraid of Mr. Mac because he was always yelling things at me,

but now I know that he was a friendly man, sort of jolly in his own way, and just wanted to make sure I heard him.

His dark eyes were always busy darting underneath one big, bushy eyebrow. When he wasn't walking, he just sort of rocked back and forth and side to side on big, brown wing-tipped shoes that were scuffed and dirty. His dark, worn shoes stood out beneath his clean white socks. His belt buckle rocked up and down on top of his big belly every time he moved. Stubby yellow teeth held the end of a cigar stub that disappeared underneath a bushy black mustache.

"I'm returning these," I said, assuming he noticed my bottles. I hoisted them up with both hands to get them over the edge of the big chrome buggy that held all of the returned cola bottles.

"Need some help with that?" he asked, coming toward me, shifting his cigar stub from one side of his mouth to the other.

"Nope! I can do it just fine by myself," I said confidently. He watched me closely and started in my direction the half-dozen or more times that I nearly dumped bottles from the carton.

"Well, if you say you can do it by yourself, than I guess you can," he said calmly after I took my hands off the cardboard container.

I looked at him over my shoulder as I started to walk around the corner of the last aisle in the store. I heard my bare feet splat against the cold concrete floor in what would be silence if it weren't for the buzzing static of a small transistor radio. The radio was too

loud, but occasionally I could hear some woman sing about “being raised on country sunshine” between the snaps and pops.

After a few steps, the splat of my feet mixed with the grit on the floor and whispered “sh” each time I moved. Red spots peeked through the peeling green paint on the floor, and sometimes, a spot of dirty white concrete would show through. A lady smiled down on me from an advertisement for Sunbeam Bread. I smiled back at her, but quickly changed my smile to a grimace just in case someone saw me. I looked around and didn’t see anyone. I smiled again and apologized to the pretty lady for looking so mean, hoping I didn’t scare her too much. I left and walked around the corner of the aisle.

I almost bumped into Mrs. Summour, who had stopped there and was leaning over her empty buggy trying to read the dusty price sticker on a can of Campbell’s Pork n’Beans. She was a large woman, and her blue-and-white-flowered housedress was wet in the places where it touched her body. The thick top of one of her stockings puddled around her blue satin houseshoe like loose skin. The other was pulled high up underneath her dress; it was taut against her big, round leg. I could smell her--soured milk, Aqua Net hairspray, and perfumed talcum powder all fused together. I looked at her face. Her lips were pursed. Her matted, straw-colored hair was pressed so close to her head in places that I could see her scalp, and part of it hung down in her face and almost covered her flabby jaw. Her eyes flinched. She looked at me. I said hello. She set the can back on the shelf and never said a word. I walked on.

I saw the meat counter with a sign that said "fresh ground beef." I walked over to it and looked at the brown meat covered in stretchy cellophane wrap and wondered if it was really fresh. I gently placed my finger on the package and pushed until the soft resistance of the film gave way to my probing finger and let it plunge, deep, into cold, slimy, ground meat. I jerked my finger out and wiped it on my ragged denim shorts. I looked around to see if Mr. Mac was watching me. He wasn't. He had already warned me about poking holes in his meat and said I would be in big trouble if he ever saw me do it again. The last time I did it I was with Mama. She spanked me for doing it when I got home because it embarrassed her so much. She told me she would spank me harder if I ever did it again, but no one saw me.

I quickly walked away and found the cola aisle. I decided to get the new 8-pack carton instead of the old carton of six. It was new, and I wanted to try something different. Using both hands to hold them, I waddled to the cash register and set them on the counter.

"I'll have to charge you for the two extra bottles," Mr. Mac shouted. "A total of \$1.27."

I handed him my crumpled dollar bill, a shiny new quarter, and dug into my pockets for two pennies I knew I didn't have. His eyes darted toward mine. I looked around, searching for something to say. I noticed the big pores on his long nose, and his black shiny hair. A clot of vanilla ice cream that wasn't there before clung to his thick mustache. Dirty, long, fingernails drummed against the worn, pink melomite counter. A small white and green radio with greasy black finger smudges on it continued to blare. A

clean ash tray contained a Brown-Cow wrapper that partially hid the chewed end of a wet cigar stub. I felt a rock in my pocket, and gritty pocket lint stuck to my greasy finger.

"Don't have it?" he asked, knowing my answer. "That's all right. Just bring it in next time," he said holding out his hand to shake on the gentleman's agreement.

"Okay. I will," I said as I shook his cold, soft hand. He shook hard, and his whole arm jiggled after we stopped. I could smell the stale cigar smoke on his clothes and the oil in his hair. Wondering if he could see the pieces of beef fat and blood that was backed around the edge of my fingernail, and I stuck my hand between my back and the waistband of my pants. I looked at his darting eyes and waited to see if he noticed.

"Tell the folks I said hello," he said.

"I will," I said. Realizing he didn't know what I had done, I quickly took the heavy carton with both hands, stuck my dirty finger behind a middle Coke bottle, and headed to the door.

Two men sat on the bench beside the door. I didn't notice them when I came in, but they looked as though they had been there a while. One wore faded blue Liberty overalls and a brown dress shirt with white stitching around the edges. He didn't have any teeth, and his lips sort of fell in his mouth and laid on top of his gums which made his whole head look hollow. His empty eyes were surrounded with white, pale skin that didn't even look real. He was deathly still. His eyes wouldn't even blink the whole time I was looking at him. I wondered if he knew about my finger.

The other man wore a dingy white undershirt and gray work-pants with someone else's name sewn on his waistband. He constantly patted his foot to a rhythm that only he

could hear and jerked his head around in all directions trying to look everywhere at once. He kept working his lips and tongue. I wondered if he had peanut butter stuck to the roof of his mouth and couldn't get it off. He stopped and stared when he saw me.

I stared at them. They looked at me, but didn't speak. Still staring, I leaned onto the heavy door and pushed it open enough for me to squeeze through. The sun was bright and reflected off the huge plateglass windows which had been boarded up from the inside with unpainted plywood for as long as I could remember. The hot concrete sidewalk scorched my feet. I stepped down onto the black asphalt; it stung my feet even more. I hurried to the grass on the other side of the road. It was cool and soft. No cars were in sight. There was no breeze, and everything was still. I walked home slowly, shifting the heavy carton from one tired hand to the other, trying not to set it down to rest. The sunlight burned against my bare back. I wondered if Mr. Mac had found the punctured package of ground meat and called my mother to tell her, but I walked on and tried not to think about what was waiting for me at home.

Companions

Standing on her walkway, I looked at the oversized house with peeling paint and sagging shutters. Her beautiful home had fallen into a state of unsightly disrepair partly from lack of knowing its condition and partly from the dwindling finances which she relied on to live. Thinking of the lavishness it once boasted, I felt saddened by its fall from social recognition, mirroring the fate of the one hiding inside who relied on its walls for protection.

Walking away from the edge of reality, I climbed the wide steps. With each step, I left a piece of my world behind and assumed a role in her imaginary world: a world of starched white morning dresses with hand stitched eyelet lace; a world where young girls, now ancient souls, came for brunch and bridge; a world where handsome male suitors came to call, young boys who held her hand and hoped to steal a kiss before the day's end. Her world that was beautiful to her; it was a world that she had created.

Knocking on the door, I heard the scurrying inside, double checking to make sure everything was presentable. The door slowly opened, and a small, graying lady stepped forth to welcome me. Her dingy white organdy dress was worn and frayed. Its wide scalloped collar was pulled high around her neck and pinned tightly with a yellowed cameo. Smells of mothballs and medicated face cream mixed with the kerosene odor from her kitchen stove.

"Morning, Miss Stella," I said, somehow feeling that the use of "good" was too presumptuous. I removed the hat I didn't wear and held it under my arm.

“Good morning,” she said, tightly pinching her pale lips together over her nag-like teeth, trying to keep her excitement from showing. She extended her bird-like hand, and I took it. It was cold and soft and felt as though it would crumble if I applied even the slightest pressure.

“Won’t you please come in?” she asked, stepping back, expecting compliance.

I walked across the squeaky hardwood floor and heard her steps behind me. “I was just about to enjoy some tea. Would you be so kind as to take some with me?” she asked, already placing my cup on the tarnished silver serving tray.

“I would be honored,” I said as I sat down on her dark-red velvet couch that was so worn in spots that the raw cotton stuffing bubbled through. Cobwebs covered crystal chandeliers. Rotting curtains drooped from hidden rods, and piles of dust and lint danced in every corner.

“It’s a beautiful day. We could enjoy it more from the outside,” she said pointing to her kitchen door.

I stood, took the tray from the table, and followed her. She stepped into my heart as gently as a newborn’s sleeping breath, and led me through her home to her sitting porch. I set the silver tray on the black iron table. I shifted it slightly in her direction, hoping it was the proper genteel procedure but not really sure. I looked to her for approval. With folded hands still in her lap, she nodded and smiled “Thank you.” She reached to take the handle of the beautiful floral embellished tea pot with ornate swirls of porcelain and gold and paused for a moment before she began to pour the fragrant, steaming tea.

"Sugar?" she asked, setting the fragile cup in front of me.

"No, thank you," I said.

She gracefully lifted her cup to her thin, shapeless lips. Half sipping, half smelling, she closed her eyes and savored the herbal brew. Moments passed in silence. I debated several topics for conversation but was unsure of what was acceptable in this world, a world unfamiliar to most. We watched as golden sunlight illuminated the Victorian garden and bathed each blossom with such a shower of contentment that even the smallest bud seemed to smile in its presence. A soft breeze created stirring blooms that seemed to praise her lifted hand as she pointed to two hummingbirds.

"Look there," she said, her voice crackling, a voice mournful for its melody of years past. Her eyes widened with amazement, and I watched her face reflect the wonder she saw. It was then that just on the precipice of my imagination appeared a vision that allowed me to see the celebrated beauty she must have been: golden hair, gleaming eyes, and skin as clear as a cold Southern sky.

I watched the pair of birds for a moment before the sound of a peaceful trickle from a distant fountain caught my ear. Looking in that direction, I saw the mist of the water playing in the air, each droplet catching a ray of sunshine and holding it only for a moment before tossing it back toward the sky.

"I could stay here forever," I said, leaning back in my chair. I inhaled, deep and slow, and tried to recognize each scent from the garden. She admired my appreciation with a faint smile and absentmindedly traced the delicate handle of her tea cup with her

finger. Regretfully, she sighed, "I don't know how much longer I can keep this up. I can't do all I used to do."

"Your garden is beautiful," I said and wondered how sad it must be to live alone in her enchanted world with no one to share her life with.

She had known love, or thought she had, one summer night when simple passion persuaded her to acknowledge a call of desire with a young man who had promised to ask her hand in marriage at dawn's next light. Nine months in a private boarding school and a once hopeful heart, now filled with shame, made her realize that her dream of a wedding would never be. She came home to face her shame, but she came home alone. Days would pass, then weeks and months before a visitor would arrive. When someone did knock on her door, it was only a lost stranger who had failed to hear the story of her purity's demise.

No one knew why she didn't move away and start over. She was still young and beautiful then, and there was the possibility of a gentleman not holding her soiled past against her. Maybe she stayed to remind herself, as well as others, of how foolish a young girl can be. Or maybe she stayed to be near the memories of her one true love, the man who promised to return for her some day. Or maybe, just maybe, she stayed to see her baby from the corners of her mind as she relied on memories of her own youth to watch her child grow. Here, in her mind, she could nourish the child she never saw, but imagined to be a girl with blonde hair and blue eyes. In her mind, she could keep her beautiful baby girl perpetually young with ribbons in her curled hair and ruffles on her pretty dresses. Here, she could see her baby peeping at her from behind the curtains or

getting wet when she played near the fountains. It was here that she imagined her baby picking an imaginary bouquet for her, one in which she had to fill in the "bare spots" herself to keep the vase from being so plain and lonely. After all, she knew how lonely felt, and she didn't like it.

