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## **Ninth Grade Remedial Writing Project**

Kurt Dean Clemmens

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**NINTH GRADE  
REMEDIAL WRITING PROJECT**

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A Project Report  
Presented to  
The Graduate Faculty  
Central Washington University

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Masters of Arts

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by

~~Kurt Dean Clemmons~~

July, 1986

Chapter I  
Introduction

American education is faced with the problem of increasing numbers of students finding their way into remedial classes. One area where these students have great difficulty is in language arts. Within language arts the skill of writing seems to present the greatest challenge.

Joseph Mersand, an expert in the field, has described students who encounter difficulty in writing as having five characteristics:

They lack the desire to excel scholastically or intellectually. They are slow in grasping abstractions and often incoherent in their thinking. They lack self-reliance and initiative and are highly imitative. They tend to be anti-school and anti-teacher. And they lack desirable work and study habits.<sup>1</sup>

Jill Weissmann, another expert, claims that with such students the traditional techniques for teaching writing won't work because these children cannot see beyond the present moment. Unlike the academically oriented students, they do not enjoy learning for learning's sake. If they cannot see an immediate use for their education, they will refuse to learn.<sup>2</sup>

There are others, however, who maintain that the problem is more complex in that the students who struggle with writing are not a homogeneous group. They promote the idea that not only are the symptoms in the classroom varied, but the disabilities are different as well.

Gerard Giordano divided the disabilities into two categories: The first result from environmental circumstances such as family problems. The second result from internal deficits. Neither of these disabilities is easier to remediate than the other. In fact, there are cases for both types where the student cannot be remediated. For instance, if a child's specific disability comes via a social circumstance such as a divorce, there have been cases where such a child could not be effectively remediated. On the other hand, some students can be remediated using extremely simple techniques. For example, a pupil who writes poorly because he has a difficult time visualizing the letters and transcribing them may be easily helped by the use of a typewriter.<sup>3</sup>

### The Problem

The specific challenge I face in my ninth grade remedial English class is that of developing each student's skill in writing. This should be simple enough, but there is a diversity of obstacles that interferes with acceptable development.

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Upon first entering my English lab, one would observe what Mersand has stated: that the students share similar deficiencies



such as a lack of desire, coherence, self-reliance, and desirable work and study habits. After first inspecting the class and noticing those similarities in the students' attitudes and quality of work, it would seem quite logical to teach them to write using only one or two approaches. Such a maneuver is a mistake, and one that I have made.

Giordano has shed light on why one approach will not work in a class such as this. The fact is that even though these students may suffer from similar inadequacies, the reasons for the inadequacies are diverse, complex, and often vary with each individual. Because of this, it is necessary to use various approaches in developing these students' skill in writing.

I have taught this class for two years, and in that time I have noted the most common problems I face in trying to develop these students' writing skills. One problem is that some of the students are essentially non-English speaking.

The degrees of this problem vary. For example, I am currently teaching a lab class that includes three Laotian girls. Two of them speak English well enough to make themselves understood and they write the language about as well. The third student, however, is almost totally non-functional when it comes to speaking, writing or understanding English. I often have to use one of the other girls to translate my messages. What complicates this problem even further is that while these girls ~~are very intelligent, motivated, and hard working, they are~~ surrounded by students with a predominantly "bonehead" mentality.

The effect on these Laotian girls is that they gradually begin to assimilate the attitudes and behaviors of most of the other students, and as a result, the development of their writing skills tapers off.

Another problem is the inability to read. There are several students that read on or below a fourth grade level. With such a situation it becomes difficult to give the class a blanket reading assignment that is designed to show them models of various writing styles, techniques, and formats. If such readings are given, it is normal to observe the non-readers either making a futile attempt at comprehending the meaning of the reading or making a successful attempt at disrupting the class. Such behavior goes along very well with what Rudolf Flesch said years ago in his book, Why Johnny Can't Read. He claimed that many students are disruptive and unruly in school because they are frustrated readers.

A third problem is the one or two students who are classified as being behaviorally disturbed (B.D.) kids. These students vary in their intelligence and their behavior. Some B.D. students can become explosive if given the slightest suggestion for improvement, while others will sit vapid in their seats throughout the period. The B.D. students who are exceptionally bright face the same dilemma as the Laotian girls in that they become bored when the instruction is watered down. ~~And when these students become bored, the climate of the~~  
classroom can quickly become unproductive.

Along with these problems, I face the dilemma of students who appear to have little or no self-esteem. I would conservatively estimate that at least sixty percent of my lab students have a serious lack of self-esteem, and of all the problems previously mentioned, this is the one that has had the most paralyzing effect on the students and myself.

The reasons for this low self-esteem are numerous. About fifty percent of the students come from single-parent families. Many of the kids coming from broken homes have had traumatic experiences at an early age. For example, I have been informed by students and parents of incidents concerning custody cases--a spouse's attempted suicide, child abuse, and parent alcoholism. Any of these is capable of destroying a child's feeling of self-worth, and once self-worth is gone, it is easy to adopt an apathetic demeanor.

Besides overall lack of motivation and effort, one of the main problems caused by low self-esteem is a high rate of absenteeism. Because students don't care, they very often fail to attend class or, in many cases, end up dropping the class. I began one semester with an English lab class containing thirty-three students, and by the end of the semester there were seventeen students left. Out of the seventeen remaining, six failed, and attendance played a large part in each of those failures. The numerous absences each day not only hurt the ~~students who are truant, but the students in class are affected~~ as well because of the extra time taken to record attendance,

chase down admit slips, and update returning students on the latest instruction and assignments.

After facing the vexation of this class for two years, I concluded that I would eventually burn out as a teacher if I didn't do something about the students' lack of progress. As a result, I have composed this project and have found new possibilities for me and my students. I knew as I began the project that it would be necessary to find methods for teaching writing that are both motivational and effective in building my students' self-esteem. Through my research, I have found numerous ideas and approaches to writing that I believe are motivational and conducive to the growth of each student's psyche.

