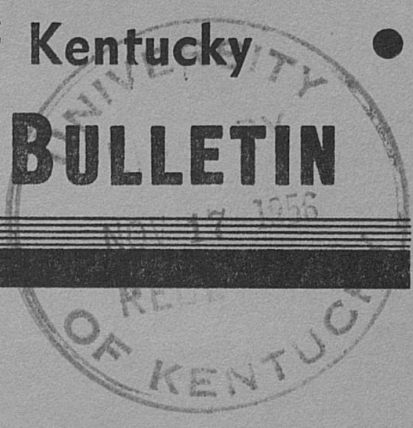


Ser 0

● Commonwealth of Kentucky ●
EDUCATIONAL BULLETIN



**PRINCIPLES AND STANDARDS
IN COMPOSITION
FOR
KENTUCKY HIGH SCHOOLS
AND COLLEGES**

Published by
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
ROBERT R. MARTIN
Superintendent of Public Instruction

ISSUED MONTHLY
Entered as second-class matter March 21, 1933, at the post office at
Frankfort, Kentucky, under the Act of August 24, 1912.

VOL. XXIV SEPTEMBER, 1956 NO. 9

Wi

Me
Ge
Ch
He
Joh
Em

**PRINCIPLES AND STANDARDS
IN COMPOSITION**
For
Kentucky High Schools and Colleges

EDITOR

William S. Ward

University of Kentucky

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Meta Riley Emberger

University of Louisville

George P. Faust

University of Kentucky

Charles T. Hazelrigg

Centre College

Helen F. Holmes

Kentucky State College

John H. Long

Morehead State College

Emma B. Ross

Hazard High School

Frankfort
Kentucky State Department of Education
1956

FOREWORD

The Kentucky Department of Education is pleased to cooperate with a large group of colleges and public school teachers of English by devoting this issue of the **Educational Bulletin** to content designed for use of instructors in that field. Initially, the project grew out of a 1952 Spring meeting of college teachers who had asked themselves, "What can the college English departments do cooperatively to help improve the teaching of English in the State?" As the project developed, the cooperative approach led to inclusion of more and more teachers from public and private schools until the large number of names (acknowledged elsewhere in this volume) were involved.

The project was a cooperative effort of colleges and school instructors with a mutual concern for the improvement of instruction. The content was the product of their work and based upon actual classroom experience. The end result is a volume of practicable value for teachers of English. The contribution of the Department is at once a testimonial of its interest in the cooperative approach to the improvement of instruction and of its concern about meeting the needs of teachers who serve our schools.

Our staff joins me in an expression of thanks to the committee members who labored and produced this volume and in the sincere hope that it will have wide and effective use in the schools and colleges of the Commonwealth.

Robert R. Martin
Superintendent of Public Instruction

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The following sixty-odd persons who did the work deserve grateful acknowledgement of their contributions:

Ruth Adkinson, Carrollton High School
Jacob H. Adler, University of Kentucky
Aimee H. Alexander, Harrodsburg High School
Mrs. L. W. Allen, Pembroke High School
Mrs. Ruby Allen, M. C. Napier High School (Perry Co.)
Savannah S. Anderson, Pulaski County High School
Coleman Arnold, Georgetown College
A. J. Beeler, Atherton High School (Louisville)
Ben W. Black, University of Kentucky
Mary F. Burt, Highlands High School (Fort Thomas)
Jack Callender, Atherton High School (Louisville)
Mrs. John Carpenter, Russellville High School
Hazel Chrisman, Lafayette High School (Fayette County)
Mitchell Clark, Transylvania College
Roy B. Clark, Eastern Kentucky State College
John L. Cutler, University of Kentucky
Gladys DeMarcus, Middlesboro High School
Mary Dierstock, Holmes High School (Covington)
Mildred Dougherty, Western Jr. High School (Louisville)
Harold Douglas, Transylvania College
Meta Riley Emberger, University of Louisville
Maureen Faulkner, Berea College
George P. Faust, University of Kentucky
Lucy Fisk, Transylvania College
Rhoda Glass, Henry Clay High School (Lexington)
P. M. Grise, Eastern Kentucky State College
G. O. Gunter,* Sue Bennett Junior College
Marian Hall, University of Louisville
John F. Harrison, Transylvania College
Maurice A. Hatch, University of Kentucky
Charles T. Hazelrigg, Centre College
Lillian Hollowell, Murray State College
Helen F. Holmes, Kentucky State College
Robert D. Jacobs, University of Kentucky
William H. Jansen, University of Kentucky
Louise Kannapell, Nazareth College
Edwin Larson, Murray State College
John H. Long, Morehead State College
Virginia Matthias, Berea College
Jane McCoy, Shelbyville High School
Guy Miles, Morehead State College
Zerelda Noland, Paris High School
James H. Penrod,* Kentucky Wesleyan College
Albert T. Puntney, Asbury College

George Reichler, Lafayette High School (Fayette County)
Frances Richards, Western Kentucky State College
Laura Virginia Roberts, Prestonsburg High School
Leonard Roberts, Union College
Bess M. Rose, Cumberland College
Emma B. Ross, Hazard High School
Sister Agnes Margaret, Villa Madonna College
Sister Mary Cleophas, LaSalette Academy (Covington)
Emily Ann Smith, Berea College
Woodridge Spears, Georgetown College
Elizabeth Vaughan, Hopkinsville High School
Marian M. Walsh, duPont Manual High School (Louisville)
Avice White, Highlands High School (Fort Thomas)
Frances E. White, Asbury College
Freda Whitfield, Masonic Home
Eunice Ward, Asbury College
William S. Ward, University of Kentucky
Leila Poage Wood, Bracken County High School
Willson E. Wood, Western Kentucky State College
Elizabeth Wyatt, Valley High School (Jefferson County)
*No longer teaching in Kentucky

CONTENTS

Foreword	296
Preface	300
A Statement of Principles	300
The Theme As a Whole	301
The Paragraph	308
The Sentence	309
Mechanics	311
The Grading of Themes	314
The Returning of Themes	320
Conclusion	322
Themes, Analyses, and Comments	322
Notes on Grades and Analyses	322
Themes and Comments	323

PRINCIPLES AND STANDARDS IN COMPOSITION FOR KENTUCKY HIGH SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

PREFACE

This booklet has been prepared by the English departments of twenty-one Kentucky colleges, with the assistance of representatives of twenty-four high schools and the Kentucky Council of Teachers of English. Its purpose is to set forth principles and standards in composition for those students who are just graduating from high school or just entering college. In some instances the minimum requirements may seem to represent ideals, but if so they are ideals which can be achieved under reasonably favorable circumstances; and even where the ideal is only partially achieved the student will have gained an encouraging insight into the solution of his writing problems.

How far each student can go toward achieving these standards will depend on his mastery of the fundamentals and his aptitude for more complex matters. It will be necessary, of course, to teach each student at the level of his own need, to encourage him and assist him to make up his deficiencies. Yet it must be demanded of each student that he learn to write correctly, clearly, and effectively so that a diploma and "passing English" may mean something more to him than the required number of years of time-serving.

The achievement of the standards set forth here cannot, of course, be left to English teachers alone. The English teacher will insist upon them in vain if students are not required to meet them in their work for other departments. The standards must, therefore, be **school** standards, and the responsibility for their attainment must be the responsibility of every teacher in the school.

Though this booklet is designed primarily for teachers, it can be read with profit by high school seniors and college freshmen also. The Statement of Principles, together with the illustrative themes and the critical comments, should make clear what is expected of them and provide a means for measuring their progress toward a mastery of fundamentals. The booklet makes no effort, of course, to touch on all the matters which either a student or a

teacher of writing needs to know. It is not, therefore, a substitute for any handbook, grammar, or rhetoric.

Finally, all who use the booklet are urged to report their opinions of it. The revision which will certainly come after a few years should reflect our collective wisdom and experience. Letters containing appraisals and suggestions should be addressed to the editor.

A STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

The Theme As a Whole

Prevision:

The philosophy which lies behind what Miss Lucia Mirrieles calls "prevision" is that a composition teacher's most effective teaching should be done before the student writes his composition, rather than afterwards with a red pencil. It seeks, that is, to anticipate the problems which students will encounter and thereby to save them from false starts, unexpected pitfalls, and needless failure.

Among the most important general aspects of prevision are the following:

Choice of Subject:

If a student is to write something which he thinks is worth saying to a specific audience, he must have a reasonably full grasp of his subject. He needs to be intellectually alive, to have had lively experiences in reading and living; to have pet aversions and prejudices, as well as opinions of all kinds, and be willing to write about them. It may not be a matter of first importance that his essay be profound, but it is important that he be interested in what he is saying. "The Role of Democracy in the Free Nations of the World," for example, may be a vitally important topic today and may appeal to a few students, but topics like "One Car in a Family of Seven" will certainly have a greater appeal for most adolescents, may produce a better theme on democracy, and very likely will produce a greater fondness for self expression. Assignments made in a vacuum or on topics far removed from the student's experience are almost certain to lead to per-

functoriness, frustration, or the dishonesty of plagiarism.

*Purpose and
Direction:*

Often a student masters the elements of grammar and mechanics rapidly. He is able to compose grammatical sentences properly capitalized and reasonably well punctuated, but his "themes" turn out to be merely a series of sentences strung together by a process of loose association. Occasionally such sentences may group themselves into an acceptable paragraph, but seldom do they add up to a whole composition.

The problem of such a student is one of purpose and direction. He has not thought his topic through and apparently does not realize that communication involves a receiver as well as a sender. What he needs to do after choosing a suitable subject is to limit it to a single, manageable aspect of the whole.

*Limiting the
Subject:*

The length of the paper assigned will naturally guide the student to some degree, but given 200 or 800 words many students tend to set up a long list of points or take refuge in generalities. Hence the necessity for settling upon the limited proposition to which he means to restrict himself. Thus "Railroads" would be far too big a subject for a 200-500 word theme, but "Light signals" might do very well. Likewise, "Universal Military Training" would be a dangerous subject, both because it is too broad and because it is a subject outside the student's experience. Like "Railroads," this subject would provoke sweeping generalizations and would drive the student to a lifeless dependence on second-hand information. If, however, the teacher makes it clear that students must restrict the topic according to their own experience or their reading, they are likely to limit themselves to a manageable aspect of the topic. Thus "What UMT would do to my high school (or college) class" or "How UMT would do injury (or be of value) to me" are subjects within meaningful reach of all older teen-agers.

Thesis

Statement:

Even limiting the subject, however, is not necessarily a sufficient safeguard against subjects which are too broad and which encourage rambling. It may be necessary for the beginning writer to go further and state in a clear, concise sentence precisely what he hopes to accomplish in his theme. Thus, though a student may feel that he has done well when he has narrowed his subject from "Newspapers" to "Newspaper Advertising," he may do much better if he states in so many words that "My purpose is to prove that newspaper advertising is sometimes misleading." A statement of this sort is often called a "thesis statement" (or statement of theme) and may occupy a position following the title and preceding the body of the theme or be placed at the top of an outline.

Audience:

Too often a student seems to feel that he writes all of his papers to his teacher. The wise instructor, however, will lead his students to see that they would not write the same paper to a group of preachers that they would to the members of the Rotary Club, the leaders of the Truckdrivers' Union, or the members of the Ladies' Garden Club, even though the topic were the same in each case. The directions and the manner would be different for each group because different people have different backgrounds and different interests. The beginning student of writing should probably choose an audience of his peers at first, but in time he will come to choose other audiences; and from learning to adjust his materials and his expressions to his own group, he should develop a growing consciousness of the needs and peculiarities of other audiences.

*The Outline;
Straight
Thinking:*

With the subject delimited, the thesis statement formulated, and the audience determined, the student is now ready to prepare an outline of what he wishes to say. To some teachers of writing it is enough that their students construct their outlines after they have already written their papers (as a check on the organization), or at most work from

a mental outline or from a few notes on scrap paper. To others, however, an outline is to a theme what a blueprint is to a building, flexible indeed and subject to change upon the appearance of new and desirable inclusions, but still a guide and an intermediate step between conception and fulfillment. The outline, in short, is fundamental to straight thinking and the orderly presentation of ideas.

In seeking to find an appropriate arrangement for his raw materials the student will come to see that any one of a number of methods might lead to an orderly arrangement. His attention will be directed to such matters as time order and spatial arrangement; he will be led to think of his materials in terms of definition, comparison, contrast, and analogy; and he will have to determine whether to use, for example, development from the general to the specific, the specific to the general, cause to effect, effect to cause, and so on. And he will, of course, have to decide on matters of length, proportion, subordination, and economy of treatment.

The mechanical form of the outline is treated in the handbooks. Only a few matters of broad principle, therefore, need be dealt with here. One is that few outlines need to be carried beyond the level of the Arabic numeral subdivision: the student is making a guide to the first draft, not the first draft itself. The outline should reveal the sense of a significant whole and of parts significantly related to each other and to the whole: the main point (thesis); the main constituent parts (main heads); and the parts of these parts (subheads). A good way to approach outlining, of course, is to have students begin with simple outlines of assigned readings. In fact, many hold that it is only after students have seen how essays are divided into parts related to a whole that they should make outlines for their own papers.

Most handbooks describe both the sentence and the topic (or phrasal) outline. Each is a useful, if not indispensable, aid in expository writing when

properly adjusted to the intended subject and treatment. The topic outline is most useful when the order is simple and the interconnections of details are obvious to writer and reader alike. The sentence outline, however, is to be preferred for subjects that do not lend themselves to mechanical arrangement, since it requires a set of actual statements (predications) and thus compels a clear and precise articulation of the parts making up the whole. Such subjects as "Building a Campfire" or "The Layout of My Garden" can be planned successfully in a topic outline, but "My Judgment of *The Moon is Blue*" or "Hometown Politics" are far less obvious in arrangement and require refinement of thought and expression which the sentence outline would precede and assist. If we accept planning in advance as an axiom of good composition, and mean by "planning" an explicit arrangement showing the interconnections of the parts, we will probably also agree that for all topics except the simplest mechanical ones, the sentence outline is the most effective guarantee that such "planning" will actually be done, and "in advance."