Once, she fought her loneliness by making Saturday and Sunday her "at home" days, days on which she would receive guests. Rising early, she would dress and have teas and coffees ready to brew at a moment's notice. Butter scones and tea biscuits sat ever so gracefully on gleaming silver serving trays with crisp white linen napkins. Homemade lemonade and ice cream were stored nearby in the kitchen in case a small child came to visit her with an elder. They had come in the past, though it was rare, and she felt the extra trouble was a justifiable sacrifice since she loved the children so much.

Every now and then, near holidays, when people's consciences played with their hearts and they realized that others weren't as fortunate as they, someone might stop by for a visit. They often found themselves surprised to see the magnificent elegance of the Southern tradition still alive in such an old house. All of them promised to come again soon, and she would anxiously await that nebulous date. Sometimes, she would sit up later than usual and even peek out of her blinds to make sure she didn't "just hear" someone ring the bell or knock on the door. But no one was there. No one ever was.

She kept thinking she had misunderstood them and thought that maybe they had said "next week" instead, so she continued to watch. Later, near the holiday season once again, someone would call. Painfully, she realized that battles fought in an uncooperating world could never be won.

"Sometimes I get so lonely here all by myself. What would you think if I got a dog?" she asked. Unsure of what my reaction would be, she steadied herself by bracing on the table. Awaiting my reply, she bit her lower lip, "Just a small one. It wouldn't bother the neighbors. I could keep it in my room at night and then out here in the day when the weather is fit," she said with a childish plea. The sudden outburst addled me so that I had to remind myself that she was an adult. She understood the confused expression on my face, and as poised as a Persian cat, she said, "Listen to me, I sound like a child. It's just that I'm tired of living in an empty house. What do you think it would look like for an old lady to get a dog?"

"It would be fine," I answered encouragingly. I adjusted myself so I could see her better, "A lot of people have dogs. They make great companions."

"Companions. That's what I need, you know, a companion," she said, her spirits lifting as she imagined having a reason to open her door when she came home and a reason to get up in the morning. With some certainty, she asked, "How long will a dog live anyway?"

"Oh, I don't know. Ten...fifteen years maybe," I guessed.

"Oh, well, that's plenty long enough for me I suppose," she said.

"What kind are you thinking of?" I asked.

"Mercy, I haven't even thought that far. A small one. Small for sure. And white. I think white dogs are so cute, don't you?" she asked, looking in my direction for an answer. I nodded.

"But I don't know what kind," she added. She paused for a moment and thought of her limited knowledge of dogs, "Mrs. Gorman had a poodle before she passed. It was pretty, but I don't think I could brush it as much as it needed," she said, looking down at her drawn and swollen fingers. "Chihuahuas are nice, but I can't recall that I've ever seen a white one. Have you?"

"No, but that doesn't mean they don't exist," I said.

"Well, you can help me decide. You just study on it for a few days and let me know what you think," she said. I took my last sip of tea and nudged my empty cup toward the silver tray.

"More?" she asked. I held up my hand and shook my head.

"There's plenty more, you know."

"I know. I'm going to have to think of leaving," I said.

"And so soon, too," she said, lowering her head. She hid her sadness, then looked at me and said, "I'm thankful for your visit."

I nodded at her and stood to leave.

"Thank you," she said, taking and squeezing my hand.

"Thank you, Miss Stella," I said. "Thank you for allowing me to have the pleasure of your company."

She blushed and respectably turned her head before turning her eyes back to mine. She paused for a moment, then turned to leave. I walked to the garden gate, opened it, and stepped out into a world of people who remained unaware of the beauty of her peaceful mind. Horns blew, people yelled, and the exhaust fumes of old cars drifted

across my face. I stopped and looked at all our life offered and understood Miss Stella's desire to create her own world.

Wondering of the happiness Miss Stella felt when she decided she needed a puppy, I looked at her garden gate; heavy, weathered brown wood was held loosely to its frame by old rusty hinges. I could see Miss Stella through the cracks between the gate and its frame. Still alone, she was walking through the flowers in her billowing white gown greeting each blossom as if it were her best friend. I looked again at the dirty walkway, the trash strewn street, and hordes of hurrying people, then thought of the rotting gate and its wasted irony.



Gloria Horton

"Good writing is a kind of skating which carries off the performer where he would not go."

--Ralph Waldo Emerson

"To Teach Grammar or Not to Teach Grammar--That is the
Question"!

As an English teacher, I can often relate to Hamlet's indecisiveness in his famous suicide soliloquy. And at no time do I feel more like Hamlet than when the issue of teaching grammar arises. The debate over when, where, whether, why, how, and how much grammar should be taught in the English/language arts classroom has been raging as long as I have been teaching--thirty-three years--and longer. I, like most other teachers in my discipline, have listened to all the theories--that if grammar is not taught separately, students will never know the rules of their language; that if teaching grammar is not integrated into teaching writing and reading, students will not understand why grammar is necessary; and that grammar does not need to be taught at all because we learn it instinctively as we learn to speak our language--for example. I have read the works of purists, or traditionalists, who believe the rules of grammar must be followed to the letter, no matter how stilted the result, and I have read the works of the progressives, or modernists, who have come up with such ideas as the generic singular "they" and other ideas which free the writer from responsibility, and I find problems with both approaches to grammar. Therefore, as one who not only teaches freshman composition, but Advanced Grammar, and who is Jacksonville State University's Grammar Hotline, I have had to sculpt my own perspective on the teaching of grammar. My ideas are these: at times, grammar must be taught separately so that students may give names to the

phonology, morphology, and syntax which constitute their language; it is just as important, though, for students to be taught grammar within the contexts of the literature--fiction, poetry, nonfiction, etc.--that they read and write; finally, it is most important that in teaching grammar, we, as teachers, emphasize that grammar is as flexible as the cultural settings in which we find ourselves and that what is appropriate in a scholarly work is most inappropriate when we are conversing with our family and friends.

In her book *Grammar for Teachers*, Constance Weaver says this about processing language:

Learning a language is not an all-or-nothing affair; we do not simply learn some underlying language structure and then automatically show equal proficiency in all of the language processes. Certainly there is a common underlying core of linguistic elements, structures, and rules, and there is a common mental storehouse. But it may be that in learning to read and write, the child will tend to recapitulate some of the stages and strategies initially involved in learning to listen and speak. (13)

Weaver's statement supports my argument that grammar must be taught separately at some times to underscore and refresh the memories of that "mental storehouse." Perhaps some time should be spent at the beginning of each school year reviewing grammar in the English/language arts classroom, just to bring that long-term memory to the surface again. The time spent teaching grammar in this manner, however, should be brief--only long enough to remind students about the rules by which they should abide as they write their

own pieces. During this separate time for grammar, emphasis should be placed on such syntactical concepts as sentence structure and sentence types, in general, and on such pitfalls as subject-verb agreement error, comma splices, run-ons, pronoun reference problems, and fragments, in particular. Conjugating verbs, memorizing pronoun case, and other such drills can be omitted--to be reviewed when the teaching of grammar is integrated into the reading that students do, not only in the English classroom, but also in all other situations. As Rei Noguchi points out in *Grammar and the Teaching of Writing*, "Given the diverse kinds of stylistic errors that students make and the dearth of classroom time to address them, it makes little sense to focus on grammatical categories involved in correcting errors of low frequency" (19).

The second way of teaching grammar--by integrating it into the student's own reading and writing practices--can be most successful if the teacher takes the time to plan ways to incorporate this teaching into the reading and writing assigned. One way that I have been able to do this with my college students is by having them analyze certain literary pieces to see what they teach about grammar. My Advanced Grammar students must, for their final project each semester, select a poem which might be taught at the level at which they plan to teach and show how that poem might be used to demonstrate the principles of phonology, morphology, and syntax studied in the class during the semester.

As an example of what they might do, I will use a brief poem of my own, "Winter Scene in D.C.":

Dumped on Washington by
a cold front,
Rapidly falling flakes of
whirling white snow
Mask the giant spire
of the national obelisk,
As dusk quickly descends
upon the Mall,
While from the window of the
Metro, I note
Tufts of snow, weighting pines
and junipers,
Skewing them toward the ground
along the track.
The garish orange seats of the
train scream
A harsh, hideous contrast to the
silent beauty outside.
Soon, my fellow travelers and I
will be swallowed
Into a pit carved far beneath
the earth's surface.
We will feel the jerky sway of the cars
hugging the rails,
While above, the dark night glistens
with the sheen
Of moonlight on the frothy whiteness
of newly fallen snow.

Some of the phonological aspects of the poem that might be highlighted include the use of such phonesthemes (sound combinations that seem to have taken on meaning) as sh in sheen, gl in glisten, and sw in sway. The class could provide other words which begin with these sound combinations and see the commonality in their meanings. Another phonological point that might be made is that wh is not pronounced the same way by all

speakers. For many, it is simply /w/, no matter where it appears; for others, it is preceded by a huff of air /hw/ in words like when, white, and whistle. Students might be interested in looking at the different ways a single sound may be spelled, as in Washington and national. If I were teaching the morphological elements of the poem, I would certainly point out any prefixes such as the de- of descends and suffixes such as the -ly of quickly and the -ing of falling. We might look at bases and compounds as well. For syntax, I would have the class find prepositional phrases, dependent clauses, different positions in which nominals are found, and the types of sentences that constitute the poem. I would do all of this as well as talk about the poetic devices of the poem--the alliteration, the diction, the style, the meaning, and the images of the poem. By the time the class and I had finished looking at the poem, not only would they know much about the poem, but they would have had a thorough review of grammar as well. When my Advanced Grammar students use all they have learned in my course to apply to a single poem which they may one day teach, they always find that the assignment provides a complete review for their final exam *and* gives them several concepts which they will be able to apply immediately in their own classrooms.

Finally, I believe grammar must be taught in such a way that our students understand the importance of Standard American English in much of the writing and some of the speaking that goes on in the English language. At the same time, however, I feel it is most important that we not take away the cultural heritage that each of our students brings to our classrooms. As a Southerner who grew up with "reckon," "fixin' to," and "gonna," I don't want to be told that these parts of my cultural heritage should

never be uttered or written; nor should those speakers of Black English be told that to say "she be" rather than "she is" is incorrect. And who is to say which is *the* appropriate term for a soft drink--"soda," "pop," "dope," "coke," or some other term? The grammars of the thousands of dialects that constitute the language called English are the essence that makes ours the most exciting language of all. As grammarians, then, we must respect our students' differences as they must respect ours. However, we and they must accept that the language of power much of the time is that language called Standard American English and that each of us must master this language. Thus, teaching grammar is important; it must be taught, or we will not be able to merge our private dialectal practices into Standard English.

What is important is *how* we teach grammar. Brock Haussamen, in *Revising the Rules: Traditional Grammar and Modern Linguistics*, suggests this strategy:

A rhetorical-grammatical approach to the common rules and errors of sentences would help keep writing in the hands of the writer and audience. It would make our discussions of grammar and error more of a piece with our discussions of paragraphs and purpose. (152)

Likewise, such an approach would make our discussions of grammar have more in common with our discussion of literature.

