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THE WAY WE WORD: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC VIEW OF BASIC WRITERS WRITING IN FRESHMAN COMPOSITION

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

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* * * * *

The Ohio State University

1982

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Susan Ann, Kathleen Elizabeth,
Mrs. E. L. Fraley, Mrs. M. T. Epling, Sr.,
Don, Joe, Lucille, and the student writers
in English 113
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose, proclaims the Preacher. That time for college freshmen to learn to write is when they enter freshman composition. At least, it would appear that this is the right time, judging from the number of freshmen who each year must take the course, a course required but seldom very popular. Most graduates may have painful memories of trying to figure out what an objective complement was, of trying to please a teacher who spent long fall months extinguishing grammatical brush fires from their writing, or of trying "to retrieve interesting lies about how they spent their summer vacation."\(^1\)

Implicit in the composition requirement are the assumptions that competency is valued in college and society and that writing skills can be taught and learned at the freshman level, thereby preparing students for success in later college courses and in their professional and social lives.

How carefully have these assumptions been examined? Can college students, especially the non-traditional
remedial students, be taught how to write? Can they develop writing competency after a quarter or semester in freshman composition?

The Literary Crisis

"A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver" observed King Solomon, but words unfitly spoken—and written—are bringing down public denunciation upon the heads of today's unskilled writers and the English teachers who through what Landwehr calls "benign neglect" are being forced to share in the students' guilt. There seems little doubt that a literary crisis exists and the public is demanding an accounting. Graves argues:

The public has good reason to wonder why after twelve years of education, after several thousand hours spent in the classroom studying English, so many young people graduate from high school still unable to write a good sentence or compose a coherent paragraph. One thing the public may not realize is that English teachers see themselves primarily as teachers of literature, not composition, and as a consequence most class time is spent studying literature.

Although the public may not have realized why English teachers did not see themselves as writing teachers when Graves spoke out in 1976, the public is realizing more today. Articles in non-professional magazines dealing with the literacy crisis appear to run a close third to those on dieting and Liz's latest husband. A recent Reader's Digest article cited Donald Graves' survey findings that "among 222 education courses for future
teachers offered at 36 universities, only two were in the teaching of writing." The article, "Why Kids Can't Write," listed ten steps for parents to take to improve their children's writing. Not only teachers are being called to give an account, but also parents as well are being challenged to be responsible.

A Plea for Accountability

A time to every purpose also includes "a time to keep silent and a time to speak." Today appears to be the time to speak, witness the vocal public concern over writing deficiencies. The public cry for accountability may have been nurtured in Washington, argues Lawson et al., but it has spread to state and local governments.

The public is speaking out for a return to the old paths--the basics. In today's restless, quickly-changing world, tomorrow looks too uncertain. All around there seems to be a public mental attitude of anxiety and confusion. We cannot balance the budget, national or personal; we are afraid to drink the water, eat the food, breathe the air. With tomorrow so unpredictable, there is really only one direction to look, and that is backwards--if not back to the security of the womb, at least to something solid, sure, stable--back to the old landmarks, back to the time when students could read and write, goes the argument.
There is great public pressure on educational planners to return to basics. In a world gone awry, there's something so basic about basics, and being able to write is basic. Recognizing the writing need as basic is one thing; meeting this need is another. James R. Squire describes the writing situation as follows: "Writing . . . is the disgrace of American education. . . . In no other area of elementary, secondary, and college English education is our need so great."  

Teachers cannot escape the teaching of writing task by saying it is too difficult. At the college level, freshmen, educational consumers, pay teachers to teach them to write. In one sense, teachers are in an adversarial role where they must "demonstrate (often quantitatively) to administrators and elected officials that what they are doing works." Accountability has, indeed, become the watchword in education.

Actually, the roots of accountability go back to 1964 when the terms "cultural deprivation" and "cultural difference" were first found in the Education Index. By the end of 1965, these topics were the most heavily-itemed areas listed, according to Shaughnessy. Responding to the call to be accountable to college freshmen, particularly academically deficient writers, fifty-five colleges and universities revealed that they either had established or were in the process of establishing
alternative writing programs which would give special help to the remedial student before he entered regular freshman composition.10

The decision to establish special programs for these students deficient in writing, as well as other basic English skills, was based upon declining achievement test scores on the American College Test, the Scholastic Aptitude Test, and The National Assessment of Educational Progress in Writing. At The Ohio State University, Lunsford reported that the incoming freshmen followed the general trend of declining scores. Of the some 2,000 freshmen writing a short placement sample, 30 percent could not formulate a thesis statement or develop it in edited American English.11

However, the remedial English pilot study at The Ohio State University revealed that adults can be taught to write, and that special remedial writing programs can prepare students to succeed in regular freshman English. Eighty percent of the remedial or basic writers passed freshman composition with a grade of C- or above, as compared with 40 percent of those who passed without having had the carefully structured and monitored pilot program.12
Unanswered Questions in Freshman Composition

Yet, while we have some idea of the writing experiences of students in basic or remedial writing programs, we do not know much about the actual day-to-day writing experiences of basic writers in a regular freshman English classroom. We know little about the writers, the contexts provided for writing to take place, and the kinds of writing students are asked to do. More importantly, we know little about the writing process as experienced by these college freshmen.

One of the reasons we know so little about the composing or writing process of college freshmen is that, until recently, attention had been focused on the composition itself—the product. Albeit we have isolated and analyzed specific elements in students' writing such as errors, syntax, and length, this approach has not shed much light on the writing process or on those components which affect this process.

In addition, understanding the nature of composing is difficult because composing is a complex process. Even asking the right questions about such a complex process is not easy. What do we ask about that which we cannot see? And we cannot see the cognitive domain, that area of the innerworkings of the psychological processes where much of composing occurs.
However, we must ask questions if we are to learn more about the complex web of learning to write, more about the interrelated components of the college classroom setting. In other words, what happens in the freshman composition class?

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to investigate and describe the writing experiences of remedial or basic writers in a traditional freshman composition class, employing an ethnographic approach. More specifically, the study sought answers to the following questions:

1. What can be learned about the basic writer's ability to write in freshman composition?
2. What kinds of writing and occasions for writing take place in the freshman classroom setting?
3. How do students identify and speak about the composing process in their own writing?
4. What are the teacher characteristics which encourage the development of writing development?
5. What components help create a supportive writing atmosphere?

**Importance of the Study**

While the development of writing competency has been stressed as an important goal of education, an examination
of the literature reveals that in comparison with studies of the writing process of elementary and secondary students, relatively little is known about the writing process of older students in the natural setting of a college classroom.