*Over-All
Organization:*

Regardless of the nature of the topic, however, it seems safe to say that every piece of writing consists of a beginning, a middle, and an end. These divisions should not, of course, be formalized to the point where the beginning and the end become self-conscious bows to the audience and compete for separate paragraph space. Rather, the beginning should be regarded merely as that portion of the composition in which the writer states and defines his subject, establishes a point of view, and suggests the tone of his composition. In like manner the end should provide a considered conclusion which makes the reader feel that the writer's purpose has been accomplished; and it should, of course, be appropriate to the central idea, the point of view, and the tone of the composition. The middle, obviously, is the main body of the composition and should provide a clear treatment of the central idea with proper

attention to order, point of view, and tone. It is here that the outline becomes indispensable to good logic and the proper coordination and subordination of ideas. Concrete examples and specific details should be used almost to the point of extravagance.

*Anticipating
Other
Difficulties:*

Besides the general features of "prevision" already noted there are those which arise out of particular assignments. Thus if a particular method of paragraph development is to be followed, the teacher will discuss the method thoroughly. If the theme requires note-taking and footnoting, he will talk about these matters; or if extensive use is to be made of direct discourse, he will review the use of quotation marks.

For those teachers who place a heavy emphasis upon grades and are suspicious of any attempt to protect a student from failure, such a procedure may seem dangerously close to mollycoddling. The purpose of prevision, however, is far from this. It is concerned first and foremost with the amount of teaching that goes into each theme; it seeks to reduce the number of errors which a student makes when he writes; but it also insists that the student, having been given careful guidance, master his faults or fail.

*Writing in
Class:*

Closely associated with prevision is the need to have students do at least a portion of their writing in class or in a writing laboratory. Such a method, of course, places the student where he may have paper, ink, dictionaries, reference books, and reasonable quiet; but more important, it provides a supervised writing period when first drafts may be brought to the teacher for advice and help.

Length:

Most teachers agree that the themes which a student writes in the later stages of a course should be substantially longer than those which he writes at the beginning. The short one-paragraph expository composition almost always holds to a single expository technique, such as definition, comparison, or

classification. The longer theme usually involves more than one of these types. It may, for example, begin with a definition of crucial terms, proceed with an illuminating comparison or contrast, and then present a detailed classification or analysis. But regardless of whether the theme assigned is to be seventy-five words in length or eight hundred, the student must always remember that length is not to be achieved by the addition of more and more material at the end, a procedure that is almost certain to eventuate in digressions and thoughtless, random progress. Instead, it must be realized that length is the product of greater refinement in thought on the writer's part and a nicer awareness of the reader's needs, and that this development can take place only within the main divisions of the composition.

*Emphasis on
Exposition:*

A large portion of the speaking and writing and much of the reading and listening that people do — in school and afterwards — is explanatory in nature. School routine requires quizzes, term papers, and examinations which test their ability to communicate their ideas with clarity and precision, and lectures and textbooks which test their ability to comprehend. Afterwards, these same abilities are frequently called on in many ways: in business letters, in speeches and talks, in newspaper and magazine articles, in items in technical and trade journals, and so on. It seems reasonable to suggest, therefore, that the emphasis in a composition course should be on exposition.

This emphasis on exposition, however, should by no means eliminate the study of the other forms of discourse. Outside the rhetoric books one seldom finds a piece of pure exposition. Any "explanation" of any complexity at all is certain to employ description, narration, or argumentation in the fulfillment of its purpose. In the beginning composition course, however, these forms should be introduced not as disciplines in themselves but as devices useful in the presentation of ideas.

The Paragraph

It is doubtful whether the tendency in modern rhetoric to treat the paragraph as a rigid, determinable unit can be justified. What the textbooks describe as the typical, well-made paragraph is merely one type of paragraph — really a miniature composition with three parts: a topic sentence for a beginning, a group of sentences systematically developing the topic for a middle, and a concluding or clincher sentence for an end.

From the time when fifteenth-century printers first introduced a symbol — ¶ — as a device to break up the monotonous sequences of otherwise unbroken lines on a printed page, paragraphs have been quite flexible in both their structure and purpose, and paragraphing has been practiced with a double motive. On the one hand there has been the desire to set off those more or less formally developed logical units which fit together to make up the whole composition. On the other there has been the conflicting desire to give a peculiar emphasis to a particular sentence, to signal a turning point in the discussion, or simply to avoid putting before the reader more than he can easily take in at a glance.

In short, it is both difficult and unwise to be dogmatic about the nature of the paragraph. An analysis of the practice of good writers makes it clear that paragraphing is a rather unpredictable thing and that it represents an adjustment between a writer's rhetorical habits and his subject matter. Yet whatever one's definition may be, a paragraph is a part of the whole and must contribute something to the whole through the contribution that it makes to the development of an idea. Progression is perhaps the most important single factor in both the paragraph and the whole theme, since the thought must progress **from** somewhere **to** somewhere else.

Paragraphs should be considered as aids to both the reader and the writer. They aid the reader by

signalling the order and the unity of the subject matter; they aid the writer by enabling him to present his ideas logically and by dividing his task into parts so that he is confronted with only one problem at a time. Thus as steps in the orderly presentation of ideas they make an important contribution to straight thinking.

Paragraph

Development:

There are, of course, no right and wrong ways to teach paragraph writing. Straight thinking and logical organization can be taught by giving students practice in following the more or less mechanical methods of paragraph development. This implies that each paragraph will contain a focusing (or topic) statement and that students will consciously develop this statement by comparisons, contrasts, or examples; by expanding a definition; by presenting causes or effects; and so on, ultimately progressing to the point where a combination of these methods is employed in what might be called mature writing. At the same time students should be shown that in both their writing and their reading they may expect paragraphs which do not fit into this mechanical, somewhat formal pattern. For such paragraphs there is no strict formula, since each one will derive its method, form, and length from the thought that it has to express. There does remain, however, one necessity: that each paragraph develop a clear-cut stage of the subject and that the parts be such well-ordered parts of the whole that the reader comes to understand the subject as the writer sees it.

The Sentence

As with the paragraph, it would be difficult to find a definition of the sentence that all would accept. Nevertheless, it seems to be agreed that the following are the minimum syntactical requirements which the twelfth-grade student and beginning college student should be acquainted with through study, instruction, and practice:

Grammar:

A knowledge of functional grammar is important to a mastery of the sentence. With this knowledge a student can more fully understand the forms and functions of words and of larger elements in sentences, and can participate in a discussion of why his sentences sometimes go wrong.

*Sentence
Form:*

The student should be familiar with three basic patterns of the sentence: the subject-verb combination, the subject-verb-predicate complement combination, and the subject-verb-direct object combination; and in connection with the second and third patterns he should be aware of the possibilities of phrase or clause as subject, complement, or object. He should understand the differences between simple, compound, and complex sentences and be able to isolate a single idea in a simple sentence; to join two related ideas in a compound sentence on the principle of addition, alternation, contrast, or result; and to treat properly a main idea with a subordinate idea in a complex sentence. He should be aware of the force of various connectives and realize that **and** will not substitute for **but**, **nevertheless** for **consequently**, **although** for **since**, and so on. He should recognize the advantage of simple parallelism.

*Faults in
Sentences:*

On the negative side, the student should know that sentences go wrong at times. He should recognize an indefensible fragment and know what to do about it; make sure that his verbs agree in number with their subjects, his pronouns with their antecedents; and avoid unnecessary shifts in structure and tense. He should realize that adjectives and adverbs have distinctive functions. He should be wary of dangling and misplaced modifiers. In choosing between active and passive voice, he should know that the active voice is normal, sound, and effective; that shifting from one voice to the other in the same sentence or neighboring sentences is amateurish. In short, the student ought to be capable of noting incorrectness, awkwardness, or obscurity in the sen-

tence, and for the sake of his own writing be willing to construct every sentence he writes according to criteria of logic and sensible usage.

Diction:

In the matter of diction the student should be able to distinguish between standard and substandard English, to know the value of socially acceptable language, and to understand under what circumstances he is likely to meet with substandard forms, as in some types of narrative. More to the purpose, perhaps, he should come to understand the advantages of a natural, easy informality in his own writing, so that his diction will be appropriate to his subject matter and his audience. He should know, for example, that it is appropriate to use the language of the baseball diamond when he writes of sporting events for people interested in sports and yet be capable of using more formal language when writing on a topic of more serious import. In his command of a normal vocabulary he should use with good taste words which range from formal to informal and even to substandard, knowing the distinctions, for example, between the words in such a group as the following: **weary, fatigued, exhausted, tired, worn out, all in, shot, bushed, pooped**. As he learns to use his dictionary in cultivating such distinctions, he should also be encouraged to expand his general vocabulary and to heighten his awareness of the flexibility of his language, as well as to work toward an effective and economical use of it.

Correctness, informality, precision, economy, and flexibility, all working toward a total consistency of tone, ought to be the criteria on which a study of diction in the sentence will be profitable. Triteness, pedantry, finewriting, and redundancy can be avoided.

Mechanics

Though a student's mastery of mechanics is rarely complete at the end of high school, his practices in manuscript form, capitalization, spelling, and punc-

tuation should have become habitually accurate in common situations. Allowance, of course, should be made for inexperience in unusual ones.

*Manuscript
Form:*

A student should be accustomed to writing in ink in a regular and legible hand within a frame of regular margins. He should be capable of following without difficulty the teacher's directions about such matters as spacing beneath a title, indenting paragraphs, and endorsing the paper.

Capitalization:

Differences of practice in capitalization among newspaper, magazine, and book editors make it quite understandable why students should have some uncertainties about capitalization. In addition, irregular handwriting often makes it doubtful whether a capital is intended. There is, however, no excuse for "the Mother of two daughters" and "in the Community" or for "would I know If I could". The first two are presumably mistaken tokens of respect, the last a mistaken notion of syntax.

Spelling:

The society we live in puts great stress on the mastery of conventional spelling as a matter of social propriety and an evidence of literacy. Accuracy should be insisted upon in all classes as a **prerequisite to writing**, so that by the end of high school, students spell the commonplace words automatically and are not distracted by uncertainties. But they should not be discouraged from trying out new words; neither should they confuse the ability to spell with the ability to write. Common sense suggests also that some allowance should be made for chance miswritings and for misspellings in themes written in class, and that the relative frequency of the word and the degree to which the misspelling is disconcerting or interferes with ease of comprehension should be taken into account. But in spite of these injunctions that spelling should be dealt with in such a manner as not to discourage the student needlessly, the fact remains that he should never be allowed to suppose that correct spelling is not

important or that he can get by indefinitely without mastering it.

Punctuation:

Students need to understand that most punctuation serves as an indication of intonations of the voice and that the following marks are usually more or less audible: commas, periods, question marks. But they should also understand that other necessary marks are conventional rather than audible, the most common of them being quotation marks, the apostrophe, and the hyphen for breaking a word at the end of a line. High school graduates should have mastered the common uses of these common marks. They should also be able to use the semicolon, the colon, parentheses, and paired dashes.

Specifically, high school graduates should know where to stop a sentence, including the avoidance of indefensible sentence fragments and comma splices. They should know that within the sentence commas are used

1. after introductory material, especially if it contains a verb or a verbal
2. between the major clauses of a compound sentence
3. around inserted material, such as parenthetical expressions and nonrestrictive modifiers
4. between the members of a series of three or more, with the last comma optional.

In general, students seem to prefer a more open punctuation than most teachers and editors do. This clearly arouses the suspicion that students avoid punctuation in order to avoid mistakes. It is also noticeable that the weakest papers tend to use sentences that call for very little internal pointing. This may not be unreasonable: anyone tends to avoid what he does not understand. Yet if teachers will make it clear that a mastery of fewer than ten uses of punctuation will solve perhaps ninety per cent of all punctuation troubles, an important psychological hazard may have been removed.

The Grading of Themes

When one sits down to grade a set of themes, he will have many vexing decisions to make. Not only will he have to determine how good a theme must be to receive an A and how bad to receive an E, but also he will have to decide whether "good" and "bad" are relative terms. That is to say, he will have to decide whether to apply the same standards to freshmen and to seniors, whether to worry about faulty parallelism in the paper of a student who has not learned to make his verbs agree with their subjects or to distinguish a clause from a complete sentence. And there are many other problems.

Contents vs. Mechanics:

No one of them, certainly, will confront him more often than that of the relative importance of content and form. What, for example, shall he do with the innocuous theme written by a student who has seen nothing and feels nothing, but has learned how to spell, capitalize, and use punctuation marks? Or worse still, what shall he do with the theme that is thoughtful in content and full of fresh observation and experience, but at the same time bristling with grammatical errors and bad spelling? There is no answer to these questions that will satisfy all teachers, but a few observations may be helpful.

Some teachers feel that there is advantage to giving one grade for content and another for correctness—at least until the student has had a reasonable opportunity to remedy his most blatant errors. In the one case the somewhat intangible qualities of the composition will be appraised—the subject matter, the way it has been selected, limited, organized, and presented. In the other, its technical qualities will be judged—the commas and the capitals, the spelling and the choice of words, the agreement of subjects and verbs, of pronouns and their antecedents.

Many teachers, however, disagree with the double-grade system. They object that thought cannot be separated from form, that bad form distracts the reader and hence weakens the communication of thought. And even advocates of the double grade point out that the system is sometimes abused by those well-meaning souls who seem to feel that students should never experience a sense of failure—even though short-lived—in anything.

Nevertheless, the skillful teacher will do everything he can to keep from killing the spirit of the student who has insight, is perceptive in his understandings but has not quite mastered the ins and outs of grammatical constructions. He will do all he can to encourage such a student to think for himself and to become a close observer; and he will say a kind and encouraging word whenever possible. He will mark errors, but he will remember that too many red marks may bewilder and demoralize more than they teach. All this must be done in such a way, however, as to keep the student from concluding that good writing is not very important or that he can get by indefinitely without mastering it. All concerned need to remember that in the long-run one stern reality always remains: either the student must achieve a reasonable mastery of both content and mechanics or he must fail.