#### Definition of Terms

##### Writing Skill.

Writing skill is the ability to put thoughts on paper in a way that is logical, organized, original, and unimpaired by mechanical errors.

##### Remedial.

Remedial is the classification for any student that has demonstrated an inability to develop basic writing skills.

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### Limitations of the Project

This project was designed for ninth grade high school students. The objective is limited to the development of an eighteen-week writing program.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> John M. Kean, "The Teaching of Writing in Our Schools," Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, Fastback #193, p. 26.

<sup>2</sup> Jill Weissmann, "On Teaching the Learning Disabled: A Practical Viewpoint," English Journal, Feb. 1982, pp. 49-50.

<sup>3</sup> Gerard Giordano, Teaching Writing To Learning Disabled Students (Rockville: Aspen Systems Corporation, 1984) p. 31.

## Chapter IV

### Writing Curriculum for Ninth Grade Remedial Students.

The following writing curriculum is designed specifically for remedial ninth grade English students, although it could be used in almost any high school English class. The structure of this curriculum is largely based on the ideas of James Moffett. Students begin with expressive and creative types of writing and later move to the more structured aspects of writing that are found in the writing of an expository paragraph. Such an approach should motivate the students because they will begin the course writing about themselves, something they know very well. From there they will write poetry, fantasy stories, a short story, one act play, and finally they will write an expository paragraph.

Kennewick High School's ninth grade English lab class is supposed to cover literature as well, so the curriculum also incorporates literary techniques and various literary models. But in every case, the use of literature in this course mainly serves the purpose of enhancing student writing.

Any instructor using this curriculum will find that it may be spread out through an entire semester or squeezed together into a single quarter. The units and even the assignments can be interspersed with other student work depending on what various class requirements are.

## Curriculum

Unit 1: Autobiographical Writing

Assignment 1: A model for autobiographical writing.

Readings: "Why Don't You Wear Shoes?" Daniel K. Inouye.

Directions: Before you read this short autobiography, you need to understand what it means to be "introspective." Being "introspective" or "introspection" is the name of the process when a person carefully examines his thoughts and feelings about a particular situation. It's kind of like talking to yourself about the situation. Here's an example.

Christmas has been over now for a week. I don't know why, but I always get depressed about it being over. It's kind of silly really; the whole Christmas thing is a pain and I should be glad it's over--but I'm not.

Now that you know what "introspection" means, go ahead and read the model, but as you read, look for and underline all places where you think the writer is being introspective.



Unit 1: Autobiographical Writing.

Assignment 2: Daily Entry.

Definition: A daily journal entry is a place to record your reactions to the events and thoughts of a particular day.

Directions: On a fresh sheet of paper write the date and your name. Before writing anything, just relax and review the day as a whole. Consider any dreams you may have had the night before, how you felt when you came to school, what your moods have been. It's best to single one of these out in your mind and then consider your thoughts about it or reactions to it. Now begin to write. Don't worry about correctness or neatness; just make sure that you get on paper what you think is important.

Example: Joanne Brown 6/11/86

Woke up a little disturbed by C's call last night. But J. didn't say anything about it. A bit discouraged about the fact that I wasn't selected to be a camp counselor. Felt a little hopeless. Talked to C. over the phone again and was a little happier, but he sounded glum and I hope I haven't put a gap between us. He's supposed to come over after school.

Unit 1: Autobiographical Writing.

Assignment 3: Markings of Your Life.

Definition: A set of markings consists of those things in your life history that you consider to be major stepping stones, signposts, turning points, or flags.

Directions: List between eight and twelve of these points in your life beginning with the point where you were born and moving in order from there up to the present. Don't spend a lot of time thinking; just write what comes to mind and remember to put them down in order.

Example: Markings of My Life.

1. I was born and my mother died.
  2. I crashed and broke my leg.
  3. I found my balance by becoming a gymnast.
  4. I learned and listened and did OK in school.
  5. I sang and danced after joining the chorus and dance club.
  6. I found mother-love when my father remarried.
  7. I decided to become a lawyer after learning to debate and winning a few contests.
  8. My leg didn't hinder me when I swam, so I decided to join the swim team.
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Unit 1: Autobiographical Writing.

Assignment 4: Crossroad

Definition: A crossroad is an autobiographical piece of writing that pinpoints a situation in your life where the road of your life split into two directions and it was either up to you or someone else to decide which road you should take. Both roads were tempting and by choosing one, you had to give up the other.

Directions: Check your list of markings to see if there are any crossroads. If not, you need to reflect for a few minutes until you can think of such a situation. When you get one fixed in your mind, take a moment to picture yourself taking the road you actually took. What were the consequences? Write about them after you explain the situation. Next, picture yourself taking the other road--the one you didn't take. Imagine what the consequences would have been if you had taken it. Write about them.

Example: My dad was always a baseball fan. He talked baseball to me night and day when I was a kid, and though I loved the trumpet, I started playing baseball when I was seven. Dad used to take me out in the backyard to practice throwing and catching. I felt I'd be a disappointment to him if I didn't play baseball, so I reluctantly went out for the team. My life was filled with practice and pressure for winning from all sides.  
What would have happened to me if I'd gone out for band?

I close my eyes and see myself signing the class card for band. I make the audition and I'm accepted. I like the music teacher and each day after school I'm rehearsing and I'm smiling . . .

Unit 1: Autobiographical Writing.

Assignment 5: Personal paragraph beginning with "I believe."

Definition: Because you are a living breathing homo sapien, you have beliefs about many things including yourself, life, other people, what's right and wrong, etc. You could even say, "I don't believe in nothin." That's fine, but guess what? You're actually saying that you believe in disbelief, and that's something.

Directions: Read over your other autobiographical writings first and look for any comments you've made that indicate your philosophy or personal beliefs. If you can't find any such comments, then you will have to work with raw brain. After the thoughts begin to flow, you are ready to write. Begin your personal paragraph by indenting and writing the words, "I believe . . ." and finish the sentence however you wish, just as long as it's really how you feel or think. Next, you will write a series of sentences that explain why you believe the first sentence. Then you will finish the paragraph by writing a last sentence which restates your belief very briefly.