Will I ever stop teaching grammar? I don't think so. At some point, all speakers and writers of English need some instruction in grammar, even though the basics of grammar are instinctively gained early in our use of the language. Because of environmental, cultural, educational, and other differences in each speaker and writer of

English, grammar will always be an important element of the English/language arts classroom. I have, however, made many changes in the way I teach it, and each change has made me a stronger teacher. I, like Hamlet, have my answer--to teach grammar!

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Museum Piece

Enshrined in glass at the Museum of Art,
A Wedgwood jardiniere, sculpted in porcelain,
Rests, its ivory background embellished
On one side with a muted peasant scene
Depicting young maidens bent low in the fields
Garnering sheaves of dun-yellow wheat.
On the opposite side, a row of thatch-roofed
Cottages, evening refuges for weary workers,
Is lovingly etched by the artist's hands.
The handles of the vessel--two foam-green
Mermaids, eyes turned toward the rustic scenes--
Give soft-hued contrast to the scarlet top and
Bottom rims. A polished lacquer, brushed
Carefully over all, preserves the vessel.
Its glass tomb protects the vase from fingers that
Would touch, flowers that might soil its worth.
This stately jardiniere has new purpose, now--
To give to those who pass before it a moment
Of beauty too often absent from the glass and
Steel world that lies outside museum walls.



Stephanie Kirby

**"Anyone who says he
wants to be a writer and
isn't writing, doesn't."**

--Ernest Hemingway

The Blind Date

Even before I saw his face, he touched me with his voice, his laugh. He made me smile. We spent countless hours on the phone as he tried persistently to get me to agree to a date. I was the master excuse-concocter, coming up with at least twenty reasons why I couldn't schedule a date. "Honestly," I thought to myself, "a blind date could not possibly be a pleasant experience." I replayed in my mind the disastrous blind date experiences of friends and promptly convinced myself that I would not become another blind date horror statistic. I wouldn't be like Jennifer, who spent an unbearable evening with Buck, the proud owner of a banana-yellow truck and a trumpet about which he talked ceaselessly. And I definitely wouldn't want to spend an evening at McDonald's, listening to tales about deer hunting and mud wrestling as Kim once did. I was sure that although this guy sounded relatively normal (whatever that means), he was certain to be either a geek or a jerk. I wouldn't like him; I just knew it! After all, I really didn't have time for dating. I was a busy college sophomore involved in practically every activity on campus and holding down a part-time job. "But," I reminded myself, "he does have a gentle, endearing voice and an infectious laugh."

Despite my emphatic protests and unflinching pessimism, he was not deterred. Instead, he enlisted the help of friends, who bombarded me with stunning references. After four weeks of nightly phone calls (at his expense, of course), in a weak moment, I hesitantly decided to give him and his unforgettable laugh a chance. "Okay, I'll go out with him once, and maybe he'll stop calling me," I reasoned.

When I answered the door, I was surprised to see an unblemished olive complexion and captivating dark eyes blanketed by thick, long lashes that went well with *the voice and the laugh*; however, I maintained my uncertainty about the whole ridiculous situation. “Me, on a blind date? What a joke,” I muttered under my breath as he was getting into the car. Dinner at an elegant candlelit restaurant was impressive to me, a 19-year-old college student from rural Cleburne County, Alabama. The atmosphere was perfect—soft music, dim lights, the scent of fresh flowers and warm bread in the air. I suddenly found myself thinking that I could get used to this kind of treatment. But I reminded myself that although geek was out of the question, he could still turn out to be a jerk. “Perfect gentleman” is a better description; he opened and held the door, politely listened to my constant chatter, and even asked before taking my hand. Our phone conversations had prepared us with plenty of background information on each other, so we seemed like old friends during dinner. The conversation came so easily that we hardly paused long enough to savor the blackened grilled shrimp and prime rib placed before us. Though we ignored the time, hours passed by swiftly, and the evening seemed to end too soon.

When he called the next morning to inquire about a second date for that night, I eagerly accepted the invitation. A couple of mutual friends met us for a casual dinner, and we spent another evening immersed in conversation, and laughter, of course. Though I didn’t realize it immediately, the dating scene was no longer a part of my life after that first face-to-face meeting. I’m not sure when I fell in love, but I definitely fell fast and

hard. Our dating relationship continued for the next three years, and after a brief engagement, we said “I do” and committed our lives to each other in a small church ceremony.

As I reflect on our wedding day, I remember thinking that I could never love him more than I did at that moment. The world stopped; everything was perfect; he was perfect. Wrong! No human is perfect, and marriage will prove that theory over and over again. We fought, we screamed, and we cried during that first year. We realized that dating someone for three years and living with that individual under the same roof every single day are two entirely different scenarios. From what I hear, however, I think (or at least I hope) that we are basically normal (whatever that means!). How does the old saying go? “If you can make it through the first year of marriage ...”

We did survive that first year and almost six more since. Every day is not perfect, but neither are we. His imperfections—selective memory (he can remember the winning play of a football game from ten years ago, but forgets birthdays and weddings), messiness (he litters the house with neckties, baseball caps, or whatever he takes off as he walks in the door), inability to read my mind and mood (he doesn't understand that I really want to be pampered even when I say I don't care)—are the very elements of his personality that make him the unique individual he is. Although I chastise him routinely for those faults, I wouldn't change a thing. His laugh continues to turn my head and lighten my face with a smile even on the worst of days. His positive outlook keeps my pessimistic nature in check. When I say, “I can't,” he says, “We can together.” My knack

for organization overpowers his chaotic nature (Thank goodness!). Encouragement comes my way daily in the form of a look, a word, a hug, or a smile. We've become the replica of the "old married couple," completing each other's sentences and making identical comments simultaneously. Strangers even say we look alike. Once, a curious store clerk went so far as to ask, "Is that your brother?" The clerk was unable to conceal his surprise when I replied with a grin, "No, he's my husband."

He sleeps peacefully as I write this, and, as I watch him, I wonder where I would be if he hadn't been so stubbornly persistent ten years ago. I know that I am fortunate to have his unconditional love. I realize daily how wrong I was on my wedding day when I thought I could never love him more—my love for him grows stronger each day. Maybe that is because not only is he my husband, he is my best friend.

Nature's Mystery

You are calm

A rippling lake

Lapping at my feet

Gentle to the earth

Preserving its foundation

Inviting.

You are fierce

A tumultuous churning abyss

Tearing at my knees, my thighs

Pounding against the shore

Stealing from the earth's surface

Rejecting.

You are serene

Chanting a rhythm that takes away all worry

Refreshing my flesh with a subtle coolness

A balm to the abrasions of the world

Stimulating all of the senses

Soothing.

You are nature's mystery

Calm, fierce, serene, sea.

A black and white illustration of a scroll. The scroll is unrolled in the center, with the ends of the scroll visible on the left and right sides. The text is written on the unrolled portion of the scroll.

Elizabeth Lixey

"Achilles exists only through Homer. Take away the art of writing from this world, and you will probably take away its glory."

--Les Natchez (1826)

Bad Boys

Brothers, living together since birth;
cute, cuddly,
cautious of the world around them.

Friends, napping together since birth;
lazy, languid,
listening to the sounds all around them.

Destroyers, playing together since birth;
inquisitive, incorrigible,
incurring disaster everywhere around them.

Hellions, performing together since birth;
disobedient, disrespectful,
demanding attention from anyone around them.

Kittens, living with us since birth;
pampered, protected,
providing love to the family around them.

Comet and Squeaker, together since birth;
dynamic duo,
delighting with antics those around them.

Daughters

Each day the sun wakes up the house,
But it is the faces of my daughters
that brighten up my room.

The golden rays pierce through partially drawn curtains,
As chattering children, sisters with sunlight hair,
tell of exciting plans for the day.

By mid-afternoon, the dark summer clouds appear,
Threatening to spill cooling rain on the hot cement.
Tired siblings argue over toys normally forgotten
or whose turn it is to set the table.

The rain evaporates, and the dim rays of the retiring sun peek
through partially drawn curtains.
Arguments forgotten, friendships renewed, sisters
share secret thoughts before settling down to sleep.

Cool, illuminating moonbeams shine through partially drawn
curtains onto the faces of my daughters.
Quiet, peaceful, lost in dreams, sleeping now
to refresh them for another day of
Golden rays piercing through partially drawn curtains...

Portfolio Assessment

"Sometimes I think we in education today are so tied to assessment that we forget that our students will live a long time after they leave us and their continuing intellectual growth and emotional growth is the only assessment that truly counts." Dixie Dellinger

I know that my own creativity as a writer stopped somewhere during junior high school, perhaps when correct grammar appeared to be the only factor the teacher graded. I found myself dreading assignments that required exhibiting my writing skills. What was the rule regarding commas, again? I would much rather display formulas in chemistry or math, and when I did write, it was for history or science, and the teachers rarely looked at the grammar; their interest was in content. These writings were usually of a research nature, and my creativity remained dormant. In college, as an undergraduate, I majored in drama and minored in communication studies (speech). In these disciplines, the spoken word was assessed more critically than the written word. After graduation, I became a benefit authorizer for the Social Security Administration. My ability to compute complex mathematical formulas based on federal legislation was required. Most of the letters I sent to beneficiaries were form letters where I filled in the blank. I returned to graduate school in my mid-thirties seeking a Master's Degree and a teaching certificate in the area of language arts. This meant English classes. However, I was lucky, and the essays and writing assignments were those of a research nature, and I kept the MLA handbook by my side.

When I inquired about the Writing Project and learned of its purpose, I decided it was time to overcome my fear and apprehensions about writing. After all, how can I encourage students to write when I fear and abhor the task?

In the Writing Project I have rediscovered the excitement, challenge, and joy of writing. I have found pride in the creative work I produce. What has happened to me? Am I actually enjoying writing? Yes! Why? The best reason I can think of is that the instructors (directors) and my peers encourage me, applaud me, and constructively critique my work in a positive manner. Each of my writings does not receive an individual grade. I will be receiving six graduate credit hours for this course, but the grade will be based on the entire body of work as a whole, not individual grades combined and then averaged.

Dixie Dellinger encourages her students to keep all their writings and to analyze the total body of their work during the course, rather than focus on isolated papers or on grade averages. Her students are amazed at the quantity of work they produce, and they can recognize their own improvement. She has discovered that if she puts any marks on their papers, students choose their best work based on those remarks. She feels, "the power of external assessment to displace self analysis short circuits the reflective process"(15). Perhaps this is what happened to me. I learned to evaluate my own work by what my instructors thought about the piece.

Dellinger also believes that preparing "portfolios encourages a student to appreciate herself and make a commitment to education. Reading what has been written earlier creates a sense of confidence and pride"(15). The portfolio is more than an assessment; it increases the quality of writing, by encouraging student involvement and improves the quality of learning by encouraging growth over a period of time rather than in brief graded intervals. I agree with Dellinger that "each stage of growth including notes, drafts, and revisions is valued. Each stage contributes to cognitive growth by

encouraging students to describe and analyze rather than judge; to evaluate and support with evidence and to reflect over time” (21).

I have found the freedom to express my creative self. I have developed confidence in my own ability to write effectively and vividly. I take pride in my finished pieces and have hope for my works in progress. What is the comma rule, again? I know I can always use the MLA Handbook to assist me, but never obstruct my imagination again. Thank you JSU Writing Project.

Work Cited

Dellinger, Dixie. "Portfolios: A Personal History." *Teachers' Voices: Portfolios in the Classroom*. Eds. Mary Ann Smith and Miriam Ylvisaker. Berkeley: National Writing Project. 1993. 11-24.

Dedicated to The Army Wife

We, too trace our beginnings to June 14, 1775,
When the minutemen responded to the call,
leaving us to care for farm, children, and all.