A System of Penalties Not Enough:

A few teachers look with some favor upon the establishment of a system of penalties for mechanical errors, but others oppose this view on the grounds that it encourages in both teacher and student an attitude that it does not much matter what is said just so long as no rules are broken. Without exception, those who graded the themes in this booklet seemed to be unwilling to set a low standard so far as mechanics are concerned; at the same time they insisted that a theme be more than a set of sentences grammatically correct and properly punctuated and capitalized. There was the further requirement that each paper reveal a clear purpose

and an evident sense of direction, an adequate treatment of subject matter, and a competent adjustment of form and content to the reader.

*The Use of
Marginal
Notations:*

In grading papers, composition teachers usually follow the widespread practice of using marginal notations to identify or correct errors. Less widespread is the use of the terminal comment in which the teacher evaluates the theme as a whole. As pointed out in *Evaluating Themes* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1955), "In our complex craft, where the whole is more than equal to the sum of the parts, perhaps our most difficult problem is to reconcile care for detail with the concept of the whole. We walk a tightrope. On the one hand we must not slight accuracy, precision, mastery of detail; on the other we must not allow our students to believe that these matters are ends in themselves instead of means to a larger end." Marginal notations, of course, are properly concerned with the means; terminal comments, with the evaluation of the theme as a whole, including strengths as well as weaknesses.

*The Use of
Terminal
Comments:*

The compilers of this booklet believe that the terminal comment is perhaps the teacher's most important contribution to a student's understanding of his writing problems and to the development of his capacity for criticizing his own work. They do not advocate doing away with marginal notations, but rather seeing to it that the student perceives how his mistakes in detail affect the purpose and direction of his paper as a whole. Admittedly, the writing of terminal comments adds to the teacher's burden, but not so heavily as one might think. If, for example, a paper exhibits the same mistake repeatedly, such as shifts in point of view, misspellings, or mixture of tenses, only the first instances need to be marked marginally. The terminal comment can then urge the student to find and revise the remaining instances. In short, marginal and terminal comment can be so geared as to encourage the student to the maximum of self-criticism.

*A Practical
Combination
of Marginal
and Terminal
Comments:*

The terminal analyses and comments accompanying the themes in this booklet are written for teachers seeking rather full demonstrations of the philosophy set forth in the foregoing Statement of Principles. They are, therefore, too long and too complex to serve as models of terminal comment in day-by-day practice, though they do embody the ideal content of such comment. It seems desirable, therefore, to introduce here examples of the above-mentioned ways of marking papers. The model is Theme No. 13 (p. 348 within). It is presented in two forms: (1) with marginal notations which identify or correct mechanical errors; (2) with marginal notations and abbreviated terminal comments.

Too many errors. There are others which I could have marked.

you fail to stick to your subject

D

Grading to Identify and Correct Mechanical Errors

I HAVE LEARNED THAT THE SWIFTEST TRAVELER IS HE THAT GOES AFOOT

P

Most people today would say that traveling afoot is not a good way to travel. Perhaps for them that is right but if they only realized it, they have to depend upon someone else if they travel in any other manner.

Agr.

Traveling afoot a person can start when ~~they~~ ^{he} please ^s and stop when ~~they~~ ^{he} please ^s. You may find an interesting place and decide to stay for a while,

Awk.

being afoot and no one else to worry about, getting a job perhaps to have a little income while in this place. When you have settled your ^{sp.} ^P curiosity you can move on with ^{sp.} out any interference from anyone.

Inic. sent.

Being afoot you will probably travel very slowly, therefore getting more enjoyment out of the scenery. A large town, beautiful rugged mountains, cool stream ^s and waterfalls, or anything that has any artistic beauty in it. ~~Each or any of these~~ ^{tenae} may keep you fascinated for several days or week ^s if you are alone on foot, whereas if you were with someone traveling otherwise you might not even stop to admire their beauty for even one day.

P

Ref.

Ref.

Agr.

Awk.

sp

Someone may tell you that you can travel with them on a trip, but it may be ten years before they decide to make the trip. Also with someone else there is always split decisions on ^{where} ~~place~~ to go, when to go, how to go, and many other situations that one person has to face but just has himself to convince on how he is to go about the trip. He can always change his mind without herting anyone else's feeling's also if he is alone and afoot.

P

P

The greatest reason for traveling afoot being the fastest method of travel is: You do not have to wait on any man, It does not require the assistance of any mechanical object, generally the man who travels afoot can start any day and not ^{have} ~~having~~ to worry about what he has left behind.

Be more Careful with your proofreading.

Grading Teach and Th

What is normal of a Co... sent? Re-read them how off... forth... 3rd an... person

Do you what a Fault

1. You Par. far time pro
2. See and
3. Sent and can

D
Your paper contains all sorts of errors, but I see in it much promise also. Let's have a conference soon!

Do you really prove that travelling afoot has anything to do with speed? What thesis statement have you developed?

Grading to Teach Writing and Thinking

I HAVE LEARNED THAT THE SWIFTEST TRAVELER IS HE THAT GOES AFOOT D

What is the normal punct. of a compound sent.?

Most people today would say that traveling afoot is not a good way to travel. Perhaps for them that is right but if they only realized it, they have to depend upon someone else if they travel in any other manner.

Re-read your theme and see how often you shift back and forth between 3rd and 2nd person

Traveling afoot a person can start when they please and stop when they please. You may find an interesting place and decide to stay for a while, being afoot and no one else to worry about, getting a job perhaps to have a little income while in this place. When you have settled your ^{sp} prosity you can move on with out any interference from anyone.

Being afoot ^{sp} you will probably travel very slowly, therefore getting more enjoyment out of the scenery. (A large town), (beautiful rugged mountains), (cool stream and waterfalls), or (anything that has any artistic beauty) in it. Each or any of those may keep you fascinated for several days or ^s week if you are alone on foot, whereas if you were with someone traveling otherwise you might not even stop to admire their beauty for even one day.

Tense

Someone may tell you that you can travel with them on a trip, but it may be ten years before they decide to make the trip. Also with someone else there is always split decisions on, places to go, when to go, how to go, and many other situations that one person has to face but just has himself to convince on how he is to go about the trip. He can always change ^{sp} his mind without herting anyone else's feeling's also if he is alone and afoot.

The greatest reason for traveling afoot being the fastest method of travel is: You do not have to wait on any man, It does not require the assistance of any mechanical object, generally the man who travels afoot can start any day and not having to worry about what he has left behind.

Do you know what a Comma Fault is?

1. Your paper is based on a good idea and has a recognizable organization. Par. 1 states your over-all purpose; pars. 2, 3, 4 develop three reasons to support par. 1; par. 5 is a recapitulation of 2, 3, 4. See if you can restate the topic sentence in each par. more clearly so as to make the steps in your progress more unmistakable.
2. See if you can find examples of faulty agreement in sent. 1 of par. 2, and sent. 2 of par. 4.
3. Sent. 2 of par. 1 and sent. 2 of par. 4 are so garbled that the reader must reread and finally guess at their full meaning and purpose. See if you can improve them.

The first of these methods of theme grading—that of identifying and correcting mechanical errors—is valuable but is inadequate alone. It is the second method—the combination of marginal notations and terminal comments—that the compilers of this booklet advocate as a method which is both practicable and effective. In the first set of corrections the grader has conscientiously marked every error in spelling, punctuation, and grammar that he could find. When the student gets his theme back, however, he may feel quite discouraged, for the clipped abbreviations and symbols, the machine-like, impersonal tone has told him only that he has done poorly. The second grader, on the other hand, has read the composition carefully enough to discover the writer's purpose and plan and to appraise his successes as well as his failures. Furthermore, he has taken the time to formulate comments designed to help the author understand his faults and to correct them. As with the first correction, the student's errors have been marked, the grade is still a D, but there is a significant difference in the tone of the two sets of corrections. In short, there is no escaping the fact that the most important thing about the grading of papers is not the grade which a student receives, or even the marginal notations, but instead the critical comments, the constructive suggestions, and the encouraging words which the teacher writes on the paper when he places a grade on it or which he says to the student later in conference.

The Returning of Themes

*Theme
Revision:*

When a student has his paper returned to him, he should be required to revise it so that he may receive full value from his writing experience. This revision may vary all the way from minor corrections on a superior paper to a complete rewriting of a paper that is poor in organization or that fails to give meaning to generalizations through the use of concrete particulars.

Conferences:

Conferences are designed to help individual students with their personal writing problems as distinct from the general difficulties which many in the class share and which therefore should be taken up in class. With some students much of the time will be given over to mechanics, but it is important that the teacher reveal his concern with what the student is trying to say. It is important that the student come to value his teacher as a sympathetic, if critical, reader who expects themes to be individual and interesting. Otherwise the student is likely to think of his conferences as help sessions on punctuation and his themes as routine sets of grammatical sequences properly punctuated. This is not to say that a teacher will have spent his conference time unwisely if much of it is devoted to mechanics, but ordinarily he will have done better if he shows the student how he failed to limit his subject, define his terms, arrange his materials well, or develop an idea convincingly; how honest exposition is the fair consideration of evidence, not the defence of biased opinion; and so on.

It should be understood, of course, that conferences are not for weak students only. The superior student and the average student as well should receive profit: the latter can be shown how his C paper lacks something; the former can be stimulated by having his instructor explore the implications of his papers, suggest thought-provoking topics for future writing, recommend books that he might find interesting; and so on. If a superior student leaves a conference with the feeling that he has done nothing more than have a little chat, or if the conference fails to get beyond grammar and mechanics, the instructor has probably been at fault. The well-planned conference does orally what the combination of marginal and terminal comment described above does in writing. It seeks to relate the student's weaknesses and strengths to the overall intention of his theme and thus to foster in him a greater insight into his writing problems.

Conclusion

In some schools—both high school and college—the procedures set forth in the preceding pages are likely to be regarded as above immediate attainment. The fact remains, however, that though the objectives may seem somewhat ideal to many, they have already been achieved in many schools and can be achieved with relative ease by many others; and they must be achieved by all if our graduates are to be able to express themselves with reasonable clarity and correctness. As has been pointed out already, any student or any school will be better off for having striven toward these objectives.

The number of compositions which a student writes during a year need not be great, but the teaching that goes into each one needs to be thorough. This does not mean, of course, that there can be no written assignments except under the near-ideal conditions just described. There should be. Short impromptu themes, an essay type of examination, any sort of writing that gives practice will also give fluency and confidence and thus is greatly to be desired. But beyond these kinds of writing must be the kind that is done under conditions approximating those described in the foregoing pages.

THEMES, ANALYSES, AND COMMENTS

Notes on Grades and Analyses to Follow

A paper is no more graded in a vacuum than it is written in a vacuum. Hence grades and comments occasionally reflect the fact that a particular error is especially obnoxious to one teacher and hence draws a sharp penalty, whereas to another teacher, less offended by the defect in question, the merits of the same theme may seem rather impressive. It is probably impossible, therefore, to set forth—and even more difficult to apply objectively—criteria and standards that will enable all who read to agree immediately on the grade which a theme should receive.

Despite individual differences and the inevitable necessity for subjective judgments, however, the grades and comments of those

who have participated in the preparation of this booklet are notable for their agreement. With hardly an exception there is either a concentration on one grade or else a near-equal division between two contiguous grades. It is worthy of comment also that the evaluations by high school and college teachers coincide to a remarkable degree. There seem to be slightly higher standards among the college teachers, but the rise between high school and college is probably about the same as for each grade in high school.

As stated in more detail above (p. 317), the comments which follow each theme were written primarily for teachers as full demonstrations of the philosophy set forth in the Statement of Principles. Admittedly these analyses are often so long and so complex as to make them impracticable as a day-by-day method of marking papers. Attention is again called, therefore, to pp. 318-9, where a method that is both effective and workable is described and illustrated.

The reader is reminded also that he is to assume that the themes were written by students just as they were graduating from high school or just as they were entering college, and that the grades were given and the comments prepared with such students in mind.

Finally, the letter system of grading (A, B, C, D, E), though widely used in Kentucky schools, may be translated for those not familiar with it as follows: A, superior; B, good; C, average; D, poor but passing; E, failing.

Theme 1
Rated B+

Grade Distribution

A = 20
B = 20
C = 6
D = 0
E = 0

THE OLD ORDER AND THE NEW

When I stop and recall the days of my early childhood the first picture I visualize is that of a large, gray brick apartment building in the west end of Louisville. This tall massive structure, which had formerly been a mansion, was home to me for the first nine years of my life. My first friendships were formed there and my playmates and I spent our summers playing in the big yard surrounding the building. The second floor apartment was really my home but I felt that the whole building was my domain.

There were certain things around my home that have a special significance to me: the little tree in the side yard that was planted at the time I was born and grew up as I did, the old garage which had originally been servants' quarters, where we played hide-and-seek, the big tree in the back yard from which I fell and broke my arm, and the long bannister on the back stairs that we used to slide down.

For nine happy years that was home to me. But then before I realized what was happening, we moved away. That was the only home I had ever known and to be suddenly forced to leave it forever was almost more than I could bear.

Unhappily I accepted my fate, but before very long I established myself in my new home and felt quite satisfied. I was contented that is, until one day about a year later when I passed by the site of my former home. I shall never forget the sick feeling I experienced when I found nothing there but an enormous hole in the ground where the old apartment building once stood.

The grand old residence had fallen a victim to progress and was going to be replaced by a gasoline station. All that remained of the former surroundings was my sturdy little tree, which by now was two stories high, standing at attention before the high grave.

It was nine years ago that I moved away but I guess as long as I live, I will not be able to pass by a certain gasoline station without feeling a little nostalgic.

COMMENT

A theme of this kind (a subjective description of a place) is fairly easy for students who have imagination and a good command of vocabulary, but difficult for others. This particular theme succeeds because the author has these qualifications and because he handles well a somewhat commonplace subject which ordinarily is quite difficult for young writers of limited experience and emotional range. The organization is simple and straightforward; the direct narrative movement (itself difficult for the amateur to produce) is supported by numerous vivid details and by an apt and consistent emotional tone. The conclusion, however, is a bit obvious and rather too brief and hasty-sounding to be convincing.