The studies already done in the area of developing writing skills have certainly provided light at the end of a darkened tunnel of understanding the writing process. However, "most of the research confines writers to clinical settings or requires them to compose aloud. The results are not applicable to school writing situations," reports Edelsberg.¹³

In spite of the fact that we don't really know much about how writing competency is developed, we find the literature replete with numerous approaches for teaching composition. Sommers likens this preoccupation with procedures over theory to a fascination with "technology before there is a science to support it."¹⁴

Also expressing strong concern at the lack of research in the college classroom field, Shaughnessy argues that "we have yet no sociology nor psychology (nor even an adequate history) of teaching the advanced skills of literacy to young adults who have not acquired them. Yet many such students are now in college classrooms."¹⁵
Like the research now being conducted by Susan Florio and Christopher M. Clark in the elementary classroom, this inquiry examines the real world of basic writers in the natural freshman setting: the kind of writing occurring, the occasions for writing, and the processes through which students go to produce this writing... descriptive studies of the writing process provide immediately a rich case literature available to both researchers and practitioners from which insight may be drawn in the day to day pursuit of more effective ways of helping children[and adults]to become competent writers.\textsuperscript{16}

This descriptive study seeks to provide substance or content to our understanding about freshman writers. In other words, before we can have a comprehensive science for composing, we must have more field data. Before we can determine what should occur in the classroom, we must know what does occur. The importance of this study, it seems, is to present classroom life by "recreating it through the prose of description and interpretation." Such a classroom recreation would permit the reader to experience, vicariously, life in the freshman composition classroom.

\textbf{Organization of the Remainder of the Study}

The organizational plan for the remainder of the study is as follows:
Chapter Two presents a review of related literature including sections dealing with ethnography in education, ethnography in the composition classroom, studies on the composing process, literature on divergent teaching procedures for improving writing in freshman composition, literature on creativity and the composing process, composing as a creative process, and basic writers.

Chapter Three contains a description of the method, procedures, and sources of data, including a section on the study site and the persons in the study. It also provides an overview of the classroom pattern and the classroom setting.

Chapter Four contains a report of the components interacting to create a supportive writing climate: Students' experiences, expectations, and understandings; teacher availability for individual help; taking time and explaining thoroughly; and variety in writing.

Chapter Five explains the lecture on creative process and writing. In addition, students write about Stage Two: Process as observed in their own writing.

Chapter Six deals with Developmental Stage Three: Products. Classroom procedures and students essays are contained in this chapter. In addition, students write about their composing processes as they prepare their essays.
Chapter Seven contains a report of students' writing habits in freshman composition, a panel discussion, advice to incoming freshmen, and students' evaluation of the class and research study.

Chapter Eight contains a summary of the study, conclusions from the data, and recommendations for further study.
CHAPTER ONE - NOTES


2 Proverbs 25:11.


8 Lawson et al., pp. 2-3.


11 Lunsford, p. 5.

12 Lunsford, p. 12.


CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This ethnographic study explores and describes the actual writing world of basic writers in the freshman composition classroom. We know that "a particular level of achievement" has been attained by these basic writers in skills areas in the college remedial program. In contrast, however, surprisingly little is known about the teaching and writing experiences of these same students after they have demonstrated proficiency in the remedial classroom and have moved into the traditional freshman composition setting.

Searching for answers to what goes on in that naturalistic freshman writing world led to an examination of four areas of literature considered pertinent to this study: Ethnography in Education, Divergent Improvement Procedures in Freshman Composition, Creativity and the Composing Process, and Basic Writers.

Two limitations were placed on the scope of the literature: Studies dealing with classroom environment and studies on teacher characteristics and procedures. Studies in both these areas are so numerous that an entire chapter
could be devoted to each area. However, specific works in these areas will be cited in the body of this paper when appropriate.

Ethnography in Education

"Ethnography" is the label currently appearing in the literature to describe the research approach generically called "field study" or "qualitative research." Other terms, often used synonymously, are "case study," "collaborative," and participant-observation; but it is the term "ethnography" which has captured education's imagination. In fact, since 1980, the term has approached "faddism," notes Rist.³

Using an ethnographic approach, the researcher goes out into the classroom "field," the culture where he interacts with teachers and students for a designated time in an attempt to help others understand "the nature of the phenomena explored and also in building and critiquing theory."⁴ While quantitative research has been the approach used most often for studying problems in education, qualitative methods are considered fruitful for seeking answers to questions not "amenable to experimentation and statistical treatment."⁵ McCutcheon argues, in fact, that using the quantitative approach exclusively "may permit important aspects of schools to elude our grasp and substantially misrender events in the classroom."⁶
toward discovery, toward an open-endedness, ethnography seems especially appropriate for searching for answers to what goes on in the complex, dynamic classroom world.

**Variety in Educational Settings**

The ethnographic perspective provides insight into a variety of educational settings. The uniqueness of the ethnographic approach for uncovering the unexpected was revealed in Porter-Gehrie and Crowson's study of urban principals at work. The researchers discovered a new dimension for the principals' role at the same time the research was occurring. For example, when the principals tried to implement a new mastery learning-based curriculum (among other things) which had been dictated by others, the principals' "disturbed balance" could be clearly seen. Prior to this time, the principals had functioned more freely in their decision-making responsibilities.

Attempting to understand more about the dynamics of the teaching-learning process in the college classroom, Cooper used the ethnographic approach to study a junior course at Michigan State University. She found that students perceived the class session in light of the verbal (pronoun usage, for example) and nonverbal behaviors of the teacher; the use of space; "the local
activity; and the moment to moment changes in the event."⁹ Students steeped in the "school culture" provided insight into the class interaction "that could not be discovered any other way."¹⁰ This study suggests the importance of students' perceptions in classroom ethnography.

Kyle studied two teachers' activities in their second grade classroom, extending the ethnographic approach to include the dimensions of educational criticism. Methods were adapted from anthropology and aesthetic criticism to the classroom. "The two disclosures included description, interpretation, and appraisal of teachers' activities, problems emerging from them, and apparent effects on the curriculum."¹¹

Ethnography in the Composition Classroom

Conducting a descriptive field study at the high school level, Edelsberg spent five months with an eleventh-grade Intermediate Composition Class, functioning as a participant observer.¹² In this class, he discovered that students' responses to their teacher's comments on their writing was not a simple, automatic response. Students' revisions "originate in sources other than reaction to teacher remarks appearing on students' papers."¹³ Edelsberg concluded that students' use of teachers' comment is "a complex activity, related to the whole of instruction, and seemingly influenced by students' previous experience with school-sponsored writing."¹⁴
Margot Soven argues the need for more research in the teaching of composition using an ethnographic perspective. She cites Shaughnessy's work with basic writers as ethnographic "in a limited way" because Shaughnessy asked ethnographic questions and used ethnographic methodology. For example, Shaughnessy attempted to find answers to students' writing problems by examining their writing against a background of the language customs and behavior of their community vis-a-vis the school's language.

Soven cites other ethnographic studies concerned with "how much people are writing and the kinds of writing they are doing." For example, Lee Odell is studying actual writing in industrial settings. Also, Dixie Goswani and Shirley Heath at The University of Tennessee are conducting ethnographic research in an attempt to understand "the students' own concepts of the function of writing and how they arrived at those concepts." In addition, Heath found that students responded to writing instruction when they understood how writing was actually used in their community and work setting.