Throughout history, proud Americans responded to the call
Of Duty, Honor, Country,
Leaving us to care for home, family, and all.

We have become a sturdy lot,
Though not in the places where the wars are fought,
But at home, still caring for parents, children, and all.

Those wives of long ago, set the example for us to follow;
For as we tearfully say good-bye, we understand the call
Of Duty, Honor, Country that our husbands follow,
And stay behind to care for finances, family, home, and all.

Our heritage is proud, and even today
We understand the fear in Martha's heart on that cold day
When George responded to the call,
Leaving her behind to care for family, home, and all.

Once our hearts filled with sorrow,
Worried about brothers fighting brothers,
The toll this war would take.
Husbands, fathers, sons, and brothers
Heard the two distinctive calls
Of Duty, Honor, Country,
Leaving us at home to bury the dead
And care for home, babies, and all.

In this century, much more has happened;
The summons became a cry for help.
Our spouses once again responded to the call,
Proud to assist those in need,
Leaving us behind to care for country, home, and all.

From the soil of home to the fields of France,
The cold stone wall of Berlin to the islands of Japan,
The green rice paddies of Korea to the steamy jungles of Viet Nam,
The desert sands of Kuwait to the starving children of Somalia,
Duty, Honor, Country; dedicated soldiers respond to the call,
Leaving us at home to proudly care for home, family, and all.



Deborah Prickett

"I don't wait to be struck
by lightning and don't
need certain slants of light
in order to write."

--Toni Morrison

The Darkness of Blue

At its deepest hue, blue becomes
dark, menacing,
Not the soothing, welcoming
blue of a summer sky.

Here—blue transforms,
ashy ghosts slipping along the hallway,
calls ringing from enemies,
sounds unnerving the night,
awareness of minute changes in the still air.

Fear—imagination roams
as a blue-black evil,
who rides, now, in a red car,
careening his neck,
only a glimpse from him
is needed to ignite fear
to spark the descent into darkness.

A Scar Lover

Looking for bits and pieces of the child I once held close,
 Now, at thirteen,
 She is shattered, confused, lacks self-knowledge.
 She attempts to gather energy
 And let the new self emerge,
 Only to fall to bits and pieces—lost.
 She will tell me, with a smirk,
 “*There ain’t nothin in here!*”

One day, she pulls out stuffed animals and dolls from the past.
 The next, she carelessly gives up the valuable gift of self
 To unseemly *playahs*, creating dark shards of memories,
 Memories
 scraping,
 stabbing,
 stinging,
 Some shards lay in wait,
 To emerge unexpectedly, bringing confusion, fear, and doubt.

She is empty—nothing in there anymore!
 No pain, No guilt, No remorse, No emotion.
 She has either buried these in the recesses of darkness
 Or conveniently given them to me,
 For she knows I am strong.

First came,
 Unexplained, random violence.
 Occurrences only hinted at through bits and pieces,
 Bit and pieces of letters she left for me.
 Then came,
 Screams, piercing the home;
 Blows, exchanged to the heart through the flesh.

For her *boyz*, she battled me saying,
 “*We gonna die!*
But thay gonna get you fust.
Ya diggin yo grave, stupid bitch.
Ya jus dunno it.”

Then came,
 Hate from everywhere.
 She says she isn't going to stay.
 Her *boyz* will take care of her.
 She can go anywhere.
 Instead,
 She tries to live on Mormon Mountain
 But suffocates from the pressures
 And smothers her self instead of flourishing.
 The place
 makes her feel her dirt,
 makes her feel her violence,
 makes her acutely aware of her impurity.
 This too comes to an end.

She hates all of them, too.
 She tells her uncle, "*Doan touch me,*"
 with an insulting jerk of the arm.
 "*I ain't goin no wheres wiss you !*"
 A plea from the uncle,
 An event I had expected for days,
 "*She blew up on me this morning;*
we need to have a meeting."
 He has decided that she
 Isn't quite as fixable as he thought.

I take her back into my undeniable love,
 hoping to save her this time.

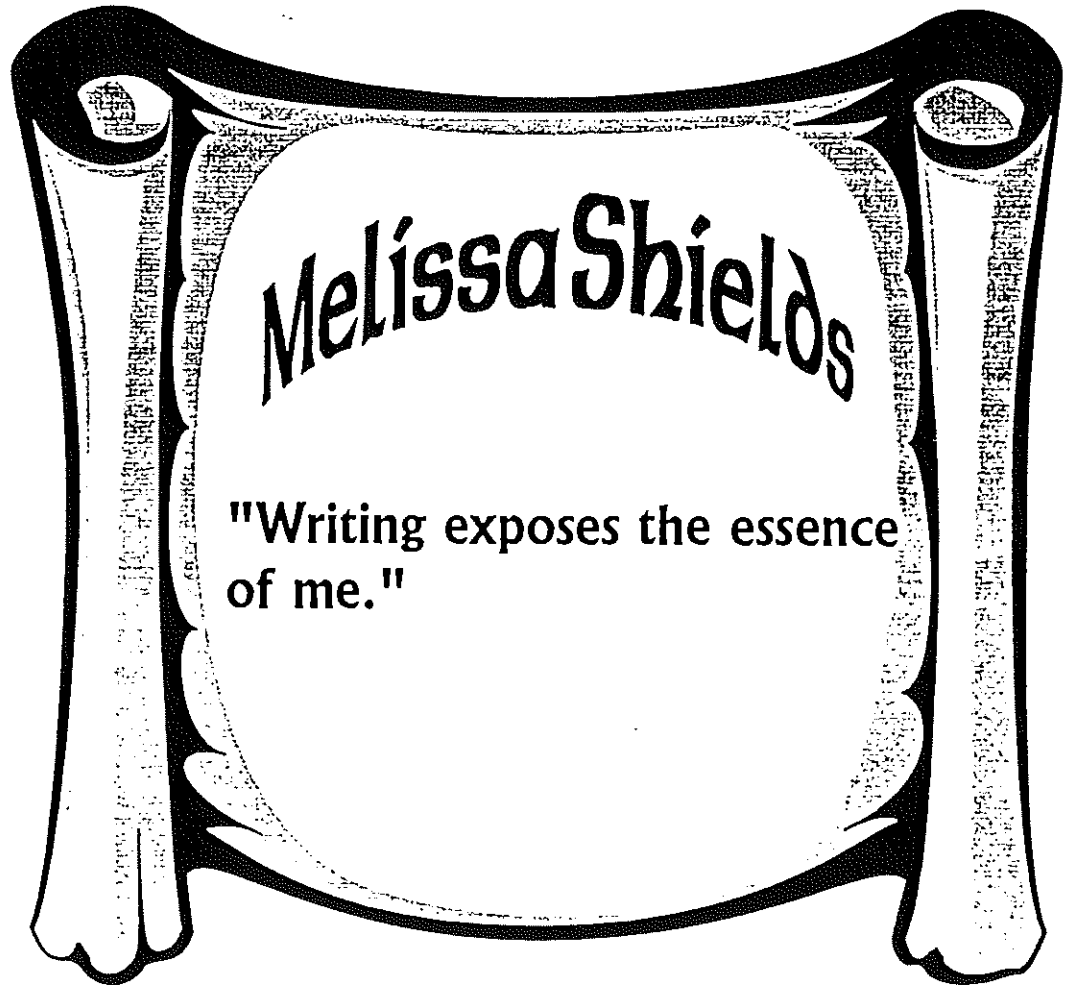
Still, she's empty, nothing in there anymore!.
 She pleads for help,
 swinging her arms wildly,
 snatching great chunks of hair,
 beating her face and head.
 Afraid of herself?
 flinging arms, tears, fears,
 fear of what will come,
 fear of what she might do,
 Does she know? The answer is a simple no.

She allows my embrace momentarily,
 Then pushes away—simultaneously.
 As she finally lies calm,
 As a mother only can,
 I catch the sound of her breath
 And remember and know—this is enough for now.

Chaos
Depression
Sexual Assault Paranoia
Guilt-- Lies, Fears, Hates
Nightmares Violence
Suicide Threats
Chaos

She's back now, still in bits and pieces,
Innocence shattered, self destroyed,
 knowing far too much,
 understanding nothing at all,
 nothing in there anymore!
Scars just beginning to form will never fade.
Even years of undeniable love
Cannot heal scars of nightmarish memories.
A young girl must instead become a scar lover.

Must a young girl begin to define her self through pain?
The world will have it no other way.



Melissa Shields

**"Writing exposes the essence
of me."**

Teacher-Student Conferences

I cannot remember many of my former high school teachers pulling me aside to voice a praise or concern about my writing. Nor can I recall a teacher personally explaining whatever I found to be especially difficult in his or her class. Teachers appeared to be too busy to treat me as an individual. Consequently, when I chose the teaching profession as my career, I vowed to myself that I would try to encourage my students on an individual basis as much as possible. I would believe in them, all of them, and they would know it.

It is difficult to accomplish this task by merely grading assignments and returning them to the students. They ache for individualized attention. They need to look in the teacher's eyes and be able to ask questions without fear of reprisal from other students. Unfortunately, when a teacher has over a hundred students, meeting with each may seem impossible. However, as teachers, it is our job to conquer the impossible!

Students know when they are treated as faceless commodities. They know when the teacher values their opinions and when she really does not care. Kids feed off the notion that the teacher will not actually read their papers. One extremely effective way of communicating to my students that I do care what they write and think is through weekly teacher-student conferences. I use this time to go over the week's writing assignments, grammar and literature units, and personal conduct.

During the week, I am up in front of the class doing anything I can to keep their attention in hopes of bringing about knowledge and understanding. Sometimes that

includes dancing and singing. Whatever it takes! However, on Fridays, I give an assignment; then, I adjourn to my desk. The typical Friday assignment could be a free reading day, an essay, or a vocabulary assignment. The only rule is NO TALKING WHATSOEVER! My students love these conference times, and they know that my conferences cannot be carried out with loud classroom noise.

I then call a student to my desk for a conference. If I have an extraordinarily large class, I may only have conferences with half of the class one week and then alternate them the next, keeping a record so that I will not overlook anyone. When the student comes to my desk, she will bring the graded assignments from that week. Then, while the rest of the class is working quietly, I spend around two to five minutes with this student; this is when she can ask me any questions and voice any concerns. I, in turn, do the same.

I usually begin each conference by giving the student his current grade average. Then, I may explain a correction I have made on an descriptive essay, I may help with predicate adjectives, and/or I may listen to an explanation of poor homework performance. I ask questions about specific passages he wrote so that he knows that I actually read his work. My approach truly depends on the student and his needs. I invariably try to find something redeeming from his work that week to let him know that I believe in his potential as a writer and student. I can also give my thanks for great behavior, or I may ask him to change poor conduct. Whatever the case, he has to look in my eyes and answer my questions and concerns. He cannot hide behind the laughs of his classmates, nor can he ignore me.

I have been conferencing for years and have found it extremely rewarding for both

my students and me. It gives me insight about them and their needs in my class. This special time lets them know that I do care and I am listening. For those students who are particularly shy and those who feel they are "slow," this gives them a chance to talk to me with little or no embarrassment. At the same time, I am able to accommodate those exceptionally bright students who need constant encouragement and critique. During the course of these conferences, my students are compelled to realize my commitment to them. In turn, most of them reciprocate by accepting my help. As for writing, I am able to help my students find their voices and styles in a risk-free environment.