The vocabulary is superior. In a theme of this type, most students are tempted to pour out adjectives indiscriminately. Here, however,

the adjectives are appropriate (*sturdy, nostalgic*) but rather few, and the student depends also on appropriate nouns (*domain*, and all the natural-sounding synonyms for *building*) and verbs (*visualize, friendships formed* rather than *made, experienced*). The result is a style which is both natural and individual. With a few exceptions (like the ambiguous antecedent of the relative clause at the end of the second paragraph, the inappropriate position and resulting ambiguity of *unhappily* in paragraph 4, and the awkward "I guess as long as I live I will" in the last paragraph) the student seems to be at home with all the common types of sentence structure and to vary his sentence pattern well. The movement is steady and assured. The paragraph structure, however, is somewhat less sound. The fourth and fifth paragraphs, for example, could be combined as they stand, and with a bit of rearranging it might be possible to combine the first and second. The mechanics are good, though commas after *childhood* in the first sentence, *there* in the third, and *home* in the fourth would be normal; and the successful use of the colon in the second paragraph marks the author as more than ordinarily adept in his mastery of punctuation. In the last sentence, however, punctuation is clearly desirable after *away*, and separation of the two thoughts into separate sentences might be a still better solution.

The student has succeeded well in his assignment and has produced a theme which comes close to the "A" level. Well-chosen details have made a place vivid and the emotions convincing. The rather hackneyed subject, the rather weak conclusion, the occasional stylistic awkwardness, the one sentence inadequately punctuated, are flaws which point toward a grade of B, but the virtues of the paper are such that a grade of A would not be out of the question.

Theme 2
Rated C-

Grade Distribution

A = 0
B = 7
C = 28
D = 11
E = 0

MY FIRST REAL JOB

The day that I was sixteen I applied for my first real job at Woolworth's Five and Ten. I shall never forget how scared I was. I stood outside the door to the Personnel Office ten minutes before I mustered enough courage to knock on the door.

To my surprise the lady was very sweet. She must have sensed how scared I was, because she patted me on the shoulder and smiled very sweetly.

I went to work behind the lunch counter the very next day. I was so very confused that I wanted to cry and go home.

All day I made cokes, sundaes, sodas, malts, and milkshakes. I thought I would never learn just exactly how many dips of ice cream to put in a soda, and if I was sure whether I was supposed to use the black dipper or the blue dipper, or maybe it was the red dipper.

During the rush hour I spilled a cup of coffee on a lady. I was so afraid I would get fired that I didn't even tell the lady I was sorry!

Finally, that long first day was over, and I went home to go to bed to dream about ice cream dippers.

The second day wasn't quite as bad. Really the job wasn't as hard as I had thought it would be.

I worked there for a year, and by the end of that year I had learned many things, mainly how to budget my money.

COMMENT

My First Real Job is a good example of the mediocre—in content, in organization, in style, in mechanics, and in interest. The sentences are adequate but somewhat monotonous in that the author relies heavily upon simple and compound forms rather than upon complex. Similarly, the vocabulary is adequate, but limited; the diction trite, though consistent with the author's rather uninspired treatment of her subject.

The worst fault with the paper, however, is its lack of focus, or point. The writer needs, therefore, to learn the value of a well-defined thesis statement, the advantages of an outline, and the necessity for logical planning and development. This means, for example, that she must be made to realize that she has not developed her theme in such a way as to prepare the reader for the statement in the last paragraph—a statement that is really irrelevant to what has gone before. It should be pointed out, of course, that the subject could lend itself to this conclusion but that the evidence must be presented in such a way as to lead logically to it. Likewise, she should be made

to see that attention to narrative order would place "I was so very confused that I wanted to cry and go home" (paragraph 3) after—not before—the incidents that produced this feeling. Finally, she should be shown that mature writing rarely permits so many short paragraphs in so short a space, and that the cure is (1) reorganization and the regrouping of sentences, (2) the inclusion of additional significant facts and details.

The student's good qualities should not go without comment. For example, she should be told that despite her failure to organize and develop her materials satisfactorily she occasionally reveals some sensitivity to language and has some feeling for detail—even though she gives details too sparingly. Properly motivated and guided, this student might rise above the easy superficiality which suggests that her chief objective in this theme was merely to write just enough to fulfill an assignment or to keep busy until time ran out.

In conclusion, perhaps one might speculate that the teacher who assigned this theme may have contributed unwittingly to the student's failure. As was pointed out above under the heading of "Prevision," it is necessary that the student limit his subject, determine what his specific objective is to be, and arrange his materials in such a way as to achieve this objective. "My First Real Job" is a topic broad enough to permit a great deal of wandering. The author of this theme needs to be shown that she must have a thesis statement such as "My first day on a real job was a trying experience." In time, students must learn to limit their subjects sufficiently, but a responsibility also rests upon the teacher to see to it that each student learns this principle well.

Theme 3
Rated A-

Grade Distribution

A = 24
B = 21
C = 1
D = 0
E = 0

MY ROOM

I've always been fascinated by houses and rooms. To me, each room is a separate unit, a place that reflects both its use and the personality of its occupant.

My room is an example of what I mean. It's a bedroom; it has four walls, two windows, and a little furniture. Those are the sta-

tistics, but to me each article has some significance; each squeaky board and bump in the plaster means something.

The four walls could seem quite ordinary to anyone else, I guess; they aren't to me. The pale green of the wallpaper reflects the quiet mood of the room. It reminds me of spring trees, soft moss — the things everyone loves. The two windows frame a striking picture in the winter, for the ermine edge of snow on the lacy iron grill-work presents an artistic contrast in both color and texture.

The furnishings are unusual, however. My thinking chair is a prize. I don't mean that the chair itself thinks; I mean that I do most of my serious thinking in it. I consider my bed an heirloom, not because of any monetary value but because of the memories it brings. I can remember my grandfather sinking into its soft embrace when I was a child; I remember myself slipping in between its icy covers on winter nights, and I remember lying on it, listening to street noises on warm spring evenings.

My room isn't very neat, but the bright clutter on my dresser is made up of parts of me — letters, faint perfumes, a stray handkerchief, a picture of "The Man," a glittering necklace, a soft silk scarf. My poor closets have all of the worst aspects of Fibber McGee's. When I open one, I have to jump back as a stiff crinoline lashes out at me. And, quite often, before my startled eyes, small caps cascade down from the top shelf and tumble tipsily to the floor.

I have a mirror, too; it's not the magic kind — it's just a plain mirror. Instead of telling me I'm the fairest in the land, it whispers nastily, "Look, kid, I told you to cut down on that sweet stuff. You look horrible!"

I know my rugs personally. You see, I watched them grow from strips of old dresses and hose. I saw them as they were made, strip by strip, on a handloom of century-old wood in the back room of a small country home.

The chandelier that peers from the gloom of the high ceiling like a dully baleful golden eye has been there since the house was built. The woodwork, too, was carved when the house was being built. The fine workmanship of the mitered corners shows the skill and care of the craftsmen. The long-dead men who did this work were convicts from the old penitentiary.

To me, each article represents a colorful story or revives a store of memories. And I suppose that's why everything seems interesting to me.

COMMENT

My Room is a creditable attempt to use description as a means of revealing personality. Its aim is to leave the reader not with a strong visual impression of the room itself, but with a lively sense of the occupant's character: her responsiveness to beauty, her devotion to the traditions of home and family, her preference for the casual rather than the prim and neat, her air of humorous self-deprecation. Each of these facets of her personality is established by well-selected and often happily phrased detail. The development begins in paragraph 3, where the green walls suggest objects of natural beauty ("spring trees, soft moss") and the window presents a contrast of snow and iron grillwork; and it continues in paragraphs 4-6, which respectively feature the bed as a family heirloom, the "bright clutter" of the dresser and the crowded closets, and the unflattering comment of the mirror.

But the author should be shown that the paper has faults that we should not expect to find in a finished piece of work. Thus the observation in paragraph 1 that "each room is a separate unit" is absurdly obvious; and the "baleful" quality of the chandelier (paragraph 8) is left unexplained. And paragraphs 7 and 8 seem out of order. They appear to be related to the intention of paragraph 4, which is to establish the writer's fondness for the traditional. If retained in a revision, they should be moved to a position following paragraph 4, though the writer might well decide to reject them in order to avoid giving disproportionate space to one of the paper's four points.

Finally, there is occasional lack of harmony in the management of detail. In paragraph 3, for example, we are given the image of snow and grillwork and then are bluntly informed that this "presents an artistic contrast in both color and texture." Since the basic method of the paper is indirect — the revelation of personality by what purports to be a description of a room — this directness is out of key. The paper as a whole assumes a reader who can see below the surface; the parts should do likewise.

Theme 4
Rated D

Grade Distribution
A = 0
B = 0
C = 15
D = 19
E = 12

WOMEN ARE NOT NATURALLY SUPERIOR TO MEN

It has been said that women show more affection than men for their children. Women have more time to teach their children to be kind, loving, and cooperative. In my opinion men would like to show as much love for their children, but do not have the time, to do so, and at the same time to provide a comfortable living. Men may pay more attention to their wives and learn how to show love and respect for their children while at home.

It has also been said that women have much more resistance than men. Doctors say that men live to about sixty-five-and-a-half years, whereas females live to the age of about seventy-one years.

During World War II when most of the men in the factory and labor jobs left for the army, owners of factory wasted no time in calling upon the women to replace the men in factories, and many other such businesses who employed a large number of men changed to female help.

After World War II the truth was out women could do as well as men in most of the fields which had been forever closed to them, and in many fields, proved themselves superior to men.

COMMENT

Trouble with punctuation, plurals, and agreement constitutes an important part of this student's writing difficulties, but a more serious shortcoming in this particular paper is the glaring inconsistency between the title and the content. After asserting in the title that "Women Are Not Naturally Superior to Men" and then somewhat lamely trying to show why men should be expected to be inferior to women in their dealings with children, the writer proceeds to prove that women are either equal — or superior — to men in almost every endeavor.

Clearly this student needs to be shown that the points he has made would serve him better if he were to propose women's superiority to men, rather than the opposite. He should then be required to rewrite his theme from this new point of view and should support his position by expanding theses such as the following:

- I. Women are superior to men in domestic situations
- II. Women are superior to men in clerical positions
- III. Women do as well as men in the professions
- IV. Women do men's work as well as men during national crises

Another shortcoming is the use of broad generalizations without sufficient supporting details. When the author rewrites his theme, therefore, he should be expected to supply concrete details which give meaning to his assertions (e. g., in paragraphs 3 and 4).

The paper is not wholly lacking in promise, however. For one thing, the author shows some paragraph sense even though the paragraphs themselves are not always adequately developed. For another, he has introduced a variety of sentence patterns into his theme (e.g., in paragraph 3 and at the end of paragraph 1) even though the relationship between parts of sentences is sometimes inadequately established.

It may be stated that the topic itself is difficult. Unless the writer is reasonably skillful and is prepared to involve himself in careful qualifications and debatable generalizations, he will never get anywhere with it.

Theme 5
Rated A

Grade Distribution

A = 27
B = 14
C = 5
D = 0
E = 0

SPRING

Spring is a combination of many things. It is the brightness of the sun as it floods the world with its indispensable light. It is the moon rising like a huge red ball which later changes to yellow and pours its soft light over the quiet earth. It is sudden showers and strong winds, fleecy clouds and blue skies. Spring is melted snow and ice and swollen streams which cause devastating floods. Spring is the reappearance of familiar birds — the modest little wrens, the brilliant cardinals, the cheerful robins, the quiet blue birds, and the ostentatious blue jays. It is also the industrious "measuring worm" methodically and patiently measuring the slender new blades of grass or perhaps the dead, dry stalks of one of last year's weeds.

Spring is a turtle coming out of the mud to sun himself on the bank of a pond; it is a chorus of frogs in the evening. It is the chattering squirrel as it noisily eats its diminishing supply of nuts and completes its meal by robbing a tree of the soft, new leaf buds. Spring is the redbud and dogwood trees displaying their brilliant colors; but even before these, it is the golden blossoms of the forsythia bushes. It is the dandelion-dotted lawns or the grass-dotted dandelion patches. Spring is little boys eagerly digging for fishing worms and going wading in forbidden creeks. It is the old farmer plodding along resolutely behind his plow and strong white horses. It is the young couple strolling hand-in-hand along the road side. Spring is the eager sun bathers, each one trying to get a darker tan than the others. Spring is jumping rope, shooting marbles, and playing softball games. Spring is a feeling — the joy of living, seeing, and learning. The combination of all of these things, and many more, makes up Spring as we know it.

COMMENT

In *Spring* the aim is to suggest the emotional quality of a season by an enumeration of carefully chosen and arranged details. All of the details are concerned with the notion of renewed vitality and thus prepare the reader to accept the concluding generalization that Spring is a feeling — “the joy of living, seeing, and learning.” The paper’s excellence is further accounted for by the emphasis put on arrangement, an emphasis which appears on the sentence level in the consistently used device of parallelism, in the grouping of sentences with related details, and in the over-all inductive framework. Within the framework there is a time-honored progression (used, for example, in the opening lines of the *Canterbury Tales*) beginning with weather phenomena, going on to the behavior of wildlife, and concluding with human activities. The technique verges on the poetic, particularly in sentences 2-5, where the controlling image of water, though not directly mentioned until sentence 4, is anticipated in the earlier sentences by the sun which “floods the world” and the moon which “pours its soft light” on the earth.

There is room for improvement here, though not a great deal. The last sentence does little more than repeat the first, and both sentences seem external to the real development, which reaches its conclusion in the next to last sentence. The writer might consider omitting them altogether. Would paragraph indentations be helpful to mark the sentence groupings? Undoubtedly, as the theme

now stands. However, at least as good a device would be to regularize the use of the subjects "Spring" and "It", so that "Spring" would occur only in the opening sentence of each group and "It" in the remaining sentences. Perhaps, too, a case can be made for moving sentences 10 and 11 (on trees and flowers) to a place following the opening "weather" section (sentences 2-5) as giving a more "natural" progression: weather, vegetable life, animal life, human life.

Finally, it might be remarked that theme topics such as this often lead to unfortunate results. That is to say, a less skillful writer may fail to exercise restraint and hence may attempt a pseudo-poetic, inflated style that is very objectionable to a mature reader. Even the present writer (in her use of cliches like "modest wrens," "cheerful robins," and "chattering squirrels") comes dangerously close to this fault at times.