Studies on the Composing Process

A survey of the related literature reveals that little research has been done on the composing process and the teaching of that process. The studies which have shed light on composing as process have been of a qualitative
nature, largely descriptive case studies. Moreover, much of the research done has occurred at the elementary and secondary levels. Barritt and Knoll elaborate on why this is so, why the study of writing as process has focused on young children and adolescents.\textsuperscript{19}

The cognitive-developmentalist believes that one of the most fruitful ways to understand any mature mental activity is to study ontogenesis of the process in the child. Only when we have charted the genesis and development of an intellectual activity do we approach complete understanding of the "behavior" of mature human beings.\textsuperscript{20}

In spite of the studies already done among public school children, further research on the writing processes are needed at these early levels, urges Petty, "so later research of more traditional experimental design might result in more definitive responses to teaching issues."\textsuperscript{21}

The key researchers, those laying the groundwork for illuminating the composing processes of young children and adolescents, will be discussed in chronological order under the classification headings of studies of young children, adolescents, and college students.

The Composing Processes of Elementary Children

The writing processes of seven-year-old children were studied by Graves (1973).\textsuperscript{22} He observed individual children, interviewed them, analyzed their writings, and observed them in groups. In addition, he studied children's writing behavior in terms of "formal" or "informal"
classroom settings. The more relaxed classroom environment seemed to encourage children to write more and to provide them opportunities for "greater choice," as one might expect.

In addition, two types of writers were identified: the "reactive" writers who talked to themselves, did not meditate long, and had little sense of audience; and the "reflective" writers who "rehearse little before writing, periodically reread, and show a growing sense of audience." The most significant contribution of the study was the degree to which Graves used the case study approach with eight children.

Now in process is another descriptive field study being conducted in two East Lansing, Michigan elementary schools by Florio and Clark. This research is exploring the kinds of writing and the occasions for writing occurring naturally in one second grade classroom and one sixth grade classroom.

The Composing Processes of High School Students

The seminal study on composing as process was conducted by Janet Emig in 1971. Using a case-study approach to gather humanistic data, she studied the composing processes of eight sixteen and seventeen-year-old Chicago twelfth graders, composing aloud. Meeting four times with each student and taping each session, Emig
reported that writers were more interested in revising "self-sponsored writing" than "school-sponsored" writing. Also, when composing for themselves, the writers spent more time reflecting and redesigning thoughts; wrote longer themes; and were more personally committed to the writing as compared to the writing they produced for school assignments. Another important finding with implications for teaching process was that little or no time was provided in the classroom for the discovery or pre-writing phase of the composing process. In a later study, Mischel corroborated the finding of too little time being allowed for the important phase of pre-writing.

In 1974, Terry Mischel and Charles K. Stallard, explored the composing processes of twelfth graders. Mischel studied one student, Clarence, in depth, as Clarence composed aloud and reported on his writing experiences. Mischel's findings, similar to Emig's, suggested that Clarence was more personally committed to writing for self as opposed to writing for teacher.

Stallard's work, a University of Virginia doctoral dissertation, used data gathered from an observational check list, an interview, and an analysis of students' writing to study what thirty student writers did as they composed. He found that as compared with poorer writers, good writers were slower. They spent more time in
prewriting, actual writing, and in careful reading and revising.

Joyce Armstrong Carroll's dissertation (1979) explored the composing processes of students from the seventh through the twelfth grades to determine if students taught by teachers trained in the writing process of the Emig Model at the New Jersey Writing Project Summer Institute would show greater writing improvement over students of teachers not trained. Analyzing the writing products of approximately 1600 students' pretests and posttests, Carroll reported

the training in process based on the Emig Model . . . was a potent influence on the development of writing abilities. Students of teachers so trained showed significant and important increase in writing performance.\textsuperscript{31}

Edelsberg's important work with eleventh graders was conducted in a classroom where the teacher used an interactionist approach to the composing process. Studying students engaged in the revision stage of process, Edelsberg stressed the importance of finding for his research a collaborative teacher who viewed

writing as a process, depicting it to unfold in stages. Writing growth, like the archeological dig, takes time, but if patiently cultivated, may lead to significant discovery and development.\textsuperscript{32}
The Composing Processes of College Students

The year 1978 appears to have been a vintage year for studies on the composing processes of college writers. Four studies provide valuable information about process. Sondra Perl, using a case study approach, chose a community college setting to study five writers "deficient" in basic skills. She taped the writers composing aloud on four separate occasions. Students were then directed to "externalize their thinking as much as possible" during the taping. Perl's major finding was that unskilled writers do know how to compose. Their writing "remains problematic because of the nature of their already internalized deeply embedded composing process."

Another important 1978 case study, conducted by Nancy Sommers, explored ways in which eight college freshmen and seven experienced adult writers revised their writing. One significant finding was that during the revision stage of composing, the experienced adult writer made changes on the sentence level while the college freshmen made changes on word and phrase levels.

Focusing on the basic or problem writer, Rinderer advocates that fuller attention be given to the uniqueness of "the person" in the composing process in order to provide a more complete composing theory. The person brings his own special experience, understanding, language abilities, kinds of errors, and reasons for errors to the
writing act. Responding to persons in the process means "seeing where they are developmentally vis-a-vis learning to write, developing self-reflections and intuitions about writing, and understanding feelings as well as giving support where needed." This attention to persons has significant implication for understanding, teaching, and researching the composing process.

The most recent literature reviewed was a Columbia University doctoral dissertation written by Bessie Waites Blake which examined the composing processes of adult basic writers. In addition to the composing process, Blake focused on student attitudes toward writing, classroom interaction, and quality of work. One of the two courses involved in the study used expository prose models while the other course used experience writing as a starting point before moving toward more abstract writing. Twenty students were randomly placed in each class and one case study from each group participated in six to ten one-and-one-half hour sessions. Two significant findings came from this research: Prewriting as an act of discovery continued throughout the composing process, and the composing process was the same regardless of the type of writing done. In addition, Blake reported that whatever rhetorical pattern was assigned, "students in both classes began their essays with personal experience writing."
Obviously strides have been made in providing guidelines for understanding the composing process and teaching the process since Braddock, Lloyd-Jones, and Schoer likened the state of research in composing to chemical research, emerging from a period of alchemy. Emig, too, had considered the metaphor "alchemy" an apt one for describing our understanding of how persons of all ages compose. Even though Emig's landmark study had led us up "one rung of a ladder up from alchemy" (as she had hoped), "we still need vigorous research on written discourse and the composing process." 

Literature on Divergent Teaching Procedures for Improving Writing in Freshman Composition

Because of the complexity of the writing process and the limited understanding of this process and how best to teach it, there is a plethora of literature offering a vast range of recommendations on what "should be done" to improve writing in freshman composition.

Too often teachers in a composition class make assignments, students do them, and "little reaction occurs regarding what is being done and what students would like to be doing," observed Jeffry, after studying four high school project schools as part of the University of Western Australia Writing Research Project. In contrast to Jeffry's finding that there is little concern about "what is being done and what students would like," some
freshman composition instructors appear to be extremely sensitive to the desires and needs of their students, as students strive for writing competency. A variety of teaching strategies is being tried in freshman classrooms across the nation.

For example, at Boise State University, Leahy advocates allowing students to "contract for the writing they will do." He maintains that this procedure will improve students' attitude toward writing as well as their writing. Also, at the University of Houston, class textbooks are seldom used in Portales' composition class. He stresses the value of teaching students to play with words, a game which he has dubbed "idea-land." Students' writing improves, reports Portales, as they give more attention to fresh titles and introductions, a "satisfactory finishing-up feeling that these exercises lend the writing process." In addition, Landwehr recommends that sentence combining and classical rhetoric be taught, because they "provide useful tools to write well."