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Unit 2: PoetryAssignment 1: Poetry Patterns

Explanation: Poetry often is arranged in ways that have a pattern of some sort. One way this can be done is by first setting up a grammar pattern and than plugging in words to make a poem.

Directions: Study the grammar pattern first and then notice how the words in the example have been inserted to fit the pattern. When you feel that you understand the process, go ahead and plug in words to make your own poem.

Pattern

Like a (noun)

Subject

Predicate

Question?

Example

Like a child,

the wind

cries among the trees.

Are the trees listening?

Unit 2: PoetryAssignment 2: Poetry Patterns

Directions: Study the pattern below first and then look at the example to see how the words fit the pattern. When you feel that you understand, go ahead and use your own words. For this pattern it is suggested that you use some natural event; a leaf falling, a flower growing, a storm breaking.

<u>Pattern</u>	<u>Example</u>
Adverb	Swiftly,
Adverb	smoothly,
Adverb	stealthily,
The (plus) noun	the snake
Verb	stalks
Pronoun and modifiers	his unwary prey.
Noun!	Danger!

Unit 2: PoetryAssignment 3: Poetry Patterns

Directions: Study the pattern below first and then look at the example to see how the words fit the pattern. When you feel that you understand, go ahead and use your own words. I suggest for this pattern that your topic be about learning to do or create something.

<u>Pattern</u>	<u>Example</u>
The (plus) noun	The kitten
verb (plus) object	taps the ball
verb (plus) object	chases the ball,
verb (plus) object	catches the ball--
Adjective!	Exciting!
Exclamation!	How good it feels to capture something!

Unit 2: Poetry

Assignment 4: Poetry Patterns

Directions: Study the pattern below first and then look at the example to see how the words fit the pattern. When you feel that you understand, go ahead and use your own words.

<u>Pattern</u>	<u>Example</u>
Noun	Diver
Verb, verb, verb	jumps, soars, plunges
Prepositional phrase,	off the board,
Prepositional phrase,	through the air,
Prepositional phrase-	into the water--
A (plus) adjective (plus) noun	A perfect swan!

Unit 2: PoetryAssignment 5: Poetry Patterns

Directions: Study the pattern below first and then look at the example to see how the words fit the pattern. When you feel that you understand, go ahead and use your own words. I suggest that you make the poem an action poem about some type of race.

<u>Pattern</u>	<u>Example</u>
The (+) adjective (+) noun	The startled sleeper
Verb (present) (+) object	hears the alarm,
Verb (present) (+) prepositional phrase	jumps out of bed,
Verb (present) (+) object	downs his coffee,
Verb (present) (+) prepositional phrase	hops on the bus.
Noun!	Relief!
How _____!	How hectic is the morning!

Unit 2: PoetryAssignment 6: Learning Poetic Devices

Definition: A poetic device is a word or words or even letters used in a poem in a way that makes the poem more powerful, funny, frightening, beautiful, or sad. There are many devices that poets use, but we will learn only a few really important ones.



They are: simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole, alliteration, and allusion.

Directions: Read each definition and example and then write in one of your own.

1. Simile - The comparison of two unlike things using the words "like" or "as" to make the comparison.

Example: Her hair was like silk.

Your simile: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. Metaphor - Compares two objects without using "like" or "as."

Example: Her hair was silk.

Your example: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. Personification - This is where the poet gives a non-living object human capabilities or qualities.

Example: The cannon grunted and grumbled.

Your personification: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. Hyperbole - This is where the poet exaggerates in order to get a point across.

Example: I have tons of problems.

Your hyperbole: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. Alliteration - This is where the poet uses the same beginning consonant sound repeatedly in one line of poetry in order to give the line a certain sound that helps create the mood of the poem.

Example:        good old grinnin' gruntin' Gunga Din.

Your alliteration: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. Allusion - This is a name in a poem that represents a famous person, place, or thing to make a point using few words.

Example:        There's something San Franciscan about that fella.

Your allusion \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Unit 2:        Poetry

Assignment 7: Learning Poetic Devices

Directions:    Read the following poems once to get a feel for them: "I Wandered Lonely As A Cloud" by William Wordsworth, "We Real Cool" by Gwendolyn Brooks, "Nothing Gold Can Stay" by Robert Frost, and "War" by Dan Roth. Next, read each poem again and underline and label all of the poetic devices you see.