Theme 6
Rated E

Grade Distribution

A = 0
B = 0
C = 9
D = 17
E = 20

REPORTING A SMALL INCIDENT

There was a small explosion. It was only a tire blowout. The car swerved from side to side, but Bob managed to keep the car in the road. About this time the car lights went out, another small incident to this old car. You couldn't see ten feet in front of you, because of the deep fog that night. Using what brakes there was and the gears too, the car was finally stopped.

The car was sort of an old beat-up ford car to begin with, and now everything started happening wrong as it usually does when you are in a hurry to get home.

We were just this side of Hopkinsville when this happened, and we remembered that we had passed the last filling station about two miles back.

In the fall of the year the nights are rather cold, already the coldness was felt through our light wraps.

Bob, Sadie, and I weren't disturbed much, but I must say Chuck was as nervous as a old mother hen with a new brood of chickens.

Why did it happen? Who can say? Expecially when your supposed to have been home hours ago. Surely it couldn't have been the condition of the old car.

To begin at the beginning we decided on the spur of the moment to go with Bob and Chuck back to thier station, which was at Camp Campbell. Bob said that there was to be a good floor show at one of the clubs.

Upon arriving the show had begun, but we saw the main part. Later there was dancing, and we became so interested in all of this that we weren't conscious of the quickly passing time. We left camp a little late and didn't arrive home until much later. However after the tire was fixed, we found flashlights in the car pocket. Bob and I held the flashlights out of the window and used these for lights until we got back to the filling station that we had passed. Having no further trifling incidents, we arrived safe at home at about 2:30.

Fortunately for Sadie and I dady was working in Detroit at this time, and mother at this time of the night had piping hot biscuits made for us.

COMMENT

The deficiencies of this theme are various: a) poor spelling (*your* for *you're*, *thier*); b) a comma fault (paragraph 4); c) the use of inappropriate forms ("What brakes there was"; "a old mother hen"; "for Sadie and I"); d) dangling participle-gerund constructions (paragraphs 1 and 9); e) a number of poor choices stylistically (the generalized *you*; overuse of compound sentences and passives); f) poor paragraphing (too many, and all but two undeveloped as they stand); g) a recognizable narrative technique (flashback) obscured by mishandling; and h) misjudgment of the end of the episode ("getting home," not "hot biscuits" is the logical end). By any set of customary standards, the defects of the theme warrant a failing grade.

But failures are not all alike, and what the paper accomplishes or even attempts should not be overlooked. The constructions, though too often mishandled, suggest that the writer is consciously trying to do more than write a sequence of short, simple statements. There are, for example, only seven compound sentences as against at least fourteen subordinate clauses. Furthermore, there are three initial participle-gerund constructions and one initial infinitive; and the first paragraph contains a rather interesting appositive

construction. In short, the student has apparently tried to avoid starting too many sentences with the subject and at the same time has broken the routine of a series of declarative statements with a couple of questions. But more than this, the theme contains a good deal of definite detail, a figure of speech (even though trite), and an ironic statement. All this, and perhaps the flashback technique as well, point to previous training and, more important, to a desire to apply the training.

Along with help on mechanics, this student needs assistance with the arrangement of material. Comment should be directed to showing her how her well-intentioned but unsuccessful use of the flashback technique can be improved and how the relevant details can be assembled in just three parts: 1) the incident and the situation it produced; 2) the events leading up to the incident; 3) the process of extrication from the situation.

Theme 7
Rated C+

Grade Distribution

A = 0
B = 17
C = 22
D = 6
E = 0

MY HOME TOWN

If you threw an arrow toward the map of my home state and it should happen to land in the dead center, the point would cover my home town. The point would easily cover Middletown, for it is a town small in size and insignificant in population. I have learned that size does not make a town valuable for I have lived in New York as well as Middletown and I have taken time to make the contrast.

Middletown centers around a college which was intended for the mountain children of my state. The founders saw the need for a educational system whereby these boys and girls could work thier way through school. Gradually, through blood, tears and time the institution grew until today it stands proud of it's service and the record it has made. Knowing the history of this college I am proud and feel a part of its uniting spirit and fighting strength.

The college has developed many industries in which the students work and make a large part of thier school money. These industries in themselves have created vast interest all over the

world. There is the weaving industry, the bakery and candy kitchen, the broom and basket industry, the furniture shop and many more. The students work two hours of labor into thier schedules and learn from the experience they gain.

I am of the personal opinion that the system is remarkable and that this college teaches the whole country a lesson that needs to be taught right now. It is a living example of what combined work and likeness of desire can do for even a large group.

The college is the core of the town and as it is, I have dwelt on it. I feel that the town itself is unimportant in comparison except that it is the resting place for one of the greatest institutions in the world.

COMMENT

The author of this paper has communicated what he has to say fairly effectively. His spelling, however, is not what one would expect from an average student: "it's" for "its" and "thier" for "their" are inexcusable; and "*a* educational institution" comes as a shock in a theme that generally does much better. The punctuation is satisfactory in the main, though occasionally it is a bit shaky and inconsistent. For example, the author uses his comma correctly in sentence 2, but omits it in the same construction in sentence 3 and in the first sentence of the last paragraph. The vocabulary is generally satisfactory, but when the author says that the town is the "resting place" of the college and that the college owes its existence to the "combined work and likeness of desire" of interested persons, he displays an insensitiveness to words that calls for attention. Likewise he should be made to see that arrows are *shot*, not *thrown*, and that such phrases as "blood, tears, and time" and "uniting spirit and fighting strength" are stale.

At first glance the theme appears to have almost nothing to do with the announced subject, but the author very carefully explains that for him his hometown is synonymous with the college which it contains. Whether this explanation should be permitted to reconcile the disparity between the body of the paper and the subject is open to question, of course. It is quite possible that the student wrote as he did by design, but it is also quite possible that he suddenly realized that he was off the subject and therefore tacked on the last paragraph in order to get his paper back on the track. In any event, the

teacher should point out that he has adopted a questionable procedure and probably needs to devote more attention to organization.

The writer has certain potentialities and should be encouraged. His opening is not especially skillful, but the fact that he has used the "arrow" figure is encouraging. He seems, too, to have the ability to write straightforward exposition, and most of his mechanical errors are of the sort that can be corrected rather easily. Again, though the paper does not reveal careful organization, the author does have some sense of form, as his opening and closing paragraphs indicate.

Theme 8
Rated A

Grade Distribution

A = 32
B = 12
C = 3
D = 0
E = 0

I WAS SCARED

It all began one morning in early October, 1950. Tired men, dirty and short tempered, climbed aboard the convoy trucks they had loaded during the previous night. The convoy rolled at eight o'clock; everyone, including myself, felt better because it was our first time to relax in three days.

The morning, like most October days, was cool and refreshing, and most of us slept, at least until the sun rose high enough to make it miserably hot and impossible to relax. As we passed through the ravaged and bombed out cities, I had mixed feelings toward the people we saw there, a feeling of pity and a feeling of hate.

Soon we left the little villages behind and began climbing into the mountains where signs of human life are not seen for long intervals of time. Everything was quiet except for the rumble of heavy trucks and a lonely GI singing, "Carry Me Back to Old Virginia."

Even in Chosen the mountains are pretty this time of year with the leaves turning all colors and falling to the earth, blanketing it with beauty that cannot be described, only felt deep inside.

Yes, everything was quiet and peaceful until up ahead came the chatter of machine guns and the occasional crack of a Garand. I began to feel a little nervous and scared, no not scared, at least not yet. You see, it was my first experience with war. Our truck was the last in a long line, and as we were descending into a small valley,

the brakes became hot and began to freeze. We knew we would have to break convoy. There was a bombed out bridge at the base of the hill; we had to go around it and through a small creek: here is where it all began and nearly ended. When the truck reached the creek, the brakes were so hot we could not climb out of the embankment. The rear guard came by and asked if we needed assistance, which we declined because the only thing to do was wait for the brakes to cool.

The rest of the convoy went on, and we waited there, expecting to catch them later. There were five of us. While we were waiting, the chatter of guns could still be heard in the far off mountains—cleaning up, they called it, and that should explain itself since the front lines had moved on farther north.

A guy starts thinking when he is in a spot like that, and I was doing my share of it. A buddy just handed me a cigarette, when all hell broke loose. Bullets riddled the cab of our truck, and the chatter of machine gun fire roared in our ears. We hit the dirt or, I should say, hit the mud of the creek bed. Yes, I was scared. There we were, five guys alone in a small creek facing a Red machine gun and an unknown number of men. Yes, I was scared, plenty damned scared, and even worse than that, I knew of nothing to relieve the situation; but I wasn't alone.

We all said a silent prayer and thanked God that our little friends were such lousy shots. I often wondered how a greenhorn would feel with his first taste of war: then I knew. Only a few seconds had passed, yet it seemed like a life-time. Then, as suddenly as it began, the firing stopped. I could still hear the chattering of those guns and splattering of lead. It pounded in my head as though they were still firing. One of the guys yelled something; at first it didn't register, and then I looked up the road we had just come over; that column of dust was the loveliest thing I had ever seen.

The Convoy had been only a few minutes behind us. Their lead jeep, with a machine gun mounted in its cab, came roaring down the hill spitting out death. By this time the Reds had disappeared.

We had been initiated into the ranks of those who knew what it meant to be afraid. There was no shame because of our fear; we had discovered a new meaning for the word and silently agreed to respect it in its own right.

COMMENT

I Was Scared has what appears to be one of the simplest of all plans of organization, that of natural time order. This order alone, however, is not enough to guarantee an effective story or incident, for problems of selection and arrangement arise within any kind of general framework. The writer has solved these problems with considerable success by selecting details which chart not only the progress of the convoy but also the shifting moods of the men involved. Thus the movement is from the feeling of relaxation engendered by the quiet and beauty of the October morning as the convoy moves into the foothills, to the nervous tension aroused by the distant rifle fire and the trouble with the brakes of the truck during the descent into the valley, then to the paralyzing fear when the attack occurs in the creek bed, and finally when the second convoy brings relief, to the sober realization of the new meaning for the word "fear." The style ably supports the aim — which is to tell the truth simply and vividly without the varnish of false heroics; it abounds with sharply phrased details like "the occasional crack of a Garand," "the splattering of lead," and with the idioms of natural speech — "you see," "cleaning up, they called it," "a guy starts thinking," "plenty damned scared." It is clear that this writer is unusually mature: he knows how to grasp his own experiences and give them significant shape.

The faults are faults of detail only. The writer should be asked whether anything is gained by making the very specific reference to the *time* of the incident in the first sentence and withholding the *place* till paragraph 4. His attention should be called also to the way the tenses of the second sentences of paragraphs 7 and 8 (past instead of past perfect) work against the basic time order of the events he is relating. He should clear up such small matters as the incorrectly used reflexive ("including *myself*") in sentence 3 of paragraph 1; the cliché "spitting out death" in paragraph 9; and the needless comma before the song title in paragraph 3. Lastly, he should understand the reader's bewilderment to learn at the start of paragraph 9 that "The convoy had been only a few minutes behind us." Since only one convoy, the writer's own, has so far been mentioned, more explanation is needed at this point. Preparation for the rescuing convoy might be made in the first paragraph without destroying suspense, simply by revising the third sentence to "Our convoy, the first of two, rolled at eight o'clock . . ."

Theme 9
Rated D

Grade Distribution
A = 0
B = 0
C = 10
D = 24
E = 12

CAUSES AND PREVENTION OF TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS

As we all know, traffic accidents take hundreds of lives each year. There should be some way to prevent these accidents and the lives that are lost.

Some accidents are caused because of such things as: speeding, intoxication, slowoffs, and unsubstantial mechanical parts.

There are people who like to speed or race one another. This helps to contribute to losing the lives of teenagers. I have said this because a lot of teenagers own speed demons known as "hot rods."

Another way of losing lives in traffic accidents is because of drunken drivers. People who are under the influence of alcoholic beverages when driving are a menace to society.

A third type of traffic accidents is caused by show-offs. Often, these jokers just want to show how fast they can drive or some new joke that a friend has shown him.

Still other things that lead to fatalities is unsubstantiality of mechanical parts. There may be some one on a dangerous highway and his brakes go bad or the automobile runs out of gas and oil, all of this is because he probably didn't have his automobile checked before he began his trip or something of that nature.

One could prevent some of these traffic fatalities if drivers wouldn't do things such as exceeding the speed limits in speed zones, and he should watch out for crowded intersections.

If all drivers observed all rules and regulations, we wouldn't have to worry about traffic accidents and the lost lives of our loved ones.

COMMENT

This theme is saved from failure by its obvious attempt at organization, if by nothing else. The author, therefore, should be commended for limiting his discussion of accidents — as promised in the title — to "causes and prevention." He should be shown, how-

ever, that he fails to develop either of these categories as the reader has a right to expect him to. He should be able to see at once, for example, that the two logical divisions of his paper are badly disproportionate in length and development.

In revising and rewriting his theme, the author obviously needs to find more material to include in paragraphs 3, 4, 5, and 6. Or if expansion seems impossible to him, he should at least be asked to draw these paragraphs together into one solid paragraph covered by an inclusive sentence such as that in paragraph 2, rephrased, of course, so that its parts will be parallel. The first method of revision would be preferable since it would force expansion from within; but the second would be acceptable. Then, having revised and developed the *causes* of traffic accidents, the author is ready to proceed to their *prevention*. Here again he must develop new materials, since he has disposed of this division of his theme in two inadequately developed paragraphs.

It is possible, however, that the author might wish to adopt an altogether different approach: that of treating both cause and prevention in each of the four paragraphs of the body of the theme. Thus a statement about speeders (paragraph 3) would be followed by an explanation of how to educate them, and so on.

But the student has a great deal to learn besides the organization and development of his ideas: he must learn how to avoid errors in agreement (paragraph 5 and 6), vague pronoun reference (paragraph 7), the comma fault (paragraph 6), shifts in structure (paragraphs 1, 4, and 6), and lack of parallelism (paragraphs 2 and 7). His attention might well be called also to his inadequate vocabulary as it is reflected in his word choices. Here his faults range all the way from the slang-like "joker" to the artificial "unsubstantiality of mechanical parts" and the jargonesque "under the influence of alcoholic beverages." He should be shown that language must be appropriate to the subject which is being treated. Here, for example, he is writing a serious essay on an important topic and should avoid being either flippant or pompous. It might serve a useful purpose, too, to have him list his verbs in order that he may see how unimaginative they are, or to have his teacher underscore those words and phrases that show excess verbiage or lack of precision. Suggestions of ways to *strengthen* what he has to say would be definitely advisable for this student.