At the Delaware Technical and Community College, Wilmington Campus, the composition course content was changed from literary culture and writing to practical writing, relevant to the students' "technical interests," reveals Silver. Freshmen, earlier, had not benefitted from the traditional writing approach because they saw no purpose for such writing outside the classroom.
Silver surveyed the employers of the graduates to determine kinds of writing and occasions for writing which existed in the work world and used these writing tasks for in-class focus. Now, students see writing taught in a meaningful context, and this "is one way to help improve writing competency of today's college students." This approach appears to have had a positive effect across the curriculum, on this campus, as the technical faculty are realizing that technical skills alone are not enough. After listening to successful business people brought on campus, instructors (other than English instructors) saw that "the ability to communicate technical knowledge with clarity and precision would largely determine career success" for their students.

Stephen Marcus who teaches writing at the University of California, Santa Barbara, advocates the use of free writing as a means, among other things, to help free freshman writers "from premature editing of ideas." In addition to the value of free writing for freshman composition, Marcus suggests that five minutes at the end of any class, across the curriculum, would improve students' writing. For example, in math class a student could free-write on the difference between a formula and a graph, allowing writing practice for the
student and providing "ways for the teacher to attend to the substance of the course."^50

Another procedure found to improve writing performance was the use of a weekly discussion group "designed to facilitate self-awareness, confidence, and social consciousness,"^51 reported Kernan, after his study of 120 freshman women writers at Seton Hill College in Pennsylvania. Three instructors taught one experimental and one regular freshman composition group with everything the same except for the verbal tasks from the Human Development Program. Kernan found that there was a significant improvement of the writing of the students in the discussion classes.^52

Focusing on another area of the writing picture, author-lecturer, Thom Seymour, stresses the value of a real audience for composition students.^53 He argues that the well-read composition teacher with broad interests is more real than the ideal or general audience. Writing is communication, and without a sense of audience, classroom writing is "done in a vacuum."^54 Seymour pleads for composition teachers to be readers first and teachers second.

In their survey of English programs throughout the United States, James Squire and Roger Applebee found that "perhaps the most successful practice in the teaching of composition has been the regular conference to
discuss the problems and progress of the individual students." In spite of the efficacy of the student conference, its use is not widespread.

In summary, it seems reasonable to conclude that the vast amount of literature on new strategies for teaching freshman composition indicates that teachers are exploring, are searching for better ways to help students develop writing proficiency. Whether the emphasis is on contract writing, fresh titles and introductions, technical relevance, free-writing, weekly discussion, audience, or student conferences, there's always the hunch, that just around the corner is the magic dust that will solve students' writing problems.

**Literature on Creativity and the Composing Process**

Since one part of this study deals with writing as a creative process, it seemed important to explore the concept of creativity as related to composing. Each time a student writes a word, a sentence, a paragraph, an essay, he is creating, by one definition. Creativity is the bringing of something new into being. This creation is a statistically infrequent one in which original insight is sustained until there is full development. Monaghan sees the new creation as "a self" expression. He elaborates: "I see something, I get an idea and take it unto myself and turn it around and elaborate it and expand it.
I then express it. This is the nature of creative expression." 58

A particularly insightful source on creativity was Brewster Ghiselin's *The Creative Process*, containing biographical and autobiographical writings of some of the world's great leaders from the arts and sciences. 59 What went on in their minds before the birthing of a new mathematical formula, a sonata, a poem, a new theory? Ghiselin reports on certain processes of mind which were shared by those leaders involved in creativity.

To summarize briefly, there was first a sense of being drawn to the unknown, an intuitive knowing that in that dark, unconscious, there was "something new." This phase of the creative process was characterized by a conscious striving to make connections, a wrestling for the elusive "new." Next, insight or flashes of inspiration came at a time when conscious mental activity was thought to have ceased. Following insight, there was a nurturing or elaboration of the original insight—a carrying it further or waiting for more areas of the image or the "new" to be revealed. Finally, the new expression was shaped or fitted into an appropriate pattern or form.

Parallel to the discussion of the creative process as described in Ghiselin's work, as well as in Rollo May's *The Courage to Create*, 60 is another study which
illuminates the psychological process of writers at work. Malcolm Cowley discussed the stages which writers pass through. This book is based upon taped interviews of successful writers: published short-story writers and novelists.

The first stage is the "germ" stage; the writer catches a hint of an idea from a face or a word. Second, there comes the "meditation" stage, characterized by a brooding and rejecting of parts and pieces until some "whole" is put together. Then, there is the rough draft stage, and last, the final draft. Later Cowley added a fifth stage which he calls "increased sensitivity," a time when the chatter of birds can move the writer to tears, and words take on increased meaning.

Still others have described the composing process in terms of prewriting, composing, reformulation, and editing; and prevision, vision, and revision. Whatever the labels used to describe the creative or the writing process, one thing is clear: both creating and composing are complex processes involving conscious effort and a relaxation of effort before the "new" can be produced.

Gebhardt summarizes points from the 1974 Position Statement of the NCTE's Commission on Composition about the dynamic quality of the writing process:
Writing moves and grows so that initial ideas and sentences become coherent, complex, and clear. Whether students conceive of this process as starting with thought or with physical behavior seems less important than that they know that writing is not a static thing.\(^6^4\)

Stated another way, writing is work. If students can be helped to understand that it's not only permissible but inevitable to struggle with an idea through a series of false starts and circular ruminations, maybe they will find the confidence and patience to do the hard work necessary to teach themselves to write.\(^6^5\)

**The Human Brain**

After having briefly looked at the processes involved in creativity and composing, it seems appropriate to look at the inner source of these processes—the human brain. In fact, Emig argues that a return to "basics" in the teaching of writing would lead us to the "organic structure" that interacts with process to produce writing. The brain is one of "the basics."\(^6^6\)

Today, across disciplines, implications are being drawn from a plethora of readings on brain research and function.\(^6^7\) While an indepth review of literature on brain research would not be relevant to this study, a brief overview of some literature on brain function seems basic to understanding creativity and composing.

Obviously, there are unique qualities of the left and right brain. The conscious left brain is logical and
analytical; it functions in a step-by-step progression. This brain is the reading, writing, speaking, predominately verbal brain which carefully evaluates by going through steps in the scientific process. It is a conscious problem-solver, attempting to make sense or connections from the information available to it from the conscious mind. It is bound by that which it is able to consciously retrieve from memory and thought to work with. In a sense, the left brain is the judge or editor. At the appropriate time in the composing process, this judging quality of the left brain is invaluable. However, as Krashen's work on monitor theories indicates, "attention to editing [too soon in the process] can impede or stop the composing process."\(^68\)

The right brain is also a conscious brain (albeit long thought of as the dark, unconscious side), a fully functioning emotional organism constantly taking in stimuli and programming it. Although it cannot express its "aliveness" verbally, only nonverbally, it understands "a surprisingly large number of words."\(^69\) The brain is intuitive, perceives in images, and is problem-solving. Having no limitations or constraints, it can see "altered relationships" (another definition of creativity) which can act as flashes of inspiration or insight.
The ideal arrangement for fully functioning power for creativity or composing is that both sides work together in an optimum interchange: For example, in the writing process, a left brain word passes to the right brain, which then dislodges an image. This "new" then crosses over to be evaluated by the analytical left brain.