Ultimately, I have three goals in conferencing: 1) students see their own writing as a means of self-expression, 2) I serve as a mentor in their continual learning, and 3) I foster an ongoing relationship with them. If these goals are realized by the end of the year, I feel confident that I have facilitated their understanding of my course objectives. Moreover, I believe that my students will remember me as a teacher who cared about them as individuals and motivated them to continue writing for writing's sake.

The Couple

A union suspended in time,

A couple connected.

One round and full,

The other tiny and new.

Essence of purity—

One figure embodies the other

In miniature form,

An innocent reflection of time forever forgotten.

The moment lingers

As the small hands

Clasp long hair and soft flesh

Of the One who provides sweet sustenance.

As she suckles,

Eyes meet Eyes.

She pauses,

And silent words are exchanged.

Impenetrable passion exists

within the couple,

A passion known only

by Mother and Child.

My Sleeping Child

I wake up from a deep sleep in the middle of the night and know that within moments my child will also awake. She will be crying for me to come to her. She may have had a bad dream, or she may be needing a late night snack. I instinctively go to her crib and pick up her tiny form. We quietly go to the rocking chair, the same one in which my mother rocked me. Her crying has stopped, and we rock—her body fitting perfectly in my arms, her warm toes nestling in my side, and one tiny hand firmly holding my hair. A sweet and familiar scent surrounds her, and as I inhale, it casts a spell of complete bliss and innocence over me.

These are the moments I miss most with my girls. Now that one daughter is a toddler and the other a pre-schooler, they rarely beckon me in the night. So, I find myself longing for those late night rendezvous when everyone else is asleep, and I feel as though we are the only two souls on Earth, completely oblivious of anything or anyone else. Possibly that explains why I find myself peering into my children's rooms when they are in the land of Blynken and Nod.

I suppose I, like all moms, find a special pleasure in watching my children sleep. It is a time when they are quiet, clean, and still. The responsibilities of parenthood are put to rest for a while. For me, it goes further than that. It is a spiritual experience—a time when I feel connected to my children in an indescribable way. It is a peaceful time when I can revel in motherly wishes and dreams. I look at their sleeping faces, and I see myself, my ancestors, and my descendants—MY place in time.

Although this is a common ritual for me, I carry it out differently almost every time. For example, I sometimes stand in the entrance of one of my girls' rooms and listen to the steady rhythm of her breathing. When she was a newborn, I recall listening for her breathing to make sure she indeed was. But now, it's different—I'm listening to my young child as an audience would listen to a great concerto. As I listen to her quick breaths, I begin to think about my role as her mother. I realize that this child's memories will be shaped as a result of my action and REactions. What a responsibility!

At other times, I creep into my daughter's room and sit on the bed beside her. Among the fragments of moonlight, I can see her sweet rounded face, a face of peace. Her eyes may flutter, and an angelic smile might appear as though she feels my presence. I pick up her tiny hand as she curls her fingers around my own in the same way she did long ago. I imagine these fingers playing the piano one day, performing surgery, or perhaps holding a little miracle of her own.

While she is lying in this pink canopy bed, her body appears much longer than it truly is, and I wonder how I carried this gift of life in my womb. It seems impossible that she was once so tiny. How vividly I remember the brutal kicks of this sleeping child when she was inside my bulging belly. How I welcomed those brief reminders of my growing miracle!

As I sit attentively watching my child, I say a simple prayer aloud:

Lord, grant me the wisdom to make the right decisions for this little one.
Help me to be a good mommy. Surround this precious lamb with a flock
of your best angels and protect her from any injustices. Help her to
maintain the innocence and purity she now carries in that tiny beating

heart. Please let her know how much I love her and how special she is to me. Amen.

If I have had a particularly trying day or am maybe just in need of some "cuddling," as my girls affectionately call it, I go a step further. I push the bedtime toys aside and lie next to my sleeping child, who has a death grip on her favorite baby doll, Julie. I stroke her hair, wet at the brow and neck, and smell her sweet breath. I lie there quietly reflecting on the day's events, planning the next, and am startled when she turns over and says, "Hi, Mommy. I love you," without ever really coming into complete consciousness. And as passion radiates through my body for this child, I am so thankful for being given the privilege to be her mother.

When I settle into my own bed next to my husband, a sadness comes over me when I realize these moments with my girls are fleeting. They will grow up and will not be the same little cuties who want to cuddle. I will become "MOM" or "MOTHER," not "Mommy." All I will have are faded images of chubby fingers, tiny socks, colored hair-bows, and tea parties. I will lose my babies forever, and that thought sends a mixture of fear and sadness throughout my soul. Will they remember these special times? Will they still love me as they do now? And then, something in me wishes that they could forever remain toddlers with eager smiles, endless hugs, and Mommy and Daddy's protection. But alas, I realize I must put aside my selfish needs and desires, and look toward the future—a future of necessary transformation. Inevitably, change will come, and I must endeavor to embrace it so that I can grow with my daughters.



Louise Sowa

**"I grew more attentive to the
Manner in Writing, and
determin'd to endeavor at
Improvement."**

--Benjamin Franklin

Lilian Eichler, George Washington, and Me

Lilian Eichler is a close friend of mine. If you don't know her, allow me to introduce you. I became acquainted with her through the various editions of her books that I've stumbled over in the dustiest corner of obscure flea markets and the highest shelves of splintery book stalls from New York to Texas.

I found my first copy of her 1921 *Book of Etiquette* in the cellar of an old bookshop in upstate New York. I had to rescue her two-volume work by wedging myself inside a frighteningly dark cavern of books teeming with dustmites so well-fed I could read their t-shirts. I knew that any sudden sneeze would result in permanent entombment, and the gum-chewing teenager reading the Superman comic behind the counter two flights up would never miss me. As I groped to pry my cobweb--festooned finds from their prison on the lowest shelf, it occurred to me that the owner of the shop must play poker with the fire marshal every Saturday night--I couldn't think of a single fire code ordinance that had been honored in this crowded hole where books were sent to die.

Miss Eichler's volumes--small, unpretentious, dark blue leather, tastefully embellished with delicate gold ivy tracings--felt comforting in my hands. I thumbed through Volume One, and it fell open to Chapter VI, "Hotel Etiquette," where Lilian declared

Indeed, the hotel is one place where men and women are most likely to make embarrassing blunders and commit humiliating mistakes (210).

I was surprised by Lilian's frankness until further reading indicated that she was talking about the proper dispositions of one's luggage, not behavior between the sexes.

I mined for other gems and found one penned innocently in 1921, but dripping with political incorrectness today:

We know by glancing at a young man who wears an orange tie, checked hat, and twirls a bamboo cane, that he is inclined to be just the least bit gay (157).

Her next cogent comment, urging conservatism and restraint in dress, queries,

"Can you imagine . . . George Washington in a conspicuously checked suit? (158)

Yes I can, Lilian. The image is delicious, and someday I will write a short story about it. Perhaps I'll explore conversations between the be-checked father of our country and the fellow in the orange tie.

After unwedging myself, I took Lilian upstairs, paid \$3.50 to the teenager, and brought my new friend home. Since then, I have committed most of her work to memory, and I can apply her gentle urgings, admonitions, and anachronisms to almost anything life throws at me.

Lilian has provided me with considerable guidance in matters of dress, including my favorite which reads

When you want to be thoughtful and solemn, wear heavy clothes and large, drooping hats (158-9).

I'm still searching for the perfect large, drooping hat; just the thought of donning it has cheered several of those thoughtful and solemn mornings when the cat brings a

half-dead squirrel through the pet door, my daughter can't find her homework, and the power goes out before my electric rollers have heated and the waffles are done.

Lilian provides many thought ticklers about clothing. In her words:

It is interesting to note how closely the history of dress parallels the history of civilization. With the awakening of shame came the virtue of modesty. With modesty came the desire for clothes, and clothes brought the thoughts of higher ideals, wider desires than those merely of the animal. Slowly, through the ages, as the love of beauty advanced and was cultivated, an artistic sense developed which is the very flower of our civilization (150).

I ponder these words, Lilian, as I observe the black leather biker ensemble of the student in my composition class. I'm not sure I want to know what her miniskirt, inching up high enough so that we can read her thigh tattoo, and her silver-studded halter top are really telling me about civilization. Perhaps the earring in her nose and her pierced tongue contain a clue.

Even as I worry about my student, I can hear Lilian advising me to avoid wearing dresses to garden parties that clash with the blossoms:

Here, amidst summer flowers, woman's natural beauty is heightened, and the wrong color schemes in dress, the wrong costume for the setting, jar as badly as a streak of black paint across the hazy canvas of a landscape painting of an impressionist (64).

I wonder further why my bright, articulate student has chosen to jar the landscape with her streaks of black. Which brings me to another part of Lilian's writing, the one place where her unruffled complacency slips, and she shows us, perhaps, what she is

really thinking. In her chapter "The Business Woman," Lilian removes her dainty kid gloves and veiled hat to state that

Years of blind adherence to false tradition have robbed woman of her proper development along business lines. That explains why there is still a difference in the business status of men and women...advanced though she prides herself on being, woman is still considered mentally inferior. It may take many years of slow development before woman is considered man's absolute equal--in business as in politics (177-8).

Her tone here, so unlike the fluffy, impractical Lilian I know well, hints at personal frustration. Did you want to be president, Lilian? Were you thwarted in your dream of a publishing house? Just as I decide that Lilian and I might have something in common, I find myself shaken by the words of the next subsection:

The woman who looks as though she had jumped into her clothes quickly, dashed off to the office without glancing in a mirror, and then forgotten all about straightening her hat and belt is a slattern (179-80).

Uh oh. I'm a slattern all right. But we part-time slatterns would like to be excused on the grounds that all working mothers who love their children must occasionally abandon their careful morning toilettes to comfort crying children or read *Green Eggs and Ham* just one more time before leaving for the office. Lilian's next comment in the same section is puzzling:

One can be perfectly groomed with the possession of one suit (180).

How? When your other suit is at the cleaners and the one year old has just spit up four ounces of formula mixed with baby beets over your left shoulder and down the back of your only remaining suit (beige linen), it is absolutely impossible to appear well

groomed unless you plan to spend every moment at work backing in and out of offices and hoping no one comes up behind you.

I'm led to the conclusion that Lilian believes a working woman and a mother are mutually exclusive entities. I'll admit there are many mornings, (the drooping hat ones) when keeping work and motherhood out of the blender seems like nirvana. However, the aptly named Lilian could never have been in close proximity to any child and penned the words

"Children are really little men and women."

Oh Lilian, please! Men don't cover the cat in silly putty. Women don't eat an entire bottle of Flintstones chewables in one sitting. There is a subtle difference here, Lilian, that you fail to appreciate. Emily Post never made that mistake.

Lilian further declares her ignorance of children by stating that

It is not very pleasant for young children to sit quietly for 3 or 4 hours on a train (228).

You're wrong Lilian. It's *impossible* for young children to sit quietly for three or four hours on a train. I've tried it, and "not very pleasant" doesn't begin to describe what the parent of those young children goes through trying to keep them from derailing the train. Miss Eichler's advice in this instance confirms without a doubt that she knows not of what she speaks:

A big picture book for the boy and a doll for the girl, . . . will keep the child from becoming impatient or restless (228).

Don't count on it, Lil. If you expect one book or one doll to amuse a child for four hours, you must be planning to ditch the kid and jump back on the platform just as the train is pulling out.

But please don't think that these criticisms indicate any lack of love for the gentle Lilian. When I really want to escape, she waits patiently for me on my bedside table, within those small gilded volumes where she characterizes an overturned glass of water as "a very serious accident" (34). I remembered your words, Lilian, the last time I was rear-ended at a stoplight.