Unit 2: PoetryAssignment 8: Sun Diagram

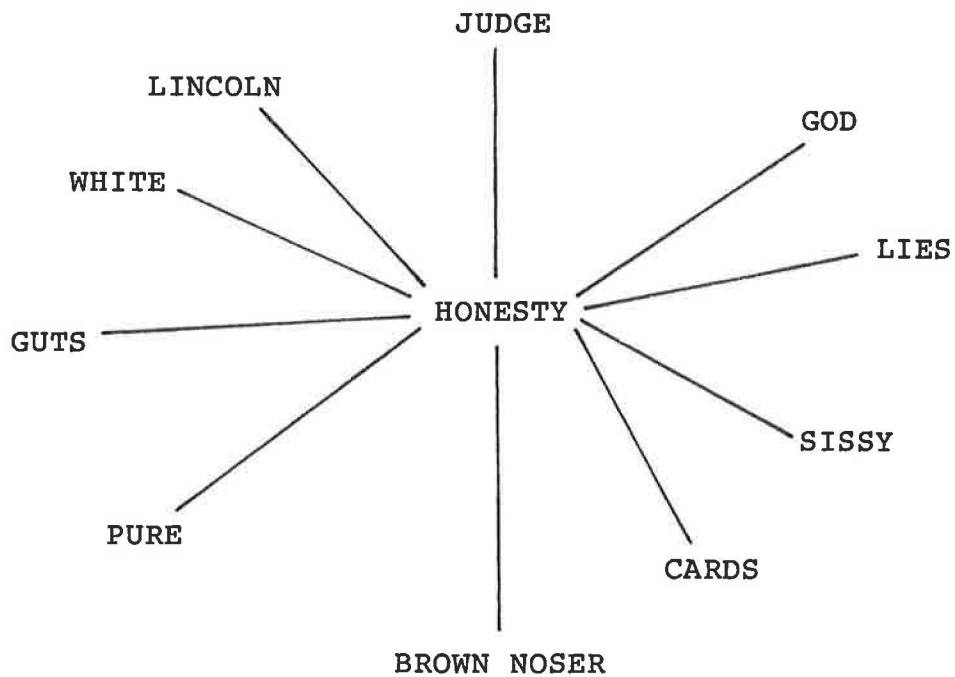
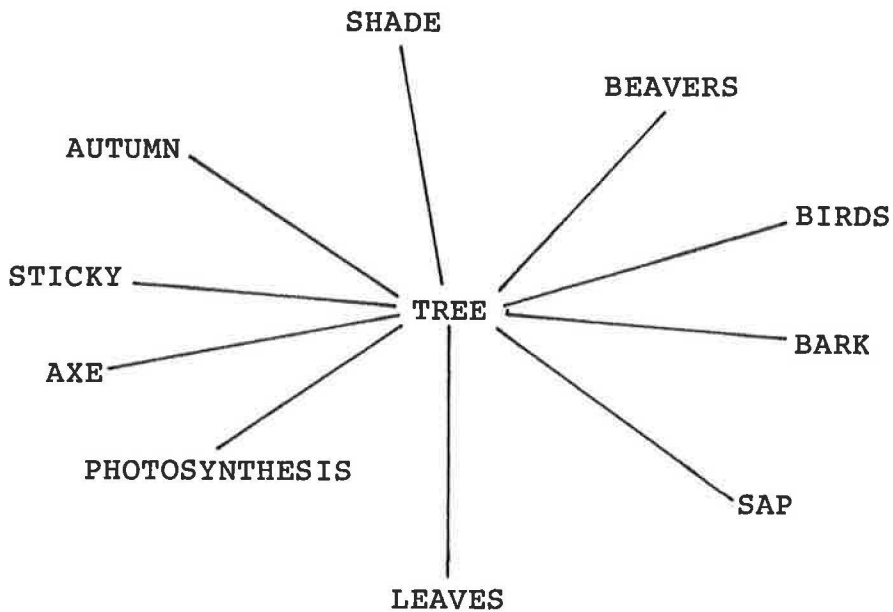
Explanation: Sometimes it is difficult to come up with ideas when asked to write about a certain topic. A sun diagram can help.

Directions: From the list below, select one topic that interests you. Write the name of the topic on the center of the page and then draw ten lines from it outward. It should look like the sun with ten rays. Now write down at the end of each ray, one word or phrase the topic makes you think about, and don't worry about how crazy some may sound. When you finish the first one, select another topic and do one more on a different piece of paper.

<u>Topics:</u>	hate	peace	honesty	millionaire	nature
	love	brother- hood	truth	pain	cool
	fun	sister- hood	bums	courage	country

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Examples:



Unit 2: Poetry

Assignment 9: Free Association Writing

Definition: Free association writing requires the author to write down whatever comes to mind about a particular topic in a certain amount of time.

Directions: Take out a clean piece of paper and one of your sun diagrams. Study the diagram briefly, then leave it on your desk. Next, begin writing about the topic at the center of your diagram. Continue writing for ten minutes about anything that comes to your mind about the topic. If you can't think of anything, then write, "I can't think of anything" over and over until you do think of something. The rule is to keep your pen moving always and don't worry about mistakes. You will do the same thing with your other sun diagram at a later date. What you want here is a bunch of scattered thoughts.

Unit 2: Poetry

Assignment 10: Masterpiece Poem

Directions: You should have two free association writings completed by now. Read over both carefully to see if there is any place where a poem could be born. The fact is that you can begin a poem using almost any idea. Remember that I'm not talking about writing down word for word what you've written in your free write; I'm talking about using the ideas.

The poem will be unrhymed and will include at least two different poetic devices. You can use any two that you want. Some poems will be long while others are shorter; it all depends on when you have fully developed your theme or main idea.

Free Write Example: When I think of desert land I think of whirling dust devils, thirsty coyotes, and circling buzzards. I think a lot about water when I think of the hot sand and the baking rocks.

Poem Example:

DEVIL

Dust demon

Whirling like an insane top

spinning up dust,

dirtying up dawn,

smudging her smile

to show the evil in the world.

Unit 3: Fantasy

Assignment 1: Nightmare Entry

Explanation: Just about everyone has had a terrible dream at some point in his or her life, one that really is frightening. Such a dream is a nightmare, and because it seemed real, it is a good thing to write about.

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Directions: Take out a clean sheet of paper and a pen, and think back to a nightmare you have had in the past. Try to remember as much detail as you can; sights, smells, sounds, feelings, motion, etc. Write all of this down in the order that it happened, and don't worry about being totally correct. I expect that you will have forgotten some things. Don't worry, just get down as much as you can, as detailed as you can.

Unit 3: Fantasy

Assignment 2: Dream Entry

Explanation: A dream isn't really scary like a nightmare, but a dream can be extremely weird and often times doesn't make any sense.

Directions: Take out a piece of paper and a pen and think back to the most recent dream you have had. The dream may have been just a bunch of different pictures in your mind with no words attached. Don't worry about that, just describe the pictures in the order that they appeared using a lot of detail. If there were words and action, simply describe what you saw, heard, touched, etc.

Unit 3: Fantasy

Assignment 3: Imagery Entry

Explanation: Everyone has what is called a subconscious mind.

It's a part of your mind that little is known about, but even though we know only a little about it, many psychologists believe that it is extremely powerful. It's sort of like having two minds; one that we are aware of and use to do our school work, and one that we aren't aware of that clicks on to full power when we are sleeping. It is possible to be wide awake and get our minds very close to a subconscious point. When a person does this he is very likely to see strange stuff. We will call this stuff "imagery." Some great art including music, paintings, literature, and movies has been created because someone, somewhere, dug for the treasures in their subconscious mind. Walt Disney is a good example.