Composing as a Creative Process

The teacher who views writing as a creative process will stress the importance of allowing time for composing: Time to search, to brood while the "conscious mind works on discovering ideas." This teacher will remind the students that "an idea doesn't come immediately and can't be forced." Furthermore, the teacher who views writing as a creative process will not accept final drafts which may be grammatically correct and neatly organized but mindless. "He expects from his students thought and imagination in addition to order."

According to Moffett:

Teaching writing is teaching how to manifest thought into language, and this requires raising consciousness of all the spontaneous and often unconscious cosmologizing to the point that it passes from verbalizable to verbalized. At the same time, the writer has to be conscious of how the verbalization now manifesting to himself needs to evolve to that degree of explicitness that will make his idea emerge sharply for others.
While the writing process may encompass the various stages of the creative process, one researcher declares that creativity cannot be taught. In Moslemi's study to test creativity "teachability," she used an experiment design with ninth graders at three schools in Illinois. Using the Torrence test in creative thinking and examining writing samples of two pretests and two posttests, she found that a unit taught on creative writing could not improve creative writing abilities. However, the experimental group demonstrated "growth in verbal fluency and flexibility."

**Basic Writers**

Since the study will focus on basic writers in freshman composition, a review of some pertinent literature seems appropriate.

Admitted to colleges through open admission policies, basic writers are those writers who are placed in remedial or developmental English classes because of a deficiency in basic skills. Basic writers, reports Perl, represent a growing proportion of the college population whose "linguistic educational background sets them apart from the better-prepared traditional college student."

**Growth in Basic Skills**

Guy Smith pointed out that 71 percent of all accredited colleges and universities in the United States had
a skills program lab, according to a 1974 survey. 77 In addition, a 1976 study by William Moore revealed that more than 80 percent of the community colleges in the nation had some type of learning laboratory designated, in part, to aid the unskilled writer. 78 While the basic writer has for too long viewed academic writing as "a trap, not a way of saying something to someone," 79 Perl discovered, however, that the so called unskilled writers have "writing competencies that lie beneath the surface." 80 These writing competencies frequently come to the surface in basic skills classes.

After a period of time, perhaps one or more quarters or semesters, when certain competency levels have been reached, basic writers move from the skills class into the regular freshman composition classroom. Since there seems to be little agreement on what constitutes "competency," no clear-cut standard for measuring appears to exist across classrooms. Shaughnessy points out that at one end of the scale a writer is considered proficient if he writes correctly with few or no mechanical errors while at the other end of the measuring scale, certain stylistic features cherished by individual teachers are required before a writer is considered competent. 81
Garnes found that at The Ohio State University Writing Workshop the basic or remedial students want to write. In fact, she says, they want to write well but are "frustrated and ashamed of what they produce, and the disparity between the clarity they hope for and the confusion they write—often just as confusing to their own eyes as to others—increases their frustration." 82

Helping basic writers shed negative writing images is an important objective in basic writing at the University of Pittsburgh, reports David Bartholomae. 83 He seeks to provide at his university instructional procedures for helping remedial students see and describe themselves as writers. "The only text for the course, then, is the students' own writing and if there is a theory of instruction, it is embodied in the kinds of conversation we have in class about that writing." 84 Even though the writer is aware of his "trail of errors behind him as he writes," 85 these errors in Bartholomae's program are understood as "marking a stage of growth. . . ." 86 Corroborating this view, Shaughnessy notes that, in regard to error, "it is not unusual for people acquiring a skill to get 'worse' before they get better and for writers to err more as they venture more." 87

Shaughnessy cautions, then, against expecting too much too soon and reminds teachers that "residual traces
of rudimentary difficulties . . . can remain."  

It takes time and patience for basic writers to continue improving their writing skills. In fact, the bad news is that "should their fragile competence go unattended and unpracticed for a semester or two, the students would most likely be back almost where they had started."  

The good news is that basic writers can learn to write competently. Evaluating one group of fifty students after a semester in basic writing, Shaughnessy reported that "rated on coherence, control over sentence structure, focus, development, organization and care," there was improvement by almost all students. In fact, three-fifths showed marked improvement. Since those first "strangers to academe" who produced essays which "stunned the teachers who read them" walked through CUNY's doors, basic writers have continued to demonstrate that they do respond to instruction. Basic writers can learn to write.  

Success in Freshman Composition  

There is more good news about basic writing "graduates." Reporting on the winter quarter follow-up of English 193X and control group students, Lunsford noted:  

While it is certainly too early to predict eventual rate of persistence, the following data clearly suggest that the remedial English classes helped the students to succeed in freshman English and that in general, the 193X students are moving into the mainstream of our University more easily than are the members of the control group.
Also, the students from New York's CUNY system have been successful. Follow-up on 600 writers from one of the earliest programs (SEEK) showed that 40 percent graduated, many of whom went to graduate school. Moreover, Professor Lucille Shandlof from CUNY's Hunter College indicated that developmental students in freshman composition achieved successful completion essentially indistinguishable from regular students.

A report from Northern Virginia Community College's Chairman of the Division of Developmental English reveals that "qualified developmental students . . . do as well or better than non-developmental students--65 percent got C or better in regular courses vs. 54 percent for non-developmental students."

Lunsford cites rather remarkable conclusions from five innovative Community College remedial programs: "Remedial students make significantly higher grades than did students in non-remedial programs."

In conclusion the basic writer should not be scorned because, at first glance, he has such obvious difficulties communicating his ideas in standard English "the medium through which our culture transmits so much value to all." Learning to write well can be a lifetime challenge for most writers. In fact--Shaughnessy equates the writing difficulties of the basic writers to the "difficulties of all writers, write large."
Struggling for meaning and communicating fresh meaning in an appropriate, correct format require attention, time, and patience for all. The basic writers are those who face writing difficulties "later than most and must therefore work harder and faster to solve them."
CHAPTER TWO - NOTES


2I say "currently" because in a doctoral level course on qualitative research methods, taken in 1979, the term "ethnography" was not mentioned in the indexes of the five texts used in the class. (However, the term was mentioned briefly during class lectures.)


4McCutcheon, p. 6.

5Lecture by Donald P. Sanders, "Qualitative Research in Education" Educational Foundations and Research 800, The Ohio State University, January 1980.


8Porter-Gehrie and Crowson, p. 10.

10 Cooper, p. 22.


13 Edelsberg, p. 254.

14 Edelsberg, p. 254.


16 Soven, p. 3.

17 Soven, p. 5.

18 Soven, p. 5.


20 Cooper and Odell, p. 50.

21 Cooper and Odell, p. 75.

22 D. H. Graves, "Children's Writing: Research Directions and Hypotheses Based Upon an Examination of the Writing Processes of Seven-Year Old Children" (Ph.D. dissertation, State University of New York at Buffalo, 1973), cited by Cooper and Odell, eds., Research on Composing, p. 79.