But I love you. I find comfort in knowing the 'Twenties roared right past you, causing scarcely a ripple in your white lace fichu. To use some of your own words, you are "a silver charm that makes one think of mellowed roses and fading sunsets" (170). I love to hear you tell me that

When you want to feel light hearted and free from care,
wear delicate colors and bright hats (158).

I've got my bright hat Lilian, sitting perkily on my shelf right next to the space for the large, drooping one. I plan to wear delicate colors more often.

miracle

Her hair

radiant sleekness, black nestled softly,
curled kitten nape.

When she sleeps

cascading
midnight
freedom laughing over her shoulders,
tendrils of coiled ivy in soft light.

Years of delight

then sickness.
YOU'LL LOSE IT ALL (white clean clinical course).

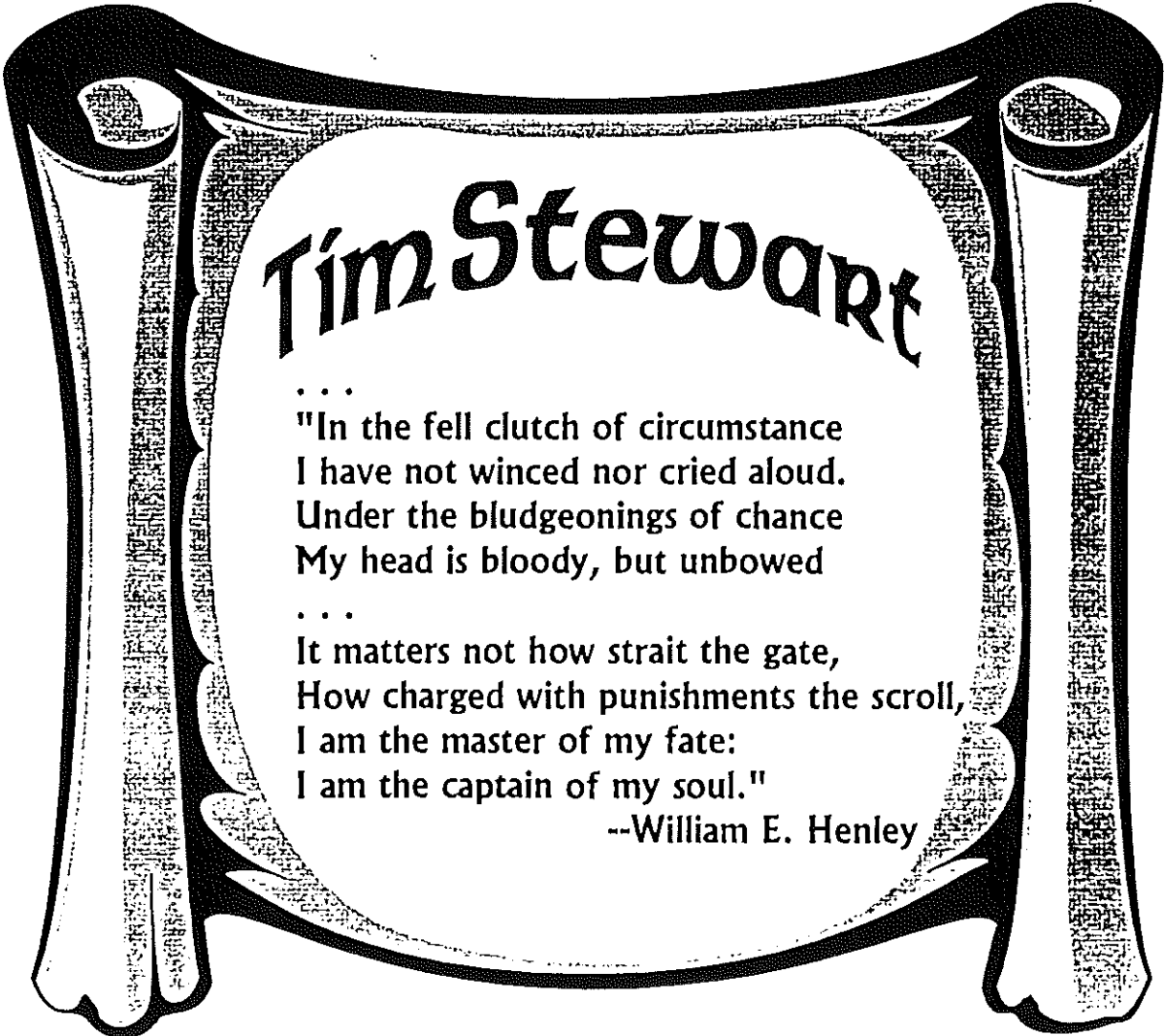
Her face

still framed by ebony billows that
cascade
down
her pillow, defiant,
magic entwined with spider silver, the only part that pain will not visit.

Her breath

rising,
rasping,
stop.

I braid the joyful streams around my fingers to
remember their freedom.



Tim Stewart

...

"In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed

...

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul."

--William E. Henley

Liza

I was watching my grandmother as she talked to herself in her hospital bed. All I could recognize from her babbling were the names of my dad and all the names of my aunts and uncles. She wasn't calling their names because she wanted them there beside her bed. She was having a conversation with herself as if she was getting her life together before she succumbed to the brutal hand of Death.

She woke up crying and fearful many a night because she said Death looked so cruel and abusive to her. Death had whispered in her ear that her passing on would not be peaceful. She told me that Death had grabbed her throat several times during her nights in the hospital and pierced the inside of her throat, making her cough up blood. It wouldn't matter who would be in the room with her. He would have his way with her and then crouch in one of the corners to wait his turn again.

We all knew Liza was dying because she had never been so weak before in her life. Even at the ripe age of 89, she still kept a garden, drank coffee, and made cornbread to go with the beans she cooked everyday. If we ate lunch or dinner at grandma's, we could be sure of two things. We would always have cornbread and some sort of bean with every meal. This came from Liza's raising so many children. And that garden was where she got those beans. Back in those days, she couldn't go and shop for groceries to feed thirteen children. Nobody could do that!

But as I said, we knew Liza was sick because she had asked my daddy to let my cousin Zora stay with him for a while. My grandmother had taken care of Zora since my

aunt's fatal accident. She protected that girl from day one of the accident and no harm has come to Zora during her forty-three years of life. No sir!

Liza was babbling about Zora's mom a lot these days. Calling her name and crying! This was not the Liza I knew. I had never seen grandma cry, even after she buried June Beth, Precious, and Tommy Lee. Now, she called their names and lamented everyday. Precious has been dead for fifty years, and June Beth has been dead for fifteen. I wonder why those ghosts chose to haunt her now. God knows that grandma had never muttered Tommy Lee's name since his death five years ago. Now she was talking everyday to the dead June Beth about the dead Tommy Lee.

Trying to decipher Grandma Liza's babble is a hard thing to do. But it goes something like this. She is fussing with June Beth and is refusing to give in to her wishes. You see, June Beth died in a car crash about five blocks from home. Three people were in the car, but June Beth was the only one killed in the crash. My uncles and aunts won't talk about the accident, but my mother told me the story when I was about twelve.

Tommy Lee, June Beth, and Zora were coming home late one evening, and they were in the left turning lane ready to turn. Tommy Lee and June Beth were always inseparable, and the only time they weren't together was when June Beth had found time to create her daughter Zora with the preacher's son in the church steeple. But anyway, Tommy Lee was driving and had a green turning arrow, so he turned without hesitancy. An old drunk man hit their car. June Beth was killed on impact.

Zora and Tommy Lee were rushed to the hospital. Tommy Lee left the accident without a scratch. That is, he left without a physical scratch. He had to be sedated several times due to his hysteria. Zora was diagnosed as fine, but my family found out later that

she had lost a lot of her mental capacity because of the trauma of seeing her mom die at an early age. In school, she had to be put in the special classes, and she has never learned to tell time.

When Tommy Lee calmed down, he called Liza and told her what happened. My granddad asked who was on the phone, and Grandma answered without hesitancy, "It's Tommy Lee! He has killed June Beth!"

For over forty years, Tommy Lee dealt with that statement by becoming an alcoholic, finally killing himself with granddad's revolver on the tenth anniversary of June Beth's death. That was five years ago.

I miss Uncle Tommy Lee. Sure, he was drunk all the time. But he was fun, and you could talk to him about anything.

Now Liza was arguing with June Beth about Tommy Lee. It seems as if June Beth wanted grandma to apologize to Tommy Lee for calling him a murderer. Liza refused! She had always blamed Tommy Lee for June Beth's death, and she wasn't going to stop now. June Beth reminded Grandma that she wasn't there and didn't really know what happened.

Grandma was crying desperately now and gasping for air as if she was taking her last breath. I was in the process of having a nervous breakdown because I had never seen Grandma in such a pitiful state. I always remembered my grandmother as strong, silent, and fearless.

I called for the nurse and asked her to give Liza some morphine. Cancer can be hell. Afterwards, I left. I wanted to be there when Liza died, but I couldn't take it anymore.

"So Mama? Are you going to die blaming Tommy Lee for my death?" asked June Beth.

"Yes, I'll never forgive Tommy Lee."

"He didn't kill me. My death was an accident."

"I'll never believe that."

"And that's why I am here, you old hag," Death chimed in. "You made Tommy Lee's life miserable, and now he is being tormented for something he wasn't responsible for."

"Mama, why don't you make peace before you die? Stop being so stubborn. I have been watching you ever since my funeral. Instead of mourning for me, you have been angry with the world. You made daddy miserable, Tommy Lee miserable, and yourself a hated individual. And if you really want the truth, you killed Tommy Lee. You loaded that gun and drove him to the fatal shot. But you can make it all better by forgiving Tommy Lee and telling him that you are sorry."

"But he is not here, June Beth," Liza whimpered.

"Don't be silly, Mama. He has been here all the time. Who do you think has been piercing your throat and cutting off your breath at night. How else would he get his revenge? If Death looks familiar, it is because you raised him Mama."

"Tommy Lee?" asked Liza.

Death took off his black cloak and removed his morbid mask. Pitiful, Tommy Lee had been there all along, taunting and slowly killing his mother.

"Hello, Mom. It has been a long time. It is your time to leave, and I've come to welcome you into the next realm. You may think it cruel of me to be your death angel, but if I had not volunteered, they would have sent someone much worse."

"Tommy Lee," Liza gasped. "You tortured me all my life, and now you torture me in death? How dare you come back and show your face after what you did to yourself and to June Beth?"

"Mama, won't you just forgive me? It wasn't even my fault, but just forgive me anyway. The second realm will be so much more peaceful if you make peace here. Hell is not a place to offer many second chances, and you got one through me."

"I'll never forgive you, Tommy Lee. Before June Beth's death, you had taken her away from me. So you killed me before you killed her. And then you killed yourself. You took a lot from me Tommy Lee, and I won't ever recover or forgive."

"Mama, you have to realize that God gave you children as a temporary gift. He blesses you with us for a season, and he has the option of taking us away. We have little control over when he takes us and how he takes us unless we kill ourselves. We also have little control over our children when they are adults or dead. We only have control over how we act and treat each other while we are here alive on earth. You did a lousy job showing us you loved us. You loved us, but we saw only your hateful acts. It's time to stop hating and time for forgiveness."

"Never!" gasped Liza.

"Suit yourself, Mama, suit yourself," whispered Tommy Lee. And with that last statement, Death put back on his mask and went back to his corner in Liza's hospital room.