Directions: Relax yourself, put both feet on the floor, close your eyes, and breathe evenly. Allow your mind to go down into the well of your subconsciousness. Record on paper whatever you find in the well; what you see, feel, hear, smell, etc. You can stay in the well for as few as three minutes and as many as twenty. If nothing shows itself at first, don't worry about it, something is always going on in your well, you just need to give it a chance to appear.



Unit 3: Fantasy

Assignment 4: Musical Imagery

Explanation: It is true that a painting can be the inspiration for a song. It is also true that songs can inspire paintings and even great stories. If you listen carefully to a song that has no words, you can tell what the general mood of the song is without being a music expert. If you listen even more carefully, you can develop your own idea of what story the song is trying to tell as pictures begin to flash in your mind. These pictures are images.

Directions: Take out a couple sheets of paper and a pen. Relax yourself. I'm going to play a song called, "Claire de Lune." You should just sit back and listen to it the first time without trying to think about what it's saying. I will play the song over again about three or four times so you can get a real feel for it. If the song creates images in your mind, then write them down. You might see yourself in some of the images; that's fine, write it down. After a half an hour you may find that you don't have anything but a bunch of strange images written down. If so, listen to the song again and try to develop one of the images into a story that fits the song. Don't be surprised if your story is unbelievable; chances are it will be.

Unit 3: Fantasy

Assignment 5: Sole Survivor

Readings: Excerpts from Future Shock and any Andre Norton Novel.

Explanation: Science fiction often deals with the future and very often goes into a lot of detail explaining how life will be drastically different. Some of the far out ideas that were written a few years ago in science fiction novels are actually realities in today's world. Computers and robots are excellent examples. Some people believe that technology such as our nuclear weapons will eventually lead to the earth's destruction.

Directions: With pen and paper on your desk, imagine yourself waking up one day and being the only living person left on this entire planet. Your will to live is strong so you must do something. I want you to describe what your surroundings are like and what you do to survive. It is important that as you do this, you talk to no one. When everyone is finished, we will share our papers with one another to see the different ideas. It should be interesting.

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Unit 3: FantasyAssignment 6: Fantasy Story

Explanation: So far you have written and read many types of unbelievable stuff. Your dream and imagery writings along with your science fiction writing can all be called "fantasy." At this point, you should be up to your ears in wild and crazy fantasy ideas.

Directions First, I want you to read through all that you have written for this unit. The reason for this is that very often writers get new ideas by looking at their old ideas. Even if you only squeeze out one new idea by reading all your fantasy writing, it's worth the trouble. As you read, be ready to write down the new ideas. When you've finished this, you may decide that you really want to write a fantasy story by expanding one of your old ideas. That's fine. Once you get an idea for a fantasy story, go ahead and begin writing. Your story can be a fairy tale, your own myth, or science fiction. Also, remember that you don't need to worry about having your first draft of the story come out perfect. It's best to just write all your ideas down in a rush and work out the problems later.

Unit 4:            Short Story

Assignment 1: Elements of a Short Story

Explanation: In the last unit you were asked to make up stories that are unbelievable. In this unit you will be asked to think up a story that is untrue but at the same time seems believable; no fairies, goblins, or space voyages to the sun. But before you write your story, there are things you need to know about five topics: setting, character, plot, theme, and effect.

Directions: Read "The Scarlet Ibis" and when you have finished, go through the story again in order to solve the problems below.

1. Setting is the place where a story happens. It could be a mountain, a living room, or a submarine a thousand feet under water. The author creates setting using very descriptive wording. In the story find three different places where the author is describing setting and underline and label them as "setting."
  2. Characters are the people in the story that the author creates in his own mind. The author's job is to make these people seem real to the reader. He does this by carefully describing what they look like and how they handle different situations. In the story, find, underline, and label the chunk of the story that describes Doodle's physical appearance and a part that describes how Doodle reacts to something. Label both pieces as "Character."
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3. Plot is the arrangement of important events in a story; the main things that happen in order. List here what you think are the main events in this story.
4. Theme is the main idea in a piece of writing; a point about life and people the author is trying to show the reader. Often there is more than one theme in a story; sometimes it is stated directly, but usually it is not. In this story try to find one sentence or section that states a theme. Underline it and label it "theme."
5. Effect is the reaction you have to the story. If you cry, then the effect is a sad one. If you laugh, then the story's effect was humorous. In a good piece of writing the setting, characterization, and plot should all work together to produce the effect. Write here what you think the effect of this story is.

Unit 4:            Short Story

Assignment 2: Character Sketches

Readings:        Jason Richardson Character Sketch

Explanation: A good story usually begins with great characters that have their differences. These differences make up the story's "conflict." It is absolutely necessary that your story have some conflict in it. The best way to get a fight going is to throw a bad person in with a good one. The sparks are sure to fly and your reader will love it. Think about it for a second,

there wouldn't be many good books or movies if there weren't all of those tense and heated moments. You know, the kind that make you nervous and up tight in the movie house. It all starts with great characters that exist only in your mind. This is your chance to create your own little world of people.

Directions: You are going to create a bad character and a good character either male or female. Do one character at a time and begin by giving the character a full name, age, and physical description. Next, give the character a history or background. Be as specific as you can and bring this character's background right up to the present. Most important of all, give your character a problem or two. A problem is where a conflict begins.

Here's one that just came to my mind. His name is Freddie Krull. He's thirty-two years old, has shaggy black hair that's constantly hanging over his eyes, and those eyes are a lifeless brown color. Freddie is a giant of a man. His mother died when Freddie was born and he never knew who his father was. Freddie lives off of the thrown out food in the garbage can behind the Highway Grill Cafe. When he's not at the garbage can eating, Freddie is slowly riding around town on his rusted bicycle. The bicycle used to be used to sell ice cream. It still has the two ice cream boxes saddled over the back tire. Hovering over the bike is a dusty green umbrella. Freddie rides this bike every day, slowly through town and watches people with his lifeless brown eyes. When the sun begins to set, he rides his bike out to the city cemetery where his mother is buried, and he crawls into

a large cardboard freezer box located against the back fence. This is where Freddie sleeps. Each night before he closes his eyes, he pulls up his shirt and stares at the tattoo on his fat and hairy stomach. The tattoo says, "Mother lives." Freddie's only reason for living is the hope he has that his mother is alive. He is just waiting for the right time to dig up her coffin to confirm his belief. The only problem is Chet Warren, the red-necked grounds keeper who is just looking for an opportunity to hurt Freddie.