23 Graves, p. 79.

24 Graves, p. 79.
25 Susan Florio and Christopher M. Clark, "Schooling and the Acquisition of Written Literacy: A Descriptive Case Study" (Proposal Submitted to the National Institute of Education, Teaching and Learning, 1978), p. 3.


27 Emig, p. 92.


29 Mischel, pp. 303-314.


32 Edelsberg, p. 105.


34 Perl, p. 4788-A.


38 Blake, pp. 4388-A - 4389-A.


40 Emig, p. 5.

41 Cooper and Odell, p. xi.


44 Marco A. Portales, "College Composition: Up the Wall and Two Pointers," Improving College and University Teaching, 28 (Fall 1980): 158-159.


47 Silver, p. 37.

48 Silver, pp. 36-37.

50 Marcus, p. 10.


52 Kernan, p. 3237-A.


54 Seymour, p. 66.


60 May, The Courage to Create.


63 Cooper and Odell, eds., p. 86.


66 Cooper and Odell, p. 59.


70 Lee Warren, "Singing and the Art of Writing." Improving College and University Teaching 29 (Fall 1981) 182.

71 Warren, p. 181.

72 Warren, p. 182.


Moslemi, p. 1775-A.

Perl, p. 4788-S.


Perl, p. 4788-A.

Shaughnessy, p. 283.

Sara Gam e s et al., "Report of the Writing Workshop: Basic Writing at The Ohio State University," prepared for Dean Diether H. Haenicke, The College of the Humanities and The Department of English of The Ohio State University, August 1979), p. 32.

84 Bartholomae, p. 90.

85 Shaughnessy, p. 7.

86 Bartholomae, p. 88.

87 Shaughnessy, p. 119.

88 Shaughnessy, p. 283.

89 Shaughnessy, p. 283.

90 Shaughnessy, p. 283.

91 Shaughnessy, p. 3.

92 Andrea A. Lunsford, "The Ohio State University Remedial English Pilot Project: Final Report and Follow-up Study" (prepared for the College of Humanities, The Ohio State University, 9 June 1977), 60.


96 Lunsford, p. 24.

Shaughnessy, p. 293.

Shaughnessy, p. 293.
CHAPTER THREE
METHOD, PROCEDURES, AND SOURCES OF DATA

This freshman composition class chosen for the study had a story to tell. To attempt to learn what that class story was required close attention to various components of the writing context: teacher and student attitudes toward writing, classroom activities, teaching techniques, the student writers and their writing habits, the composing process, and writing assignments, all of which made up part of the story.

Yet one can know about something—in this case, a freshman composition class—and still not know it, theorizes Lofland. Simply knowing about the elements that make up the life of a class could lead to stereotyping and distortion while knowing in a close face-to-face way can help in understanding the "real" range and nature of the writing process, as writers and teacher experienced their story.

So, what type of methodology would enable a researcher to get close to—in an attempt to know as opposed to knowing about—the college writers, their teacher, and their classroom world? What would be an appropriate
methodology? Lofland suggested salient features which should characterize such a method. These features were adapted as guidelines for this particular inquiry and are discussed as follows:

1. In order to know the freshman writers in their classroom setting, the researcher must spend significant periods of time in physical proximity, to facilitate non-threatening social relationships which would encourage students to speak freely about their writing experiences and those factors affecting their performance. Furthermore, procedures for collecting data should allow time and attention for details occurring in the research setting, the classroom.

2. The researcher should factually represent what he perceives as actually occurring in the freshman composition context.

3. A descriptive account should be given of the writers, teaching techniques, the writing process, kinds of writing done, and occasions for writing.

4. The students and the collaborating teacher should be permitted to tell about themselves as writers and about the freshman composition writing world as they view it because no substitute for face-to-faceness can become reasonable unless it allows the participants themselves to speak—unless it allows their world to be represented precisely in its own terms.²
So the one method which would permit this type of close exploration was an ethnographic or field study approach. While the terms "ethnographic," "field study," and "case study" are terms which will be used synonymously in this study, it is the term "ethnography" which is beginning to appear more recently and unexpectedly, in educational circles. One can say "unexpectedly" because "ethnography" earlier had been associated almost exclusively with anthropology. This type of inquiry has an "open-ended quality" to the process which allows for discovery.

Discovery is further described in ethnography by the term "serendipity," and refers to those findings which are unearthed in unexpected places. The researchers "cast a wide net when observing and collecting records because they believe that one never knows where one will stumble on something valuable." While not called explicitly "ethnographic," this appropriate mode of inquiry has been used successfully to discover more about students as writers at both the elementary and secondary levels. (Emig, 1971; Edelsberg, 1980; and Florio and Clark, in progress.) In fact, Emig contends that this approach, i.e. the field or case study approach, is "requisite to most sorts of future empirical investigation in this unexamined field."
Therefore, the method used for this study was a collaborative field technique using an ethnographic approach. Information was gathered from the classroom culture about "the qualities, essences, the character, and nature of classroom life," using the participant-observer stance of the researcher and the students' and classroom teacher's perspectives as well. Data from three vantage points provided a richer, more comprehensive picture of natural interactions. As the researcher, classroom teacher, and students shared their understandings about what went on in the classroom, they 'reeducate[d] our perception' and enabled others, vicariously, to experience the classroom life more fully.

**The Study Site**

This study took place at Rio Grande College and Community College during Fall Quarter 1981. Located in Southeastern Ohio and serving some 1,200 students, the 170 acre campus is in the center of a growing Appalachian region. Accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, Rio Grande College, (established in 1876) and Rio Grande Community College (established in 1974) "represent a unique marriage between public and private education, between career and liberal arts education, and between younger and older students," as stated in the 1981-83 Bulletin.
Rio Grande college students are preparing themselves for careers in teaching, business, or public service while those attending the Community College avail themselves of career programs, arts degree transfer programs, and continuing education.

In 1980-81, the freshman composition program was reorganized. It was removed from the Communicative Arts department and structured into a separate entity. This change occurred, in part, in response to the current challenge that schools be more accountable to teaching basic skills, particularly writing. The objective of the new composition program, then, was to offer an even stronger writing program for college freshmen.

The new coordinator for the program, Dr. Lucille Deutsch, was an experienced writing teacher, who had taught writing successfully at several colleges and at The University of Pittsburgh where she earned her doctorate in English. Later, another full-time faculty member, with a doctorate in English and one, also skilled and experienced in teaching composition to young adults, was hired. It was this person, Joseph ("Joe") Seward, who enthusiastically agreed to serve as collaborating teacher for this research.

The new composition program, in its second quarter at the time of this study, consisted of three sequential
courses: Composition/Communicative Skills (English 104); Composition I (English 113), standard freshman composition; and Composition II (English 123). The class used for this study was a Composition I class composed primarily of students who had successfully completed work in the Composition/Communicative Skills, or remedial class. (Only three students in the class had bypassed English 104, as it happened.) The other students had passed the grammar and usage final examination given in English 104 at the 80 percent proficiency level and the reading examination at the tenth grade level or above. The tenth grade reading level, incidentally, represents quite a growth spurt, since some of the students enter this open-door admissions college, reading at the fourth grade level.