Liza died within a few days. It was one of the most pitiful sights I ever witnessed. That strong black woman reverted to childlike behavior, gasping and gurgling for breath at the end. It made me think about all the trials and tribulations she went through in silence throughout her life. All the time, she was being eaten up inside because she was hurting. I wanted to help her, but the only ones who could help Liza now were God and Liza herself.

I learned a lot from Liza in life and in death. Her mistakes taught me to love my family more. Her life taught me how to live with dignity. Her death taught me that we are all vulnerable in one way or another. Learning to deal with our vulnerability can make us or break us.

We buried Liza in that very bean garden she planted summer after summer. On the day of her burial, I could have sworn that I saw Tommy Lee weeping in the crowd. That's silly, I know, but sometimes in my sleep, I can see and hear him crying where wild beanstalks grow.

The Doors

--There are two doors, and in front of the doors, two living creatures stand. They have to make a choice. A choice which is a matter of life and death. If they choose correctly, they will have extended their lives. If they choose incorrectly, complete extermination of their life will result. This is their conversation:



"So, which one?"

"I don't know! You choose!"

"I don't want to!"

"Why not?"

"I don't want to be responsible for your death! It is enough that I may be responsible for my own!"

"If we die, we die!"

"No, it's not that simple. If I choose for you and I am wrong, there will be no more of me. No reincarnation! No second world! Nothing!"

"So I will choose!"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Because I want you to be reincarnated!"

"That's sweet!"

"How can you get mushy when we are about to choose between life and death?"

"Sorry!"

"That's okay!"

Silence



"So what are we going to do?"

"Let's both choose by closing our eyes and moving toward the door we want."

"No, we might choose different doors! I want to be with you!"

"And I the same."

"So what are we going to do?"

"Flip a coin?"

"They haven't been invented yet."

"Then how do I know about them?"

"You are a prophet."

"Then why don't I know which door to choose?"

"Because prophecy doesn't work with personal choices!"

"Oh!"

Silence



"Then, on impulse, they both say, "Right!"

"Then right it is!"

"I wonder what will happen to us."

"Whatever happens, we will be together. That is all that matters!"

"I know!"

"Shall we hold hands?"

"Please."

"Let's go!"

"Okay!"



The living creatures go inside the right door simultaneously and close it behind them.



Tabatha Treece

"Writing is nothing more
than a guided dream."

--Dr. Brodie's Report

A Life Changing Event

Being thirteen is an awkward age for many teenagers, but it was especially awkward for me. I was smaller than most of my other classmates, and I was sick most of the time. Outdoor activities were not my favorites for many reasons. One reason is that I did not feel like being outdoors, and another was that I was not good at most outdoor activities. Mainly, I enjoyed indoor activities such as reading and talking on the phone. As a thirteen year old, I was trying to decide what I wanted my adult life to be like. However, I feel God had his plan for me.

In 1981, something happened to me that changed my life forever. I had always been a child who caught almost every kind of "bug" that came around, especially those affecting my stomach. I finally went to Dr. Bob with this problem. He thought, because of my low weight, I had tuberculosis; therefore, most of his testing was done on my lungs. This aggravated me because it was my stomach that was causing my problems. He did not run any tests on my stomach, and this angered me. I thought he should listen to me and test what was bothering me. Since Dr. Bob couldn't find anything else wrong with me, he decided that I had a nervous stomach and gave me nerve pills. Dr. Bob did not do anything to help my stomach because the problem only got worse. At this point, I lost almost all faith in doctors, and I decided not to go back.

Around Christmastime that year, my stomach ache became very severe. Eating was almost impossible, but I was not planning on going back to the doctor. Eventually, the pain was too much for me to bear. I decided that I had to do something. My parents took me back to Dr. Bob. However, this time he did the right thing and referred me to Dr.

Howard. Dr. Howard put me in the hospital at Scottsboro, Alabama, where I was told that I had an intestinal disorder. At this point, I was a very scared child. I did not know what to expect next. The doctors decided that I should be sent somewhere else for my problem to be treated. My parents and I chose T. C. Thompson Children's Hospital in Chattanooga, Tennessee. At this hospital, I was hooked up to all kinds of gadgets and put in the ICU. Two tubes were stuck down my nose. One tube went to my stomach and another to my intestine. I had what I will call two IVs, one on my shoulder and another in my arm. I went through all kinds of tests and finally surgery.

An intestinal blockage, which the surgery corrected, had been causing all of my troubles. I had an intestinal disease called Chrones, and it could recur anytime during my lifetime. Doctors told me that I would have to have more surgeries for this during my lifetime. This bothered me some at the time, but mainly, besides being in a lot of pain from the surgery, I was hungry. Doing away with those tubes so I could eat was my main concern. All I wanted was food and to be outside again. I especially wanted one of those whoppers from Burger King. They had those "Aren't you hungry for Burger King now?" commercials which made me even hungrier. I remember when my stomach growled for food, it felt so good since it had been a long time since I had felt anything like that. Before all this happened, there were several foods I did not like, and I would not eat them. I discovered several of those things such as sour cream on baked potatoes were now delicious.

During this time, I was not able to get up from my bed, and I began to miss everyday experiences. I longed for the outdoors. I heard that some of my classmates were enjoying some snow and ice. I was stuck in bed. Of course, the snow meant I did

not miss as many school days, easing the tension of having to make up all that school work. As I lay in bed, I realized I was hungry. The doctors and nurses all told me that I would not get hungry with the IV, but they were wrong. I wanted food. The most important problem that bothered me during this time was that if I died, was I going to Heaven or the other place. I promised myself to make sure I was ready when I got out of the hospital.

After almost a month of being cooped up in the hospital, I found that not only my eating habits but my living style changed. I now loved being outdoors. That spring, when my class went out to play softball, I enjoyed it as I had never enjoyed it before. I couldn't play ball very well, but I still enjoyed playing because I was outside. Riding my bicycle was also a lot of fun. I even rode in one of those bikeathons for charity that spring. It just didn't matter what I was doing outside as long as I was there. The whole world seemed brighter because I felt better and I appreciated my surroundings more.

Living and enjoying life became very important to me as well as my life with God. I began a new life with Jesus in August 1982. I became more involved with my church. It was not long before I was playing the piano at church when the regular pianist was absent. Several years after playing the piano at church, I began playing the piano for a gospel group. I now play the drums for Heaven's Own, another gospel group. With God's help, I have never had to have another surgery, although I have had to be on medication for my illness. I do live a fairly healthy life now and this year, the year of 1997, has been the best yet. The year of 1982 changed me for the better, and I'm thankful to be alive and well today.

Scenery at the Stone Center

I sit down on the grass in front of the Stone Center at Jacksonville State University. A little dew, which looks almost like a tear drop, still hangs on the grass. Beaming its hot rays down from the sky, the sun warms the day a little too much. The brick building beside me is partially covered by tall and short pine trees springing up next to it. Holly bushes sit beside the pine trees as if they are just as important as the larger trees.

My eyes wander to the parking lot to the right of me. Its light gray pavement seems to dull the bright green scenery around me. A few cars are parked in the blue marked places, but several places remain empty. Rushing by as if they are going somewhere in a hurry, cars speed down the road that lies beside the parking lot. One old rusty truck rattles by filled with piles of junk. I strain to see exactly what the truck contains; however, my view is blocked by several trees on the far side of the parking lot.

Finally, a white cloud gives me a break from those hot rays of the sun. A small breeze begins to blow; the short strings of my hair tickle my face. The crickets play their tiny violins, and the birds scream at the top of their lungs. A red ant crawls on my foot. As I swish it away, I realize it has bitten me. I decide it is time to get up from this green carpet of nature outside JSU's Stone Center.



Jennifer Webster

**"Learning to read and to
write ought to be one of
the most joyful and
successful of human
undertakings."**

--Don Holdaway

Emergent Literacy

The world in which we live is filled with print. Show a three-year-old a Texaco sign, and she says it means "gas." A two-year-old sees a McDonald's sign and asks for a happy meal. Most children, by the age of three can, read "Stop" on a stop sign and "Crest" when shown a toothpaste carton. Such incidents give us insights into a child's understanding of written language. Children, from birth, are aware of the existence of print. They learn early that print in the environment has meaning (Newman 5).

We shouldn't be surprised, then, to find meaning in their writing. The markings three-year-old children produce when asked to draw pictures are very different from the markings they make when asked to write their names. Therefore, we can no longer call these markings mere scribbles. By age four, the writing that children produce when asked to write a story, as opposed to a letter, are beginning to be distinctive. Their stories look like stories and sound like stories. Their letters look and sound like letters. By age five or six, most children realize how language varies by context of use and have started to explore the graphophonemics of the language. Their phonetic spelling is sometimes referred to as invented spelling (Harste 102).

Literacy, the process of learning to read and write, starts at home. Children learn real purposes for reading and writing as the parent sings a lullaby, reads a bedtime story, makes a shopping list, or writes a telephone message. The early childhood writing program should be an extension of writing that began at home. Children learn through direct participation in meaningful, developmentally appropriate activities. Music is a good analogy. If we want young children to develop musical abilities, we begin with

enjoyment. We don't give them worksheets on musical notation. With a complex process like writing, it is even more important that the conditions of meaningful participation be met (Dailey 119).

Early childhood classrooms should be writing-rich environments. Children learn to talk by talking, and they learn to walk by walking. Therefore, it makes sense that children learn to write by writing. Even very young children should be involved in using print in stimulating and powerful ways.

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The Fourth of July

I love the fourth of July. As a little girl, I didn't know much about Thomas Jefferson or the Declaration of Independence. I did know that this was the one day each summer that our family got together to celebrate. The day was truly a celebration of fireworks and food, relatives and ribs, and baked beans and barbeque.

Every summer, our gathering place for our fourth of July celebration was my mom and dad's house. It was the perfect spot for a family reunion. The backyard was large enough for a game of baseball between cousins and shady enough for aunts and uncles to pull up a lawn chair or spread out an old quilt.

My two brothers and I would awaken at dawn and begin to help Mama out with the necessary chores. We would set the table, pull out dusty lawn chairs from under the basement stairs, air out old quilts, and clean up the ice-cream maker. By mid-morning, relatives were arriving left and right, bearing covered dishes. Granny would always provide her banana pudding. Uncle Larry was known for his baked beans. Aunt Judy had a prize-winning recipe for potato salad. Uncle Larry and Aunt Peggy always brought gallons of iced tea and the ingredients for homemade ice cream.

The fourth was our biggest day of the year for food and fellowship. We ate, played, and listened to my Granny's memories of celebrations gone by. When night fell and we saw the first firefly, we knew it was time for what we had all been waiting for-- fireworks!

We knew that a certain amount of caution had to be taken with these minor explosives, but this did not stop us from stockpiling our own supply. When the adults all took cover from the mosquitoes and went inside after a rather nondescript fireworks display, it was time for the fun to begin.

One year holds a vivid memory for me. We had neighbors on one side of us that we simply did not get along with. Their children were the menaces of the block. We decided that the fourth was our day to seek revenge for various trespasses committed against us by Troy and Jared. I was especially livid about the occasion when Troy, their youngest, had tied our cats' tails together and strung them over the clothesline. We hid in the woods that separated our homes and waited until they had used up their own fireworks. Armed with a fresh supply of ammunition, we shot one bottle rocket after another at Troy and Jared until they scurried up into the treehouse. Vengeance was sweet. However, I'm sure you've heard the saying, "What goes around comes around." Shortly after returning to our home, my brother discovered that we still had a few sparklers left. Against my mother's admonition, he lit one up in our kitchen. It was a beautiful sight to see that crackling sparkler write our names in the dark kitchen. That is, until he dropped the sparkler, spewing and hot, onto my mother's brand new, country blue linoleum floor and burned a hole straight through to the subfloor. We were all guilty by association, and it cost us two months' allowance each to replace the floor.