Theme 10
Rated C

Grade Distribution

A = 0
B = 11
C = 23
D = 11
E = 1

THE MOST INSPIRING TEACHER I HAVE KNOWN

Although all my fellow-students may not — when they were in Miss North's presence — have realized just how blessed they were, I, for one, sensed her true greatness.

Quiet as a nun she always was, and, like a nun, she dedicated her life to helping others. She teaches others to appreciate all the beautiful things of life, the beauty of the sunlight dancing on the water so that it frothes up clear and sparkling, the beauty of lovers slipping through the lane at dusk, the beauty of the unpremeditated art of the song birds, the feeling that death is only an opening of a window into heaven, all this and far more she teaches.

It is one of her greatest joys to read poetry orally. Putting into it every joy, hope, fear, hate, and love of the poet she reads, and one imagines that oneself is the poet and all the world is lovely.

I shall never forget how she taught me; to live up to the very best there was inside, to be all I could be, to work hard to win, but if defeated — not to feel too badly. Instead to keep right on trying "For sometimes it is ever glorious to fail," she said.

Whenever she entered a room everyone immediately sat up very straight, and all the chattering subsided. Yet she was not severe, or if severe in aught the love she bore to learning was at fault.

One of Miss North's characteristics, which impressed me most was her unsurpassable interest in her students. If her students were ever defeated, or felt that they had lost, she helped them overcome it. If they won she rejoiced with them.

COMMENT

Enthusiasm and the desire to write sensitively and creatively are the most commendable features of this paper. Somehow, though, the author must be made to realize that her dependence on remembered and half-remembered phrases has done her admiration for her teacher a disservice by corrupting her style and destroying whatever naturalness she might otherwise have been capable of. She must also come to understand that sincerity is the first essential in writing

of this sort and that the uncontrolled ecstasy which fills her page will look to many readers like mere sentimental effusiveness.

As is often the case with "inspirational" writing, the theme gives no evidence of careful planning. It seems rather to proceed by fits and starts. Paragraph 2, while trite, is at least concrete, and paragraphs 3, 5, and 6 do appear to be attempts at specific illustrations of the general statements; but the over-all effect is merely of "the next thing that came to the writer's mind" rather than of thoughtful and logical planning. The lack of a conclusion also contributes to the haphazard effect.

The more detailed faults are of the usual sort, though some of them obviously grow out of the author's conscientious and commendable effort to write effectively. Unfortunately this effort leads her to attempt a style that is rather beyond her skill. Thus the tortuous first sentence, the fragment in paragraph 4, and the blunder in punctuation in the first sentence of the same paragraph are examples of the author's stumbling effort to handle involved structures. Errors like these, as well as the haphazard arrangement, the mistaken or poor choice of words (*unsurpassable*, *aught*), and the poor paragraph development, can be corrected with a little help and work. It may be more difficult, however, to get the writer to look at the world without emotional distortion and to write about what she sees without affecting an artificial style.

Theme 11
Rated E

Grade Distribution

A = 0
B = 0
C = 12
D = 15
E = 19

WHO BELIEVES IN HIS OWN WORK?

The only person I believe that could really believe in his work is a minister. He has to believe in God before he can ask other people to believe in God also. It would take a lot of courage and belief to stand in front of people and tell them to believe in God. A minister has to believe in what he is saying or he will not get his point over to you. I believe these people are the happiest of all people, because they believe and enjoy their work. In any kind of work you must believe in your work before you can enjoy it and if you are fortunate enough to have these you will be happy, no matter what your income is.

A minister has to believe in his work before he can teach it and that goes for any kind of work. If a person does not believe in his work he will not be happy nor successful. A person that believes in his work is far better off than the person that does not believe in his work. It does not matter what the difference in income may be.

A minister's work is respected by every one. Every minister I have ever known has been one of the best persons I have ever met.

If you ever heard a minister give a sermon and did not believe in what he was talking about, you would probably be bored stiff. If you have ever heard a minister give a sermon that was so exciting and kept you on the edge of your seat until it was over and still thought about it for a long time. You know he would have to believe in his work in order to hold you there and not move for fear of missing just one word that he is saying.

Any person that believes in his work is a great person, because he has accomplished something that every body strives for. Every person that has become famous believed in their work and was happy in what they were doing. To believe in your work is to trust it and know that what you are doing is good for your self and benefiting mankind.

COMMENT

This theme should be failed because of its poor mechanics, its bad spelling, and the confusing relation of sentence to sentence. An even more serious trouble, however, is the fact that it has little to say, contradicts itself, and repeats itself. Thus, though the writer commits himself in the first sentence to the proposition that only a minister can "really believe in his work," the reader finds near the end: "Every person that has become famous believed in their work." And all that comes between these two contradictory statements is merely a sequence of incoherent, unbelievably repetitious sentences in which *believe* (*belief*) is repeated nineteen times and *believe in his* (*your, their*) *work* ten times.

Empty themes like this are common enough. Often they come from students who are eager to please and are not sure whether their own notions will prove acceptable. Instead of trying to clarify their beliefs and set them down honestly, they unconsciously take refuge behind what they regard as safe, sure commonplaces. Or it may be, of course, that they are quite sincere in an uncritical sort

of way. In any event, the author of this theme needs to be shown that he is not really thinking for himself, that writing of this sort makes unrewarding reading, and that a reader has the right to expect a more perceptive treatment of the subject. The lamentable spelling and the errors in mechanics are really secondary faults.

Theme 12
Rated B

Grade Distribution

A = 5
B = 30
C = 11
D = 0
E = 0

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

When I think of a person writing an autobiography I always imagine an exciting adventurous life. I do not consider my life extraordinary.

I was born on February 26, 1938, the first and last child of perfectly average parents. It infuriates me now to hear people talk about spoiled "only child" children. I can top most only children by the fact that I am really the only young person in my family since I do not even have any cousins. Yet I do not consider myself spoiled.

There is something a little unusual about me though. I have red hair. That is something I forget quite often but my mother couldn't when she first realized that her only daughter had red, or to use the more polite term, auburn hair. She disliked it then but in the last seventeen years I believe she has become accustomed to it.

All my life my parents and I have lived in the same house. The disadvantage to this was most apparent during my childhood when there were no children my age in the neighborhood. In my loneliness I remember following my mother throughout the house and her vain attempts to interest me in my toys. Looking back now, this lack of companionship is the greatest disadvantage to being an only child; but this too can be an advantage because it has taught me to amuse myself and to overcome most loneliness.

My parents certainly did their best to entertain me. After supper Daddy would play all my games with me over and over, until I do not see how he stood it. Daddy taught me to roller skate by

getting out his old skates and demonstrating the proper technique for me.

The highlight of my afternoons came when Mother would read to me. I can remember sitting beside my mother in a straight-back chair, leaning all over her, listening to her read, while the afternoon was gray with cold outside. Later when I went to school and learned something about reading, I used to follow in the book as she read. The first time I ever did any real reading for myself was the day I got mad because she was too busy to read as far as I wanted her to. I amazed myself my picking up the book and reading it myself. From that time I read a great deal and it has been and is a source of great enjoyment to me.

Being alone most of the time made me so timid that when I had to start to school I was petrified of the other children. In the kindergarten I cried for my mother until I must have driven the teacher insane. I made my mother stand outside the classroom door and tearfully watched her through the glass portion of the door. Finally when the teacher would get my complete interest Mother would slip away.

About this time I picked up whooping cough and the other customary childhood diseases and was quite relieved because I had to stay home. I almost failed kindergarten because of my absence. Although I never did completely overcome my timidity, I grew to enjoy school.

Some time around the third grade I started my piano lessons. I shall never really know why I started except that Daddy plays the violin and is very greatly interested in music. At first I was extremely interested and intermittently for ten years I took I would have a brief period when I would work as if inspired but the flare of interest would soon go and the practice would become drudgery.

Encouraged by my piano teacher I took clarinet lessons for about three years and I played in my junior high school band. Although it never did create the interest in my piano lessons that my teacher hoped it would, I enjoyed it and found it very easy because of my piano background.

Looking back now at those years I regret most of all the waste I made of so much of my musical education. If I had worked just a little harder I would be a better pianist today.

I took my first trip away from home alone when I was twelve. I spent two weeks at a nearby camp. I did not get homesick and I learned an invaluable lesson in getting along with others. One of the counselors sat me and a group of my friends down one day and gave us a lesson in the "fifty-fifty" relationship of friends that I have not forgotten to this day.

As I moved into my teens I passed from junior high to the high school from which I graduated three years later. I disliked Welborn School for Girls rather intensely. Any school would grow stale with nothing but girl students for twenty-seven years and any faculty would grow boresome with teaching in the same school for twenty-seven years. This was the case with Welborn School. At any rate my grades in high school were not good. My favorite excuse for my grades is the hard work that four years of Latin entailed. Needless to say I was very glad to graduate from high school and get a new start in academic life.

There are two highlights in those last years of high school. For the last two summers I have returned to that camp I attended when I was twelve to be a counselor. I learned there a lesson that has lasted, a lesson in friendship, a lesson in getting along with others. I think this same lesson should be passed on to other children and I feel that this is partially my responsibility.

My seventeen years have not been exciting by some people's standards but yet I feel that they have been full years.

COMMENT

This paper is an above-average—but not a superior—handling of a type of writing assignment that is generally agreed to be difficult. It is above average because the chronology is straightforward and reasonably complete, the details clearly presented and rather well chosen with regard to interest and importance, the vocabulary good and the sentence structure varied. It is less than superior because it has no unifying purpose. For a moment it looks as though "I do not consider myself spoiled" were designed to be a focusing statement, but the idea is soon forgotten. It is less than superior also because the introduction and conclusion are unattractively brief and rather hackneyed.

Other flaws are less serious, but taken together they too handicap an otherwise superior paper. The paragraphing, for

example, is little better than adequate. Paragraphs, it is true, are tricky to handle in narration, but better organization with greater clarity of purpose and better thought development from sentence to sentence could well be expected. Some of the paragraphs, for example, might be combined to advantage (4 and 5; 7, 8, and 9; 10 and 11); and the use of linking words and transitional expressions would have improved the smooth progress of the narrative in a number of instances.

The sentence structure is above average in control and variety, but there are still too many compound sentences; and the student seems not to have learned in such sentences to punctuate before the conjunction (sentences 3 and 4 in paragraph 3, sentence 6 in paragraph 6, sentence 3 in paragraph 9, sentence 1 in paragraph 10, sentence 3 in paragraph 13, sentence 4 in paragraph 14, sentence 1 in paragraph 15). In lengthy sentences this failure can be seriously annoying. Occasionally, too, a sentence goes wrong in one way or another. Thus sentence 3 in paragraph 4 is in bad need of parallel structure, and sentence 3 in paragraph 2, sentence 3 in paragraph 9, and sentence 2 in paragraph 14 are so awkwardly worded that rereading is necessary.

The vocabulary and choice of words in general are quite good; and except for one misspelled word (*lonliness*) and the omission of the previously mentioned commas in compound sentences there are few errors in mechanics, though the author is a bit inconsistent and lax in using commas after introductory verbal phrases and subordinate clauses (sentence 1 of paragraph 1, sentence 1 of paragraph 10, sentences 1 and 2 of paragraph 11, sentence 1 of paragraph 13).

In short, the theme is clearly above average, but its flaws definitely keep it from being superior.

Theme 13
Rated D

Grade Distribution

A = 0
B = 0
C = 10
D = 25
E = 11

**I HAVE LEARNED THAT THE SWIFTEST TRAVELER
IS HE THAT GOES AFOOT**

Most people today would say that traveling afoot is not a good way to travel. Perhaps for them that is right but if they

only realized it, they have to depend upon someone else if they travel in any other manner.

Traveling afoot a person can start when they please and stop when they please. You may find an interesting place and decide to stay for a while, being afoot and no one else to worry about, getting a job perhaps to have a little income while in this place. When you have settled your curiosity you can move on without any interference from anyone.

Being afoot you will probably travel very slowly, therefore getting more enjoyment out of the scenery. A large town, beautiful rugged mountains, cool stream and waterfalls, or anything that has any artistic beauty in it. Each or any of those may keep you fascinated for several days or weeks if you are alone on foot, whereas if you were with someone traveling otherwise you might not even stop to admire their beauty for even one day.

Someone may tell you that you can travel with them on a trip, but it may be ten years before they decide to make the trip. Also with someone else there is always split decisions on, places to go, when to go, how to go, and many other situations that one person has to face but just has himself to convince on how he is to go about the trip. He can always change his mind without hurting anyone else's feeling's also if he is alone and afoot.

The greatest reason for traveling afoot being the fastest method of travel is: You do not have to wait on any man. It does not require the assistance of any mechanical object, generally the man who travels afoot can start any day and not having to worry about what he has left behind.

COMMENT

For a practical combination of marginal and terminal comments on this theme see pp. 318-9 above.

It is regrettable that a theme like this—based as it is on a good idea and possessing a clearly recognizable organization—should be handled so clumsily and should have the weaknesses in sentence structure and mechanics that are so apparent in every passage. The writer commits most of the common offenses in mechanics: subjects and predicates, pronouns and their antecedents fail to agree; possible parallelisms in sentence units are neglected; common words are misspelled; a comma splice and a superfluous

apostrophe appear; and capital letters are handled carelessly. No less unfortunate are those sentences (sentence 2 of paragraph 1 and the middle sentence of paragraph 4) which are so garbled that the reader must return, reread, and finally guess at their significance. Finally, point of view is badly handled in that there are frequent shifts from third to second person and back again.