Unit 4:            Short Story

Assignment 3: Setting

Explanation: When you finally write your story, you will need to have a place and a time for it to all happen. You can create your own community back in 1805 on the American frontier. You can do anything you want so long as it's believable. Also, remember that a setting can be a very small place like a jail cell or backyard. Your whole story might take place in a basement for all you know. That's OK just so long as that basement is described in detail: the squeaking rats, smell of mold, the sound of trickling sewage water in the rusted iron pipe, and the mysterious picture on the brick wall of a man being crucified upside down, and the oddly shaped shadow of a being standing near the cross. I could go on and on here. This is just to give you an idea.

Directions: Read through your two character sketches and look for any ideas for a setting that will fit together well with your characters. When you find one, go ahead and begin writing. Remember detail.

Unit 4: Short Story

Assignment 4: Your Short Story

Readings: "Little Boy Blue"

Directions: At this point you should have two or more characters developed and a place where they will interact with each other. Now your job is to read those character sketches carefully and find a situation in one of their lives that could be turned into a good story. As you write this story you will probably find that you have to make some changes in the characters and even the setting. That's OK; do whatever is necessary to make a good story. Also, remember what makes a good story: believable characters in trouble and good description.

Unit 5: One Act Play

Readings: Selected One Act Play

Assignment 1: Conversation With A Person

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Explanation: Have you ever been in love with or very angry at someone and instead of talking to them face to face, you had an



imaginary conversation with them in your head? Of course you have. We're about to do the same thing except for the fact that we are going to write the conversation down. It's a great way to learn how to write dialogue and it's also a great way to learn something about that person and yourself.

Directions: First, write down a list of the names of people in your past and present who have influenced your life in some way. After you finish the list, select a name from the list. Next, take out another piece of paper and write a short paragraph that explains how things are with you and the person today. When you finish the paragraph, you are ready to write the conversation. The form will be the same as that in a play; just follow the example below.

Example: Mrs. Lindville was my babysitter when I was in elementary school. She had a great impact on my life in a positive way and I have never had the opportunity to tell her so. She died a year ago.

Me: Mrs. Lindville, there sure are a lot of things I would like to tell you. The first is that I love you.

Mrs. Lindville: Kurt, it's good to see you. Oh my! You have grown into a big, handsome man. How's your family?

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Unit 5: One Act Play

Assignment 2: Conversation With Body

Explanation: Your body is quite a wonderful thing. There are thousands of processes going on inside of you even now while you read this page. Some people are at war with their bodies because they don't like their looks. Others are at peace with their bodies but at war with their minds. This assignment will give you an opportunity to better understand your thoughts and feelings about your own body.

Directions: Take out a piece of paper and a pen and title the top of the page, "Conversation With Body." Next, start writing the conversation in a way that brings out your real thoughts and feelings. Use the same form as you did on the last assignment.

Example:

Me: I hate you, fat!

Body: Why don't you just go on a diet?

Me: I just can't stick to one.

Body: Well, it takes willpower.

Unit 5: One Act Play

Assignment: Conversation With An Event

Definition: The things that happen to us are called events. Sometimes events are planned while at other times they are a complete surprise. Some are in our control and some aren't.

There are times when an event happens to us because we made a mistake. It's important for us to know that we can learn a lot from events if we look at them carefully. What we learn from them can help us lead more successful and fulfilling lives. Here are some examples of events: falling in love with someone who doesn't love you; living with aging relatives; religious experience; being a member of a minority group; experiencing your parents' divorce.

Directions: Title your conversation as, "Conversation With \_\_\_\_\_." Fill in the blank with the event you've chosen. Now, using the script form, go ahead and begin writing your conversation. It might help to ask yourself as you are writing, "What is this event trying to teach me about life?"

Example: Me: Hello there, event of my parents' divorce. I wonder what life would be like if you hadn't happened.

Event: Hard to say son. What exactly do you mean?

Me: I wonder if I would like girls more if I didn't come from a broken home.

Unit 5: One Act Play

Assignment 4: Group Play

Explanation: We have now read a one act play and have learned how to write a script without stage directions. The next step is to put it all together by creating your own one act play.

Directions: You will form groups of threes. Each member of the group will write his or her own one act play. Before you write the play, you need to explain what the situation is. As you write your play, make sure that you have the proper sexes in your group to play the parts and also make sure that your play deals with a situation that takes place in a single place. You may also want to write in some stage directions. When the plays have all been written, I will decide which one has the best potential. One person in each group will be the director and the other two will be actors. That's right, it's showtime! You will have plenty of time to get ready, so just relax and enjoy the feeling of creating something wonderful.

Unit 6: The Paragraph

Assignment 1: Details

Explanation: The next four assignments deal with "details." A writing that has good detail is more informative and more powerful. For example, if you tell your audience a story by simply saying, "A man was killed in a terrible accident," your audience is going to be yawning and falling asleep. But if you say, "Late last night Jacob Teets fell a thousand feet and popped on the rocks at the bottom of Dry Canyon," your audience will know more precisely what happened and will have a more graphic picture in their minds. It is also important you understand that details can be over-used as well as under-used. As you do more

and more writing, you will begin to sense when you need to inform, when you need to be graphic, or when you need an undetailed statement. Good writing includes all of these, so it's important that you know what they are, how to construct them, and where to use them.

Directions: A detail gives a name or a number, or it states a fact. Rewrite the following statements changing the underlined words to detailed words.

Example: Not detailed: Yesterday was really hot.

Detailed: On Sunday it was 101 degrees.

1. Not detailed: He is an old man.

Detailed: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. Not detailed: My neighbor bought a new car.

Detailed: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. Not detailed: She paid a lot of money for that book.