The Persons in the Study

Central to this study of life in the classroom were those persons who interacted in the teaching and learning of the writing process: The collaborating teacher, the students, and the participant-observer. To ensure anonymity, pseudonyms were given to the students.

The Collaborating Teacher

The collaborating teacher, Joseph Seward, graduated from Marshall University with a B.S. degree in 1971 (magna
cum laude) with undergraduate majors in Latin and Greek. He received his master's degree in English from Marshall University in 1972 and his doctorate in English from West Virginia University in 1980.

Before coming to Rio Grande College, Joseph taught Latin and English in the public schools, and taught English (part-time) as a Fellow at West Virginia University. He also taught freshman composition, literature, classics in translation, and business English for the United States Navy in its Program for Afloat College Education (PACE), where he later became supervisor of instructional personnel aboard the U.S.S. Lexington (the Navy's fleet training aircraft carrier) and the U.S.S. Schofield. Altogether Joseph had taught 131 English courses before this class; 95 of these were freshman composition.

Joseph explained that he had had little formal training in composition pedagogy, other than a few seminars and an in-service workshop for teaching fellows at West Virginia University. Much of what he knew about the teaching of writing had come from observation and imitation of other teachers. When asked about his theory of teaching writing, he responded, "One might say that instead of being concerned about the theory of composition, I was more concerned about what we would do on Monday."
The Student Writers

The class was composed of twenty-four students: twelve women and twelve men. They ranged in ages from eighteen through thirty-seven when the Winter Quarter began December 2, 1981. Twenty-one of these students had completed the basic skills class, English 104, during the preceding fall quarter. Assigned to English 104 on the basis of an English placement test and ACT scores, those students who scored in the lower fifty percent range were not deemed ready for English 113 in the fall. Now, these twenty-one students were ready for freshman composition. They had completed the requirements of 104, having passed this class with an 80 percent or higher on the English comprehensive final and having completed the reading proficiency test at the tenth grade level or above. See Table I, Students Ages and College English Classes.

Findings from Table I, Students' Ages and College English Classes

1. Fifty percent of the class were ages 18-19 (5 men and 7 women).
2. Twenty-five percent of the class were ages 20-29 (4 men and 2 women).
3. The three oldest students were women, all 30 or older.
4. The oldest student was 37.
5. Twenty-one out of twenty-four students did not qualify to take English 113 during the fall quarter, 1980.
<table>
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<th>Age When English 113 Class Began</th>
<th>Birth Date</th>
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</table>

*NA = Information was not available.
6. Three students proficienced out of English 104, coming
directly to English 113 without prior college English
writing experience.
7. One student was a senior from another college who had
taken the equivalent of 104 but who now wanted 113.

Selected Students

While some discussions will refer to the class as a
whole, the study also focused on other students more
closely. The following students participated in the
research by taping their composing processes and by con­
tributing additional insights about the freshman writing
experiences.

Kay: Typical adolescent freshman who did average work.
Was caught up in the freshman social life.
Joseph had had her in English 104 the preceding
quarter. Kay was our "average" writer.

Kathleen: Had never written a paper in school until
English 104. Kathleen was the writer who wanted
to learn to write. She was serious and con­
scientious about her work.

John: A senior who had transferred here, but by some
scheduling fluke ended up needing freshman
composition. Must have had equivalency of Eng­
lish 104 at another university. John was chosen
because he was a senior.
Matt: Had the most mechanical, grammatical difficulties. Completed work in English 104 earning an 88 percent on his comprehensive grammar final but writing full of errors. Sense of humor, honest in responses, open in his desire to learn to write better. College maintenance man. Found great fulfillment in writing even though he had received average grades and old grammatical and spelling errors continued to haunt him. Had been my student in English 104, Fall Quarter 1980. Matt was chosen because he made the most serious mechanical errors but still enjoyed writing about his life experiences.

Mari: Felt worthless as human being, beat down in home environment. Wanted to see if she could learn. Oldest student. Mari was chosen because she was the oldest student and felt so hopeless as a writer. We wanted to help her build writing confidence and skills.

Mork: Social development problems. Was average writer. Mork was chosen because he represented the student with serious social development problems.

Lucile: Strong, imaginative writer, excessively absent. Beset with personal problems, wanted to learn.
Lucile had demonstrated competent writing in English 104, and we wanted to help her improve already strong skills.

**Chip:** Returning veteran who wondered if he could write. At the end of the year, considered English as a major. Chip was chosen because he brought a sophisticated world view into the classroom after having served in the Armed Forces. We wondered if writing about his experiences would help him make sense of his life abroad.

**Susan:** Solid, good student, excited about learning to write better. Had no writing experience prior to English 104, but learned so quickly she inspired Joseph and me to become more excited about teaching. Had been my student in English 104, Fall Quarter 1980. Susan was chosen because her desire to learn was infectious. Joe and I needed her more than she needed us, perhaps. Her positive attitude and willingness to work hard to learn to write motivated us.

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**The Participant Observer**

I had taught freshman composition at Rio Grande College and Community College for several years prior to entering the classroom as participant-observer. After
completing Ph.D. course requirements at The Ohio State University, I wanted to do qualitative research in freshman composition for the dissertation since I had many questions about how to teach writing more effectively to my freshman students. My most salient question was one Shaughnessy had also asked earlier, one which she called an "embarrassingly rudimentary question": "What goes on and what ought to go on in the composition classroom?" I had some ideas, some hunches, but I could find little hard data which would provide satisfying answers to this question. Before I could determine what should go on in the classroom, I had to look more closely at what does go on in the complex cognitive-social realm of learning to write. So I wanted to return to the English 113 to conduct the study.

Discussing the nature of the proposed research with Dr. Deutsch, Dean Donovan, and President Hayes, I was granted permission to study a freshman composition class, English 113, during Winter Quarter, 1981. Throughout the research endeavor, I continued to receive encouragement and support from the freshman composition coordinator, the administrative staff, the cooperating teacher, and the students. All displayed an open positive attitude toward this inquiry, designed to gather ethnographic or naturalistic data from students experiencing the new composition program.
At the college, there seemed to be a consensus of commitment to helping students write well and to understanding more about various aspects of the teaching and learning of writing. So, this particular place and this particular time seemed especially appropriate for the study, since "the best time for a study of a complex social phenomenon is during a period of change."\(^\text{10}\)

**Sources of Data**

Information was gathered from the following sources: Class notes taken by researcher, journals from collaborating teacher and students, self-reports from teacher and students, questionnaires, audio tapes of students composing out of class, video tapes of selected class sessions, audio tapes of collaborating teacher evaluating students' writing, selected rough drafts and all final papers produced in class, and interviews with teacher and selected students.

The investigator and the collaborating teacher met together at least twice weekly before and after each one and one-half hour class sessions during the eleven-week quarter, for planning, analysis, and evaluation of class procedures and writing progress.

After leaving the field, the researcher continued to meet periodically with the collaborating teacher and selected individual students from the composition class.
for follow-up interviews during data analysis and disser-
tation writing.