As the years wore on, my brothers, cousins, and I all got married. Nieces and nephews began to join us in our traditional celebration of the fourth. It seemed as if every year, a new face would appear, but we always had room for more. Then one year, we got

word on the evening of July 3 that we would have yet two more unfamiliar faces in our midst. Uncle Lynn and Aunt Betty were coming. Now mind you, we always welcomed every family member and friend, no matter how eccentric. But you see, Uncle Lynn and Aunt Betty were . . . different. They were not from North Alabama like the rest of us. They were from . . . NEW YORK! We were not well acquainted with them. This was due in part to the distance that separated us. However, we avoided them mainly because we had long been aware of their misguided view of Southerners. For them, the South conjured up images of illiteracy, inbreeding, and epidemics. They talked funny, and they were sure that we never wore shoes. Nevertheless, despite our protests, Mama included them in our plans.

When Aunt Betty and Uncle Lynn arrived from the airport, the first thing I noticed was that Aunt Betty had on a starched, expensive white blouse. How inappropriate, I thought. The second thing I noticed was that when I peeked with one eye during the blessing for the food, our new relatives didn't join in the prayer. One more strike and they were definitely out.

We piled our Dixie paper plates as full as they would allow and found a spot to sit. My new husband, Wade, sat at the bar. My aunt sat in the living room with her back to us. Throughout the meal, I couldn't help but wonder what my Northern relatives thought of us. Then, it happened. I saw the whole thing as if it were in slow motion. Wade was on his last messy, sticky rib. He had one end in his mouth and the other in both hands. He was pulling and tugging with all of his might when the rib slipped from his greasy hands as if from a slingshot and flew across the room. It landed with amazing

accuracy right on the back of my pretentious aunt's head and slid down the back of that beautiful white shirt.

A few summers after that memorable Fourth of July, we found ourselves gathered once again at Mom and Dad's house. However, things were different. Granny was no longer with us, and we all felt her absence. Her death and several divorces caused our crowd to get smaller and smaller with each passing year.

Today it is just my immediate family that is left.

As I watch my nieces, Hannah and Rachel, light sparklers out on the wooden porch with Nanna, I remember, and I know that we are starting again.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHIES

Brown, Nancy. "Writing Mathematics." *Arithmetic Teacher* 41 (1993): 20-21.

This article describes an activity in which Brown's students created word problems in math class. These word problems were then taken to an English teacher who helped them revise errors. The students' word problems were printed in a book and distributed. The students loved seeing their work in print.

Tabatha Treece

Dailey, Kathleen. "Writing in Kindergarten: Helping Parents Understand the Process." *Into Teachers' Hands*. Ed. Deborah Sumner. Peterborough: Society for Developmental Education, 1992.

This article maintains that literacy begins in the home. The author shows how parents can encourage their children's writing by giving them opportunities and real purposes for writing. Children learn real purposes for writing when parents read the newspaper, write a grocery list, pay bills, or write a telephone message. Parents can enhance literacy development by reading stories, singing lullabies, and talking with their children. Children's first attempts at writing are often scribbles accompanied by drawings. As the child's print awareness increases, the scribbles will take on the form of letters. Parents should encourage this early experimentation with print. Additionally, parents should invite use of invented spelling. The information in this article is helpful to parents and teachers of young children.

Jennifer Webster

Elbow, Peter. "Sharing Responding: Some Guidelines for Writing Response Groups." *Practical Ideas for Teaching Writing as a Process*. Eds. Carol Olson and Theodore Smith. Sacramento: California State Department of Education, 1987. 139-143.

Elbow says that in order to improve writing skills students need the "movies" that play in the minds of the other students who read the work. A writer should know if readers "see" what he or she intends for them to see and if readers experience what he or she actually wants them to experience. Elbow says that it does not matter what students write as long as they write something. One method Elbow uses to let the writer know if his or her writing is on target is to have readers state what they "see" when they read the writing. The readers also state what they believe are the main points. They summarize the writing in one sentence. They describe the writing with one word that is in the

passage and with one that is not. This helps the writer understand what is being said in his or her writing and allows the writer to see where changes need to be made.

Kevin Holt

Holmes, Julia G. "Teachers, Parents, and Children as Writing Role Models."
Dimensions of Early Childhood Spring 1993: 12-14.

The author of this article talks about The Writing Role Model Project that was implemented in a kindergarten classroom. Three adults rotated daily between tables of five children. The adults wrote letters, stories, lists, and other pieces of interest to the children. As they wrote, the adults talked about how and what they were writing. They also tried to motivate the children to do their own writing. Significant changes took place. For example, most of the children wrote letters or strings of letters in their work when adults were present. Students who had only drawn pictures before were now labeling their drawings. They wrote more interesting and varied responses in their journals. Students closest to the adult would copy but would later use the letters to form other words. Children began to use inventive spelling, and they were reading what they wrote. Parents eventually were invited to the schools to do the same thing with the groups.

Ginger Carrell

King, Nancy. *Storymaking and Drama*. Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1993.

King provides useful, practical, step-by-step instructions and suggestions for setting up and maintaining the storymaking learning environment. She discusses nonverbal communication regarding our ability to read situations and make judgments based on how we sense what is happening. The author ventures on to discuss structuring a class session, selecting the text, choosing the focus, developing an activity, and evoking reflection. The last chapter is on dramatizing short stories for performance. She describes ways to explore making drama part of the regular classroom experience.

Elizabeth Lixey

Kohn, Alfie. *Beyond Discipline: From Compliance to Community*. Alexandria: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1996.

In this book, Kohn assesses and criticizes programs and theories on discipline that instructors have utilized in the classroom environment for centuries. He suggests that the teacher should not take the role of disciplinarian. Instead, the teacher should act as a guide and let the student take a vital role in his or her own discipline. He feels that classroom management should not be a goal of the teacher. Instead, the teacher and

students should become collaborators and partners when students act inappropriately. After reading this book, I feel that Kohn did not suggest enough alternatives that give the teacher an opportunity to reduce his or her role as a disciplinarian. His theories outline several real problems, but he offers few adequate solutions.

Tim Stewart

Myers, Kris. "Twenty (Better) Questions." *English Journal* 77.1 (1988): 64-65.

Instead of the traditional pop quizzes to check a student's faithfulness to reading assignments, Kris Myers suggests that an alternative measure is to assign response journals. In doing so, the students respond first to their feelings about the work and then to the connections and associations around those feelings. This allows the students to express their points of view, while allowing the teacher to be sure that students are completing their assigned reading. In evaluating these journals, the teacher personally responds to the students' interpretations. Unlike answers on an objective pop quiz, responses are very difficult to copy, and the teacher can appreciate the originality of each response. Ultimately, students find the response journals a positive experience, and they see themselves as viable interpreters of literature.

Melissa Shields

Petras, Kathryn and Ross Petras. *Very Bad Poetry*. New York: Vintage, 1997.

The Petras siblings have produced a book illustrating their thesis that "Unlike the plainly bad or the merely mediocre, very bad poetry is powerful stuff." Citing vivid examples from over 400 years of painfully poor verse, the authors prove that bad taste is not exclusive to the 20th century. The book can be an effective tool in teaching poetry to students grappling with the question of what makes a poem worth reading. In addition to quoting from the published works of many deservedly forgotten poets, the Petras show that good poets are capable of producing bad poetry too. All would-be writers should be inspired by the knowledge that the couplet

It died her body like a tinder,
And almost turned her brain to cinder

was penned by William Wordsworth. The book includes such titles as, "Children Disinterred," "Go Away, Death!," "Potato Bug Exterminators," and "My Last Tooth"; students will enjoy trying to emulate the unintentionally ludicrous verse.

Louise Sowa

Rottenberg, Annette T. *Elements of Argument: A Text and Reader*. 4th ed. Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 1994.

This is a useful guide for the teacher of college composition, even when argumentation is not the explicit objective or contained in the course title. Useful to the composition teacher are the detailed glossary of terms and a chart (located inside the back cover) of types of warrants for effective arguments. Almost every chapter concludes with a detailed set of further questions labeled "Exercises for Critical Thinking." Few other composition texts are so explicit in directing the writer's goals from the recording and defining levels of writing into those which have analytical and persuasive goals. The APA and MLA styles are represented by sample papers (conveniently located in the center of the book and containing helpful pointers as annotations) and by shaded guides to the style forms. In addition to an ample selection of readings on very contemporary issues, the volume contains a generous (300 page) section of "Opposing Viewpoint" arguments on nine broad areas of relevance to today's students. A final section features classical arguments from Plato to significant argumentative essays of the twentieth century by Woolf, Orwell, and King.

Joanne Gates

Slavin, Robert. *Student Team Learning: A Practical Guide to Cooperative Learning*. Washington: NEA, 1991.

This book discusses three cooperative group approaches to learning. The first approach, STAD or Student Teams-Achievement Divisions, is a method where heterogeneous study groups vie with each other for the highest composite quiz score. After the teacher presents a lesson, teams meet to study the material. All students in each group are responsible for every person on their team learning the lesson material. Quizzes are given, and the team receives a score based on a total of each person in the group's improvement score. The improvement score is derived from a student's previous quiz average. The second approach, TGT or Team Games Tournament, is similar to STAD but allows teachers to put students in homogeneous groups in a tournament situation. Winning students move to a "harder" table level, while losing students move to an "easier" level. After a predetermined number of rounds, students return to their original heterogeneous groups, and individual improvement scores are tallied to give team totals. Jigsaw is a third cooperative learning approach that divides an assignment, for example a literary work, into parts. Each student is responsible for learning and becoming an expert regarding his or her part. Homogeneous expert groups are formed where students meet to discuss the material and become even more knowledgeable. Students then return to their heterogeneous groups to teach the other group members the needed material.

Pam Hausfather

Whitfield, Jamie. " 'Dictionary Skills' Is Not a Four-Letter Word." *English Journal* 82.8 (1993): 38-40.

Whitfield describes an approach to teaching dictionary skills that he developed accidentally while involved in a routine writing lesson with his students. He requires his students to participate in pen-pal writing to students of various cultures. A student's request to use slang in one of these letters prompted Whitfield and his students to publish a slang dictionary to send along with their pen-pal letters. As a result, the students learned dictionary skills by using a regular dictionary as a model for the slang dictionary. This also made them more aware of how they write, choose words, and use language in general.

Stephanie Kirby

Williams, Lisa McLean. "Magazine Magic: Advertisements Can Help You Teach Writing." *Alabama English* 9 (1997): 43-47.

This article shows how teaching the writing process can be made fun. Ms. Williams gives great details and diagrams of how to perform different activities. Titles are sometimes difficult for students to come up with, and searching magazine articles could give them ideas. Students need to be able to pick out sentence fragments from advertisements. Many advertisements use a variety of styles to appeal to our senses. Students should use these same techniques to reach the reader.

Darryl Gossett

Zemelman, Steven and Daniels, Harvey. *A Community of Writers*. Portsmouth: Heinemann Educational Books, Inc., 1988.

This book helps the teacher to set the mood in the classroom to develop the writing process. It is written for students at the junior and senior high school levels. However, much of the information can be adapted to the elementary level of teaching. It covers the entire process of writing from workshops to the finished product. The authors discuss climate in the classroom, maintaining direction for the students, writing centers, prewriting, guided imagery, and evaluation. There is a section on daily objectives and expectations designed to set the pace for writing projects. This book is essential for the teacher who is seeking instruction in developing writing workshops in the classroom.

Donna Calhoun