Detailed: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. Not detailed: The man who repaired my truck last week is ill.

Detailed: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. Not detailed: That body of water is really deep.

Detailed: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. Not detailed: Our largest city has a huge population.

Detailed: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

7. Not detailed: My best friend does not like the cold-weather months.

Detailed: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Unit 6:            The Paragraph

Assignment 2: Details

Directions: Rewrite the following statements changing the underlined words to detailed words.

Example: Not detailed: The thing that makes the car go faster stuck, and he had an accident.

Detailed:            The accelerator stuck, and Ted crashed into a telephone pole.

1. Not detailed: My cousin bought a new motorcycle.

Detailed: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. Not detailed: The thing tied around her head was dirty.

Detailed: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. Not detailed: That country persecutes some people.

Detailed: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Not detailed: The person who broke into our house took several things.

Detailed: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Not detailed: That book is old.

Detailed: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6. Not detailed: My paper received a good grade.

Detailed: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Unit 6:           The Paragraph

### Assignment 3: Concrete Detail

Directions: A concrete detail appeals to the five senses--to hearing, seeing, smelling, tasting, and feeling. Rewrite the following sentences using concrete details. Remember, concrete detail is supposed to appeal to the reader's senses.

Example: Not Concrete: The sky was beautiful.  
Concrete: Red and gold rays shot up to the fluffy pink clouds.

Example: Not Concrete: The dogs made a noise  
Concrete: The vicious pack of German shepherds snarled and snapped at me.

1. Not concrete: She is an old woman.

Concrete: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. Not concrete: My car is making a strange sound.

Concrete: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. Not concrete: The carpet is dirty.

Concrete: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. Not concrete: The picture on the wall reminds me of my  
childhood home.

Concrete: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. Not concrete: Sam bought some new clothes.

Concrete: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Unit 6: The Paragraph

Assignment 4: Concrete Detail

Directions: A concrete detail appeals to the five senses--to hearing, seeing, smelling, tasting, and feeling. Rewrite the following sentences using concrete detail. Remember, concrete detail is supposed to appeal to the reader's senses.



Example: Not Concrete: The young dog made a noise.

Concrete: The tiny puppy whined his loneliness.

1. Not concrete: The fireworks were pretty.

Concrete: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. Not concrete: The pollution is bad today.

Concrete: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. Not concrete: That is a pleasant smell.

Concrete: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. Not concrete: I was tired.

Concrete: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. Not concrete: We are very hungry.

Concrete: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. Not concrete: The magpies were noisy as they fought over the food.

Concrete: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Unit 6:            The Paragraph

Assignment 5: Naked Sentences

Explanation: Have you ever been around a story teller who gets so hung up on all of the details that it makes the story difficult to listen to? Sometimes it is best to strip our speech and writing of detail so all that is left is a naked sentence that gets quickly and simply to the point. Learning to strip your sentences of detail is just as important as the ability to incorporate detail; it depends on the situation you face.

Directions: Write the "naked" version of each of the following detailed sentences.

Example: Detailed: Bonnie Sue's purple and red knee-high socks smell like moldy cottage cheese.

Naked: Her socks stink.

1. The combination of meat, cheese, lettuce, tomato, and bread is what makes a hamburger nutritional.
- 

2. According to the scale in the basement of my house, Bob weighs five-hundred and fifty-eight pounds.
- 

3. A ten-ton Ponderosa Pine fell on his red 1970 Mustang Mock I crushing it beyond repair.
-

4. I like all of Stevie Wonder's songs including "Alfie," "Traveling Man," and "You Are the Sunshine of My Life."
- 

Unit 6:            The Paragraph

Assignment 6: Topic Sentence

Explanation: Most paragraphs cover one subject in about 100 to 150 words. The main ideas or what the entire paragraph is about should be put into one sentence at the beginning. This is called the topic sentence. For example, if I were to write a paragraph that explains why Bob Jones is my best friend, I would probably begin the paragraph with the following topic sentence: "Bob Jones is my best friend." The rest of the paragraph would be a series of sentences explaining why he is my best friend.

Directions: Write a topic sentence for each of the following and write it on the blank line. Remember that the topic sentence must summarize the entire paragraph in just one sentence.

1. You need to write a paragraph that convinces someone to buy one product rather than another.

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2. You need write a paragraph in which you explain how you feel about living in this town.

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3. You need to write a paragraph that will convince your classmates that a certain student should be class president.

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4. You need to write a paragraph that explains your view on drugs.

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5. You need to write a paragraph that explains your opinion of this school.

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6. You need to write a paragraph that convinces your parents to give you some money.

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7. You need to write a paragraph that describes a beautiful place.

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Unit 6:            The Paragraph

Assignment 7: Primary and Secondary Support

Explanation: You know now that a paragraph begins with a topic sentence that tells what the whole paragraph is about in one sentence, for example, "Basketball is a very difficult sport." What I need now is what is called support. Support is really just proof. When you write a topic sentence, you need to prove it or explain it. For my basketball paragraph I will need to support the topic sentence by explaining why basketball is difficult. I can think of at least two reasons why it is difficult. One is that it takes a lot of endurance and the other is that it takes a lot of skill. These two reasons are called primary support because they directly explain or support my topic sentence. But now I need to explain what I mean by endurance and skill. For endurance I might describe running full speed back and forth on the court, and for skill I might mention timing a jump, footwork, shot blocking, shooting, and so on. This is called secondary support; its job is to explain the primary support.

Directions: In the following paragraphs label the beginning of each primary and secondary supporting sentence by placing a (P) for primary and an (S) for secondary. The first paragraph has been done for you.

1. No single skill is more helpful in life than the ability to use language. (P) It helps us to make our needs and desires known to others. (S) Even before a baby can talk, she develops a kind of language to let her parents know when she's happy, when she's wet, when she's hungry, or when she's just plain frustrated. (P) Language also helps us to understand other people. (S) Our friends can talk with us, and we can talk with them. (S) Sometimes we don't even need words to express our feelings because we understand our friends and they understand us by our use of a kind of silent language. (P) Language also enables us to read and write. (S) We can read novels, short stories, poems, technical reports, and shop manuals. (S) We can write to friends and family, or we can write an order to a company or a letter of complaint or a job resume. In fact, language is so important that if it didn't exist, someone would have to invent it.