From an over-all point of view the theme has a very satisfactory organization in that paragraph 1 states the author's proposition—a mid-twentieth century reinterpretation of the title—that by going afoot a traveler has an independence much to be desired; 2, 3, and 4 develop three reasons why the writer believes this proposition to be true; and 5 is a recapitulation of 2, 3, and 4. Unfortunately, however, the writer expresses himself so clumsily and his topic sentences are so inept that the reader is in danger of failing to see that the sentences and paragraphs are anything more than a series of sentences placed end to end. When the theme is rewritten, therefore, the author should be careful to make the steps in his progress unmistakable. This he can do by first devising an introductory statement that says in substance, "Though most people today regard going afoot as an unsatisfactory mode of travel, I would like to point out that it permits more independence than any other method." After this the author will need to employ transitional expressions which—coupled with well-constructed topic sentences that introduce his main points—will make the progression of his ideas quite clear as he moves from one paragraph to another. While doing this, of course, he will wish whenever possible to give substance to his generalizations by using as many concrete details as possible.

Theme 14
Rated A

Grade Distribution
A = 26
B = 14
C = 6
D = 0
E = 0

BATTLEGROUND

The clanging of the bell announced that it was twenty minutes to four. Miss Hancock dismissed her fifth grade charges for another day. I hurried home to pick up my gun, helmet, canteen, and the other items so necessary for a battle with the enemy, and then carried this equipment to Pete's house at the foot of cemetery hill.

Our objective for this afternoon was to clear the "Japs" from this stronghold.

The other members of our outfit were already gathered at the bottom of the hill when I arrived. We immediately began making out our battle plans. The biggest boy, Johnny Carter, was elected captain because the rest of us were a little afraid of voting against him, and the smallest, Art Taylor, was given the undesirable post of "medic."

The cemetery hill is situated immediately behind the town, and on this spring day the grass was beginning to turn a bright green. The white marble shafts on the field of green made a striking, if not a cheerful, picture. As we "fought" our way to the top, we used the tombstones as cover from the imaginary bullets of the imaginary enemy. By the miracle known only to small boys, we reached the summit without loss of men, although we slaughtered ten thousand Japanese on the way. Looking down on that scene of the "massacre," I was thrilled by the sight, although I have gazed upon it many times.

Stretched out below us was the small town of Augusta nestled on the bank of the "Beautiful Ohio." Near the center of town the tower of the red brick school thrust its way over the foliage of the big trees which shaded its campus. Each hour the chimes of the big clock in the tower sounded the time to the people of the countryside. The aisles of openings in the thick green of the leaves disclosed the routes of the streets and laid off the town in blocks. The spires of various churches peeped through the treetops.

One of the few signs of industry was the track of the Chesapeake and Ohio which stretched as far as we could see in both directions. We could not see it, but we knew that the 5:00 local was standing at the station. Its thick, dark smoke floated lazily up finally being lost in the blue of the afternoon sky. Even as we watched the engine spouted clean, white steam, and in a few seconds we heard the shrill blast of the whistle. Far to the east was a long freight laboring down the rails carrying its coal to the industries of Cincinnati.

Immediately beyond the town stretched the shining waters of the Ohio. Augusta is situated on a straight stretch of the river, and for several miles there are no bends in its course. Far to the west, the sun seemed to be resting on the crest of the Kentucky

hills where the river turned toward the north. The romantic days of the river boat steamers and the old sidewheelers were gone forever, but a sleek white towboat shoved its load of twelve oil barges from the refineries of Ashland. The size of the town did not warrant a graceful bridge spanning the mile wide expanse of the river, but the picturesque ferry bridged the gap between the north and the south. As we looked, its paddle was churning the white spray as it eased to the Ohio to unload two cars and the yellow meat truck.

The gravel road leading up from the ferry landing into Ohio, met the grey concrete strip which was U. S. 52. The highway was crowded with many cars and huge trailer trucks which were making their way to and from the metropolis of Cincinnati 42 miles to the northwest. Occasionally the sound of a horn would drift across the river and up the hill.

Beyond the highway, the wooded hills of Ohio reached up to meet the early evening sky which was already becoming tinged with orange. The delicate pink of the blooming "rose-bud" trees lent more color to the spectacular view. At the foot of the hills and far to the east, the rays of the dying sun reflected the color of the few buildings which made up the hamlet of Higginsport. To the west where the highway disappeared following the bend of the river, the glass-walled green house was being engulfed by the lengthening shadows of the hills.

As we rested, we caught the scent of the new season. It was spring, and the sweet smelling flowers and evergreens mixed their fragrance with the odor of coal smoke from the locomotives. A few song birds added their music to our enjoyment as the sun slipped from sight. The peacefulness was broken by the chimes of the town clock as it struck six. The army began a hasty retreat down the hill. Our battle with the enemy was over, but now we had much explaining to do for being late to supper. As we flew through the gates of the battleground, we dreamed of other battles which we would fight. Most of us have more important battles to fight now, but in the early days of spring, when I notice the first "red-bud" trees in bloom, I get that yearning to return to this scene of my childhood, and fight again those sham battles in this lovely battleground.

COMMENT

Battleground is an exercise in reminiscence, an attempt to recapture two experiences of childhood: the absorbing make-believe of play and the responsiveness to the beauty of landscape. The basic materials are a narrative episode and a description, which the writer has sought to combine by permitting one to envelop the other. Thus the paper begins with an account of the "battle," introduces a long description of the landscape, resumes the narrative, and concludes with the nostalgic yearning "to return. . . and fight again those sham battles in this lovely battleground." Considered separately, both the narrative and the description are developed with sharp, well-ordered detail, but their combination is not wholly successful in spite of the competent writing. Thus neither the long landscape description nor the mood of contemplation which characterizes it is properly motivated, with the result that they seem to come as an intrusion in the narrative. They could have been motivated, of course, by having the young warriors (near the close of paragraph 3) stop for rest after the breath-taking charge and climb up the hill. This, in turn, could be connected nicely with the introductory phrase of the last paragraph, "As we rested. . ."

Inconsistency in the descriptive point of view also works against the unity of the paper. The author should consider limiting his description to what the fifth-graders actually saw and felt, just as he limited the enveloping narrative to the way they acted. Once he grasps this principle, he will see that certain descriptive details must be handled differently or—more likely—eliminated: generalized statements like "Augusta is situated. . ."; references to what has vanished long before—"the romantic days of the river boat steamers"; the reference to the non-existent—"a graceful bridge spanning the mile wide expanse." Once these defects have been removed, the narrative and the description will become more nearly of one piece.

Theme 15
Rated C+

Grade Distribution
A = 3
B = 19
C = 19
D = 5
E = 0

IT PUZZLES ME

There is a gentleman living in our neighborhood who has been courting the same lady for 35 years. Neither of them has ever married. He visits her every evening and spends from four to five hours with her. They keep strictly to themselves. They seem very young in their outlook and they seemingly enjoy each other's company immensely. Did something happen in their early youth to keep them from marrying? Do they **really** only care for each other as friends? Are they relatives and can't marry but still feel the attraction? It puzzles me.

Little boys collect the most amazing assortment of paraphernalia in their small pockets. They collect string, insects, marbles, jaw-breakers, and any useless things they can find to use as barter material. Do these things have any real value? Is a little boy not one of the gang without this assortment? Is there a psychological reason for this habit they all seem to have? It puzzles me.

There seems to be an unwritten rule that upon entering high school, and subsequently college, that you must begin to smoke, and with the latter, to drink. You are sometimes observed by students to see if you do these, and is a basis for judging whether you will fit in particular groups. It is considered the mark of utter sophistication to do both well.

Why should you smoke if you don't feel like it? Why smoke if you don't even like it? Why should those groups who indulge in these habits be the ones to decide if you are an "in" or an "out" on campus. It **really** does puzzle me!

COMMENT

All teachers are familiar with the borderline theme, the kind to which either of two letter grades could be given with exasperatingly equal justification. Such themes probably account for a good deal of the grade variation to be found in this booklet. The foregoing theme, however, is in another category. Most of those who gave it a grade of C seemed prepared to defend that grade strenuously—or even to think it too high. Most of those who gave

tribution
3
19
9
5
0

as been
as ever
to five
m very
other's
youth
r each
ill feel

ernalia
s, jaw-
barter
oy not
logical

g high
smoke,
y stu-
hether
ark of

smoke
ndulge
or an

e kind
asper-
for a
t. The
those
grade
gave

it a grade of B seemed prepared to defend that grade with equal vigor—or even to think it too low. In other words, then, the paper is not of the usual borderline type, but of a type which brings to light actual and significant differences in grading philosophy. It has therefore seemed desirable to represent both the B and the C grade points of view fairly fully.

Those who see the theme as a B theme (A, if it were not for certain unfortunate lapses) are impressed by the organization, which is regarded as subtle and superior. Thus the three questions which in each case precede the "refrain" statement are regarded as providing an effective unifying device. Furthermore, the plan is simple and clearly patterned and the illustrations appropriate and engaging. In style, the student is unusual in his directness of presentation and in his ability to see to it that the cases speak for themselves without need for explanation. And in rhythm, diction, and structure individual sentences move easily.

Those who see the theme as a C theme regard it as an exercise in rhetorical ingenuity which has only the superficial appearance of unity. The first puzzle, it is pointed out, involves the individual who does not conform to convention; the second and third involve groups which do. Thus the parts lack psychological connection. Nor will morality supply a unifying clue: in the first puzzle the nonconformist is, by implication, condemned; in the third he is praised; in the second morals are not an issue at all. No amount of analysis, it is argued, can bring the three puzzles into a unity beyond the specious one conferred by rhetoric.

There are, of course, a few stylistic lapses in the theme: the inept "seem. . . seemingly" and "are they relatives and can't marry" in the first paragraph, and the superfluous "that," the clumsy "if you do these," and the subjectless "is" in the second sentence of the third paragraph. It is the organization of the theme, however, rather than its mechanical or stylistic characteristics that provoke the sharp differences of opinion which some of the criticisms reveal.

Theme 16
Rated E

Grade Distribution

A = 0
B = 0
C = 10
D = 15
E = 21

THE MOST INSPIRING TEACHER I HAVE KNOWN

I first met this teacher in the grades. She was at that time the fourth grade teacher. She was very nice to her pupils and she always tried to give them some social life at school. She inspired the fourth grade to begin a softball team. After the class had played, for a while, the intire grades started softball practice.

This teacher helped me most in my preparation for high school. She often told me I was quick and easy on my feet and that I should choose a profession, which would deal with that type of work. She helped me choose between nursing and teaching after I had taken the exams from the eighth grade. She knew I was interested in nursing and she told me I would be more satisfied with that profession.

Later I was priviledged to have her as my Senior teacher in high school and there she helped me prepare for college, by preparing me for the expansions of thought and actions I would take. She helped me choose my senior subjects that would help in my nursing.

I shall always rember this most inspiring teacher of all my teachers in grades and high school for her friendly advise and for helping me to prepare for a wonderful profession.

COMMENT

In spelling, this theme is highly typical in its errors: *tryed*, *satisfyed* (*y* for *i*); *intire* (a pronunciation-spelling); *priviledged* (logical but wrong); *rember* (failure to repeat *em*); and *advise* (confusion with the verb). In punctuation, a phrase is mistakenly set off and becomes a squinting modifier; one *which* clause should not be set off; and several compound sentences lack the normal comma. In style, the sentences are monotonous, particularly in the first two paragraphs. Actually, the subject of ten of the fifteen major clauses is *she*; and *this teacher* is the subject of an eleventh. By contrast, the final sentence is well formulated.

The organization of the theme is simple but commendable. Its neatness, however, lays bare the overwhelming defect of the paper: its lack of focus. In spite of the fact that the teacher is the gram-

matical subject of most of the sentences, the paper is really about the student, while the teacher recedes to an auxiliary position. The title gives the reader every reason to expect to learn much about the teacher, but aside from broad assertions that she was nice and that she encouraged "some social life at school" (which seems to have been softball) he really learns nothing about her or her methods.

The student must be shown that her own affairs are merely incidental in this theme and that they are not to be used except to illustrate the ways in which the teacher was inspiring. Presumably other pupils were inspired also and might have been used for other illustrations. But the point to be hammered home in comment is that the topic calls for information about the teacher and that a theme based on this topic could be written without reference to the writer. The problem goes beyond language to the necessity for moving the student toward a mature, objective point of view.

Theme 17
Rated B+

Grade Distribution

A = 14
B = 23
C = 8
D = 0
E = 0

MY FAVORITE DISLIKES

My favorite dislikes cover a fairly wide field, ranging from the mild distaste I feel for beets to the intense hatred I experience toward hypocrites and red tape. In between these come spinach, okra, fish, people who drive at a snail's pace in the middle of the road, meddlesome people, and those offensive individuals who shove their way through a crowd, using razor-sharp elbows to assist them. In order to be truthful about this list, I am forced to include in the study of sciences. I love flowers; I think there is nothing more noble and inspiring than a century-old tree; I think horses and dogs are as fine companions as anyone could want; but nevertheless I detest botany, biology, and all the other scientific-ologies.

I have a special dislike for people who mistreat fine things. To me, Hell itself is too good for people who have no consideration for a high-strung thoroughbred horse, who ruin the smooth, powerful engine of a fine car by not keeping enough oil and water in it; who break the backs, and turn down corners of the pages, of good books—or of any kind of books, for that matter; who

scratch the glowing surface of exquisitely fine wood with rings or coat buttons; who erect extravagant signboards along a road winding up a beautiful hill; who break into a lovely scene on the stage with some harsh and inappropriate comment: for all people who spoil lovely things and ruin the masterpieces of nature and of men, no punishment is too great.

Most of my dislikes seem to be without rhyme or reason, but since I have them, the most I can do is to try to conceal them—certainly a difficult task for one like me.

COMMENT

A quick reading of this theme might give the impression that it is little more than a list. Actually, it is considerably more. The first sentence sets the range: from mild dislikes to hearty ones. The remainder of the paragraph presents examples of mild dislikes in a logical arrangement: vegetables, animals, people, branches of knowledge. The second paragraph develops a hearty dislike of a special kind and gives concrete examples of it from a surprisingly wide variety of areas. In both paragraphs, to be sure, some of the examples are hackneyed; but others are fresh and thoughtful, and all are handled in a lively manner that commands the interest of the reader. Anyway, a selection of "favorite" dislikes can scarcely be expected to be entirely original. The concluding paragraph does add a flaw to an otherwise well organized paper by being abrupt, anticlimactic, and unexpectedly moralistic.