2. My favorite teacher is Timothy Tontine. Although I was really nervous about enrolling in his program, he put everybody at ease the very first day. He explained what the class would be about and told a few jokes. He seemed to enjoy that first day and soon had all of us feeling we were going to succeed in his class. Another reason why he is my favorite teacher is his patience in explaining things to us. Everything seems so clear when he shows us how a certain job must be done in a certain way. If someone

doesn't understand, he goes back over it again, very calmly, not yelling and not making the student feel like a dummy. In addition, he has also been very helpful to me personally. A while back I was laid off at work and was really feeling bad. I talked with him about my financial problems, and after a couple of weeks, he helped me find another, better-paying job. For these three reasons, I think Mr. Tontine is the best teacher I've ever had.

3. I like to watch Bob Hope specials on television. First, I've always enjoyed his monologs. He manages to bring up not only current world events but also what's happening in the particular city or area where he is right then. Second, he has good entertainers on his programs. From pretty girls to outstanding musicians, I always enjoy those who are with him. Third, I admire his patriotism. He gave up many years of being home with his family at Christmas time just so he could take a little bit of home to G.I.'s. In my book, Bob Hope is an A #1 entertainer.

4. I hate winter. I just can't seem to get warm. No matter how high I turn the thermostat, no matter how many clothes I put on, I'm still cold. And that heavy winter clothing costs so much! For summer I can buy a pair of jeans, a shirt, and a pair of thongs for less than twenty dollars; but for winter, a pair of jeans, a sweater, a pair of boots, and a heavy jacket costs me at least seventy-five dollars. In addition, driving on ice scares me. We have a

lot of bad weather here, and cities and counties don't seem to know how to keep the street and highways free of ice and snow. Last year a friend of mine was almost killed when his car slid through an intersection at a traffic light when he hit a patch of ice. No, sir. I just don't like winter.

5. Summer is my favorite time of the year. One reason is that I love the heat. After a long, cold winter when I never really got good and warm, I like to bake myself in the sun. Another reason why summer is my favorite season is that I can go on picnics with my friends and we can water-ski all day long. Of course, such things would be hard to do during the winter. Perhaps the most important reason why I like summer so much is that I'm out of school. I don't hate school, but after a while I certainly get tired of being cooped up so much. Summer lets me be free to spend my time however I want to spend it. These are the reasons why summer is my favorite time of the year.

Unit 6: The Paragraph

Assignment 8: Paragraph

Explanation: Everything you have been doing in this unit has been leading up to one thing--your writing of a paragraph. You can go ahead and call this the final test because now you will have to put everything you have learned together.



Directions: First, write a topic sentence, and then write a topical outline that points out the primary and secondary support. When you finish the outline, go ahead and write the paragraph using the outline as a road map. Remember to use detail where it's appropriate. And finally, make sure your paragraph ends with a restatement of your topic sentence.

Example: Topic Sentence: Smoking dope is bad business.

- I. Physically
  - A. Kills brain cells.
  - B. Causes birth defects.
  - C. Causes fatigue.
  
- II. Mentally
  - A. Causes laziness.
  - B. Causes paranoia.
  
- III. Concluding sentence.

Smoking dope is bad business. One reason why it's bad is because it hurts a person physically. Studies have proven that using marijuana can kill brain cells and cause birth defects. Along with this, it also can cause fatigue, a constant tired feeling. Another reason pot is bad is because it hurts a person mentally. Users often times find that they don't have the same drive to get a job done that they used to have. The drug makes them lazy. The drug can also make the user paranoid, afraid that someone is going to catch them and turn them into the law.

Between the physical and mental damage this drug does, an intelligent person would have to conclude that smoking marijuana is a risk not worth taking.

## Chapter V

### Summary

The construction of this project has revealed a number of ideas about the teaching of writing.

One discovery was the concept that writing is a process and should be taught as such. I have always had a feeling that a lot is missed by the students when an instructor simply assigns a writing task telling the students to construct an outline, write a draft and edit, write a final draft and turn it in. When compared to the process approach in the teaching of writing, such a program falls short. The process approach allows students to fully learn the value of brainstorming, editing and revising. The other method doesn't. In the process approach students are assisted by the instructor and their peers as they write. It is only when the finished paper is handed in that the instructor finally breaks the code of non-communication. This is normally done by inundating students' papers with red ink that is in most cases never read by students.

While researching the process method of teaching writing, I made what I consider to be another valuable discovery, that is the idea that teachers should encourage students' writing to be recursive. I had never really considered what might happen if students were told after writing a first draft to go back and

analyze the draft in order to find a key idea that could be developed into an even better paper. I found through my own experience as a teacher and a writer that such a procedure forces the writer to truly think, learn, and eventually develop a piece of original writing.

Probably the most important thing I have learned however, is the Moffett idea of turning writing curriculums around. Such a measure would require that elementary, intermediate, and junior high students only be asked to do expressive and creative types of writing. Once in high school, students would still continue writing expressively and creatively, but at the same time they would also be required to compose more structured types of writing like the expository paragraph. The approach is based on Moffett's philosophy that students must first realize that they have something to say, that they can create with words, and that their creations can be powerful if they are crafted properly. Once students realize these things, they should be motivated to write, and will find it much easier to learn the more formal aspects of writing.

When I began this project, I knew that the monolithic challenge I faced was that of creating a writing curriculum that will motivate my students to want to write. The idea of turning the curriculum around seems to be a logical solution to the problem.

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Along with all of the ideas previously mentioned, I also developed one of my own that I think is worth mentioning and

worth pursuing in a future study. The idea is that optimum learning takes place when students are emotionally stimulated by the subject. The idea kept coming to mind as I researched the area of expressive writing and found that students write their best when they are writing about those things they have a deep "feeling" for. It seems that we as educators too often appeal to the mental dimensions of our students when the gold mine may very well be buried in their hearts.

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