In addition to good organization the first two paragraphs have a tone which helps turn what might have been a mere list into a theme. This tone is appropriate, reasonably consistent, and mature. On the whole the vocabulary is quite apt, though the student might be warned against clichés on the basis of "at a snail's pace" and "without rhyme or reason."

And the paper has other faults. It should be pointed out to the author, for example, that "include in" (paragraph 1) is redundant and that it is not necessary to use both "but" and "nevertheless" in the last sentence of the same paragraph. The punctuation is inconsistent in the second sentence of paragraph 2: a semicolon is in order between "horse" and "who."

Nevertheless the author handles in a manner distinctly above average a subject which might easily lead to triteness and monotony. More depth of thought, or more originality of presentation, plus a more adequate conclusion, would raise the theme to the "A" level.

Theme 18
Rated D+

Grade Distribution

A = 0
B = 0
C = 21
D = 22
E = 3

THE MOST INSPIRING TEACHER I HAVE KNOWN

I have had many teachers that I like and enjoyed very much, but in high school I had my most inspiring teacher. This teacher was a middle-aged lady, nice looking and the Mother of two daughters.

I have had the pleasure of visiting her home on several occasions. I found that she was as good a homemaker and Mother as she was a teacher. She has a liking for flowers and has a beautiful flower garden.

I had this inspiring teacher for four subjects in school. After I learned her way of teaching, I took as many subjects that she taught, which was possible for me to take.

I took Latin from this teacher and she gave me a course in which I worked and liked very much. She helped me with my English grammar so that I would understand Latin better.

This teacher is very prominent in the Community where her home is. She is the president of the Ladies' Club. I see her name in the paper often for she had made a speech or has given some party.

Just recently she was chosen as president for a sesquiential. She planned and held much responsibility during the time of this office. I attended this celebration and found it to be very successful just like all of the other occasions in which I have known her to take part.

I have been out of high school for four years, and it still gives me great pleasure to read about this inspiring teacher in her activities. I shall always give this teacher credit for helping me get adjusted in high school and helping me even now in my plans for college.

COMMENT

The average grade given this theme by forty-six high school and college teachers was almost midway between a D and a C. It is here placed among the D themes in spite of the evident sincerity of

the author and the fairly easy flow of words, since these good qualities are unfortunately offset by a number of fairly serious faults.

First come lapses such as "I took as many subjects that she taught, which was possible for me to take" and "She planned and held much responsibility during the time of this office." A more fundamental fault, however, arises from the fact that the author nearly loses sight of his key word—*inspiring*—and the need to develop ideas clustered around it. When he rewrites his theme, therefore, this word should determine not only what episodes and illustrations he will include and exclude but also the precise point to be made by each of them. Obviously a mere enumeration of the accomplishments of the teacher is not enough to establish her as an *inspiring teacher*.

Another fundamental trouble is found in the author's inability to organize material. Reducing the seven paragraphs of the theme to a series of topics, we get something like this:

1. A description of the teacher
2. The teacher's home and hobbies
3. An experience with the teacher
4. The courses I took with the teacher
5. The teacher's civic prominence
6. The teacher's success with a particular community project
7. My pleasure at remembering what this teacher did for me.

The writer can now be shown that by regrouping his ideas he can present his points in a more orderly, more convincing manner. Paragraphs 1 and 7—improved upon by restatement and expansion—can be retained as introduction and conclusion. Paragraphs 2, 5, and 6, however, should appear as one unit portraying the teacher as an inspiring, well-adjusted person in the home and community; 3 and 4, greatly expanded and comprising another unit, should deal with the teacher in her role as teacher and probably should precede the home-community unit. Let it be repeated, however, that in reorganizing his material the writer must be sure that everything focuses upon and establishes the fact that the teacher is an *inspiring teacher*.

Finally, the author needs to learn to subordinate secondary ideas. The theme contains 17 sentences, only one of which starts with a subordinate clause, while 9 start with *I*, 6 with *she* or *this teacher* and are either simple or compound sentences.

Theme 19
Rated C

Grade Distribution

A = 0
B = 16
C = 27
D = 4
E = 0

**THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN INSIDE AND OUTSIDE
CLASSROOM ENGLISH**

There is a great difference between classroom and playground or outside of classroom English. In the classroom you have to think of what you are going to say before you say it, but outside the classroom you have no forethought before you speak. Sometimes the difference between these languages depend largely upon the individual. Take these three examples of individual students: the scholar, the average student and the playboy.

For instance the scholar inclines to use the same kind of English outside the classroom as he does inside the class because of his deep interests in all his subjects. With this interest the scholar has developed a habit of speaking good English at all times.

Then there is the average student who strikes a happy medium between the scholar and the playboy. This student speaks English which is between standard and formal. He neither puts on in class nor does he go to the extreme of using slang expressions outside of class.

The playboy, who is loaded with slang expressions on the outside, usually has too busy a social life to study much and therefore he does not speak too good English. Some examples of slang expressions used by these playboys outside the classroom are, when referring to girls, "Hi babe", "Hi ya chick," or "What a dish." These personal expressions are compared to "Hi June," or "Hello Betty," inside the classroom.

I know of one way to stop these differences between classroom and playground English. That is have your parents correct you every time you make a bad fault in your grammar. This help from your parents is brought about by you, the student, who sometimes speaks good English in class just to impress the professor and then immediately after class turns to his speaking of slang and careless English.

The difference between classroom and playground English may become smaller in time but they will be never be completely stopped.

COMMENT

The author of this theme has chosen—or has been required to choose—a subject about which he knows little. As a result, not only is he hazy and incomplete in his explanations but also he is unable to decide what attitude to take toward his materials. Is he aiming to give a simple description and definition of levels of English, or is he trying to convince his reader that out-of-class English is inferior to in-class English? In either case the paper is out of focus. The source of his trouble, very likely, is his insecurity with his subject. Obviously he has a nodding acquaintance with levels of usage, and he may even have heard that playground English, classroom English, and scholarly English are equally correct if their use is restricted to the place and occasion for which they are appropriate. But if he has heard his teacher say this, he is not quite sure that she means it, feels that somewhere he ought to say a good word for the King's English, and thus adopts what is almost certainly a position of insincerity—a bad start for any kind of writing.

In general, the theme is about average in clarity and correctness. There are none of the so-called "illiterate" mechanical errors. The author spells satisfactorily, and if allowance is made for some inconsistencies, he punctuates acceptably. His handling of agreement, however, is sometimes faulty. Thus in the first paragraph (sentence 3) a verb fails to agree with its subject, and in paragraph 6 a pronoun does not agree with its antecedent. The style and diction are at best mediocre. More often than in the average theme the reader will think of more exact words to express the writer's ideas and will be inclined to doubt whether he should give a grade of C to a student who writes "stop these differences" and "made a bad fault in your grammar" (both in paragraph 5).

On the credit side the writer displays some acquaintance with organization. Thus his paper contains an introduction, three main headings, and a conclusion. With this as a point of departure, however, the teacher may profitably point out that these main headings have not been sufficiently developed by means of details and illustrations. He will need to show him, for example, that though "Hi babe—Hi ya chick—What a dish" and "Hi June—Hello Betty" may be illustrations of the difference between out-of-class and in-class English, they are really quite inadequate if his generalizations about the levels of English are to have real meaning for

his reader. Furthermore, he should be shown that the attention given "the scholar," "the average student," and "the playboy" tend to make the reader—and apparently the writer too—almost lose sight of the fact that the subject of the theme is "The Difference between Inside and Outside Classroom English."

Theme 20
Rated E

Grade Distribution

A = 0
B = 0
C = 1
D = 6
E = 39

MY IMPRESSION OF REGISTRATION

This being my first year to enter college. I was quite worried about the subjects, I was to take. I wondered about the amount of hours I should carry. If the subjects for freshman would be listed for me, would I know if I could carry the subject or would it be too hard for me. These and many more came to my mind.

When I reached the college on Monday the fifteenth of September I found there was nothing for me to worry about for there were instructors to guide me.

My guide told me to get a schedule book at the Administration Building. The next day I got my book to work out in my mind what I thought a good schedule for the first college semester. Then it wasn't long until I was told we were to be divided into groups to go to the department we thought we would major in for instructions on how to fill out the schedule.

As I thought I would major in I joined that group. The instructors gave us very good instructions to how we were to make out the schedule.

Wednesday night we were told by professors how registration would take place. They told the direct route to take the people we were to see. We were told to come in the manner listed in the Booklet.

The day of registration came and as I was well instructed, I had very little trouble finding the correct route for me to take. I have one complaint to make about registration. Freshmen have the same days to register on the same day of the other students. Other than this one complaint I was well satisfied with registration.

COMMENT

No high school graduate should handle the writing system so poorly as does the author of this paper. The first sentence is a fragment; the third sentence capitalizes *if* within the sentence; common words like *untill*, *woundered*, *grupe* (*grups*), *complant*, *maner*, and *rute* are misspelled; and several of the sentences are hard pressed to make sense.

The organization of the paper is not satisfactory, but it does fall logically into four parts: (1) initial worries, (2) guidance and instruction, (3) outcome, (4) comment. Unfortunately, however, the author's basic sense of progression lacks the control of a unifying idea. Thus after introducing the worries which troubled him before his arrival at college and seemingly suggesting that the resolution of these worries will constitute the body of his theme, the author stifles this development by his single-sentence second paragraph. As a result, the body of the paper is irrelevant to the beginning.

It is evident, therefore, that the author's need for intensive coaching in organization and development is pressing. He must be made to see the necessity—as well as the method—for establishing a clear point of view and then selecting and arranging details in such a way as to satisfy the reader's sense of orderly arrangement and logical progression to a conclusion. He should be shown too that a chronological arrangement alone leads him into meaningless particulars and makes it difficult for him to unify his impressions. Finally, it should be pointed out that neither the outcome nor the complaint which precedes the diplomatic conclusion follows from the material which has preceded them.

This student has much to learn before he will be writing papers which should receive a passing grade.

Theme 21
Rated B+

Grade Distribution

A = 20
B = 19
C = 7
D = 0
E = 0

THE MOST INSPIRING TEACHER I HAVE KNOWN

He shuffled slowly up the sidewalk. No, he wasn't as active in the sunset of his days as he had been during the noon of his life. "Good morning," and he doffed his hat politely and continued on

his way to the old high school. In his hand was a brief case stuffed full of papers which he had checked the night before.

He opened the door of the high school math room and began his rather tedious task of putting problems on the board for his students to work. It was only 7:30, but his day's work had begun.

We trooped into geometry class with a smile on our faces and prayer in our hearts, and although we were having our semester examination we couldn't actually dread geometry class.

A sharp rap on the desk brought the class to order. Then began the grueling test. But it was not hard because we all seemed to like geometry, and we didn't mind the study. In reality the class really like the teacher and this was the miraculous factor which produced a class which liked to study geometry.

The papers were gathered by the teacher and the discussion of the test began. With infinite patience he explained the problems to us. As he worked with the chalk the white substance began to creep on to his suit.

With a snap in his merry blue eyes he would turn to the class and begin asking questions. To the better students he gave the most difficult questions, saving the easier ones for the other students. He did not like to embarrass Johnny or Jack so he tried to ask them questions fitted to their mentality.

At the end of the period there was a great clamor from the students for one of his famous jokes. With a twinkle in his eyes he would nod his snow-white head and close his eyes to think. Never was he without a joke to tell his classes; never did he tell the same joke twice. The room echoed with laughter as the stories progressed.

The bell gave its cry and we trooped out feeling merry and happy.

This is a typical class of one of the greatest men and teachers I have ever known. He loved his work and this love radiated through his teachings and crept into the souls of his students. He inspired us to become better students and better people by showing us that study does not have to be drudgery. To those of us who knew him better he gave a bit of his wisdom and personality. He used to tell us that, in order to be better citizens of God's World, we should get every ounce of education we could possibly get.

Who was he? He was Professor Hayes, a man who dedicated his life to the teaching of young people. Not only did he teach us math, but he taught us love and cheerfulness and the art of being a better person.

When I was a senior in high school, Mr. Hayes died of a heart attack. But as long as a student of his lives, Mr. Hayes will never die because to each one of us he gave something of himself.

COMMENT

The student who wrote this paper apparently has done a great deal of reading. This background, plus a subject in which the student was sincerely interested, has produced a strong B theme. Reading has given him a good vocabulary, a supply of phrases, and a dramatic method; and on the whole his word choices are so good that it is apparent that he would profit from having his poorer ones called to his attention: for example, the illogical use of *and* for *for* as a connective in paragraph 3, the inaccurate choice of *cry* in paragraph 8, the inconsistent placing of *grueling* beside *not hard* in paragraph 4, and the adoption of hackneyed phrases like "sunset of his days" and "noon of his life" in paragraph 1. There are, of course, a few comma omissions, as in paragraph 3 (after *examination*) and 4 (after *teacher*).

The overall conception and plan of the paper are good, but they too should be improved. In the first place, one can well question whether the day of a semester examination is a "typical" day and whether semester examinations are likely to leave time for explanation, discussion, and jokes. Also, though the sincerity of the author is not to be doubted, the reader almost comes to feel that at times the writer has unconsciously stretched his description of a real and interesting personality so as to make it fit a literary prototype. Finally, one may feel that the actual examples given of the teacher's behavior hardly seem sufficient to justify the degree of enthusiasm which the class displays. On the whole, however, the student has done very well; and even if the dramatic method of presentation, the style, and the concrete examples do not always keep pace with the student's enthusiasm, there is the comforting assurance throughout that if the student doesn't always know what he is doing, he at least knows what he is trying to do.

Readers will probably vary in their judgments of the short paragraphs. No doubt the student should learn to control larger segments

of material in a paragraph; yet the paragraphs as they stand are not ineffective as a series of vignettes, though rewriting and combining some of them would certainly result in improvement.

Mechanical errors are few. *Like* for *liked* in paragraph 4 and the misspelling of *embarrass* in paragraph 6 may both be careless errors which point to the need for more care in proofreading. The omission of the comma in the last sentence of paragraph 6 (as well as the use of *so* as a conjunction) may well be pointed out, but the failure to use a comma before *because* in the final sentence is more serious because it produces a somewhat ludicrous, unintended meaning.

Judged as a whole, the paper is well above average in intelligence, interest, and method. An improvement in style and plan would raise it to the A level.