True to the ethnographic mode, this study did not begin
with a hypothesis to be proved or disproved by the collec-
tion of data. Weeks were spent in analyzing the data,
taken from the setting, in an attempt to find a "way of
putting order into the naturalistic phenomena." As I
immersed myself in the superabundance of qualitative data,
I was struck with the concept of a freshman writing class
having a developmental life which began, evolved, and
ended during the eleven-week quarter. In other words the
class had its own life structure which unfolded as time
passed, an underlying pattern of progression which could
be understood from the perspective of phases or stages.

The Classroom Pattern:
An Overview of Developmental Stages

The three recognizable stages which became clear as I
closely analyzed the data were as follows: Stage One,
Climate; Stage Two, Process; and Stage Three, Products,
which were constructs arbitrarily imposed weeks after
the class sessions had ended. At no time had Joseph or I
even discussed developmental stages prior to the dis-
covery of class stages, and had we done so, we would not
have been referring to the class itself. Previously
we had understood stages in terms of the "stages of a
man's life" as described by Levinson --never as a way of describing class sequence.

But as I tried to discover meaning from the wealth of data I had amassed, tried to find a focus, a way to view the data, I saw the pattern. It was almost as if there had been a consciously contrived model for teaching composition. Joseph and I later agreed that the developmental stages reflected what actually took place, as though we had written and followed an overall developmental design with specific objectives.

Stage One, Climate, was a type of formative phase, concerned with creating a supportive writing context by establishing rapport, trust, and encouragement among teachers and students. Students learned to write during the entire life span of the quarter, but the climate established initially was the cornerstone of the writing class.

The first three to four weeks of the class provided an opportunity for students within a safe environment to try their writing wings, if you will, to test their ability to manipulate the language in response to various writing assignments. Like eagles who, during a storm, fold back their wings and ride on top of the wind currents, so, the student writers were challenged to rise above their storms of mechanical errors, lack
of writing experience, and fear that they had nothing to say. They were encouraged to take writing risks, to search for fresh ideas, and to share life experiences.

This writing atmosphere fostered writing growth. It reduced anxiety, defused hostility, and encouraged communication of facts, feelings, and needs. Moreover, a nurturing context where all could be winners was strived for. When undue competition, helplessness, and stress were diminished, students had a better chance for positive writing experiences.

More specifically, a writing climate with a personal touch was achieved by knowing and being known by the students, by planning class activities which invited class interaction, and by assigning writing projects which received much positive feedback from the teacher. In addition, no grades were assigned to these early writings. Within such a class climate, students were free to express and develop their own unique ideas, without fear of reprisal. As the students began to realize that their ideas were really valued, they shed their heavy coats of fear of "nothing to write about" and of grammatical uncertainties much like a person whose boat has capsized sheds excess clothing and shoes to facilitate his swimming, more freely, to safety. Once the fears and worries were minimized, writing skills could be more
easily developed. Within a class climate of acceptance and support, a foundation was laid for a deeper understanding of the composing process and of more complex writing assignments.

In a sense, the climate met the special writing needs of students by what Erik Erikson called generative caring or "generativity." The teachers attempted to establish a supportive, nurturing environment, an environment of trust so that students would be able to write without fear. In other words the classroom climate was based on a helping system, an "affective interaction of people who cared about what happens to one another." Stage Two, the Composing Process, emphasized the concept of writing as creative process, stressing the value of awareness of each stage of this process in one's own writing. As the students grew in writing awareness, they were invited to report on their own writing processes at work. Moreover, they were encouraged to be especially aware of how insight occurred, as they searched for fresh ideas for formulating thesis statements and for developing these statements. Student writers learned that the left brain, the logical monitor, can hamper, hinder, or restrain the writing flow if allowed to play "judge" too early in the creative process. Another important student discovery occurring during Stage Two
was that the creative process of writing did not end when students turned in their compositions, but rather this complex process could extend into many revisions or restructuring of even a good final draft.

Stage Three, Products, may be viewed as the superstructure, built upon the foundations of climate and process. This level allowed for exploring and practicing the various rhetorical modes of writing as set forth in the course syllabus of the new writing program. Emphasis was placed upon structuring content according to specific patterns. Attention was given not only to organization of material but also to content, diction, and mechanics. Papers were evaluated and graded by the teacher, but students always had the option of revising their papers for a better grade, in light of teacher comments.

As the class progressed through the three stages, no stage was ever left behind for the next. Instead, one stage simply became a part of the next. Similarly, Levinson had conceptualized men's lives as developing according to stages or phases. Each phase could be seen "linking past and future and containing both within itself."\(^{15}\) So, too, in the unfolding of the life of the writing class, no stage was ever absent. However, one stage at a time had the preeminence.
The writing experiences taking place at each of the three developmental stages will be described from three points of view: the participant-observer, the collaborating teacher, and the students, providing a more accurate perception of the rich class context. At some point, the student voices will be the strongest heard as they write or as they write about writing. At other times, Dr. Joseph Seward will respond to the writing life in the classroom, or I as researcher will report on the rich classroom life from my perspective. Finally, there will be times when teachers' and students' voices may be heard in interchange during the three developmental stages. See Figure I for Developmental Stages During the Life Span of the Writing Class.

The Classroom Setting

One way to describe the writing climate is to focus on those components which are an integral part of the creating of that climate. We have already looked at the collaborating teacher--his preparation, experience, and philosophy. We have also considered the students who will be in the class--their ages and their writing experiences in college. Later, we will examine their attitudes toward themselves as writers and toward writing, and their expectations for freshman composition.
It is time now to focus on the classroom, that room where the teaching and learning of writing will take place during the eleven weeks of the winter quarter. It is here where developmental stages will unfold. It is here where freshmen and teachers will interact, will touch each others' lives in a common purpose; it is here where attitudes toward writing should become favorable. Mager suggests that a universal educational goal is to "send students away with at least as favorable an attitude toward subjects as when [they] first arrived." I would like to capture something of what I thought and felt December 2, 1981, the first day of class. Allow me to share from my notes.

Today was the first day to meet the new class. The snow forecast for the first Tuesday in December was now pelting down outside my office window. I could see the colorful pageant of students, arrayed in vivid greens, blues, and reds, darting across the college campus stage. Shrieks of delight could be heard as students unsuccessfully dodged the missiles of snowflakes, assailing them as they hurried to class.

Quickly finishing my tasty lunch of white chicken, whole wheat bread, and plump green grapes, I tossed the crumpled brown paper bag into the wastebasket, and
dashed out the office door, donning coat and mittens as I ran. I found myself pushing through a thick wall of snow, by now, but I didn't mind. The taste of this first snow on my lips was sweet and refreshing.

With anticipation, I entered room 214 located on the second floor of Anniversary Hall, a 50-year-old brick building covered with a few sprigs of still green winter vines peeking from behind the snow. It was almost 1:00 o'clock and the students would soon be arriving. Selecting a seat to the right of the door, I stationed myself in the back of the spacious room, containing 35 desks with ample room for 35 more. My eyes wandered up and down the six rows of desks and chairs, hedged in on the right side of the room by a recessed cloak closet, revealing hangers covered with rust from lack of use. (It must have been too tempting to fling coats over the available empty chairs.)

On the left side of the room was a wall of windows, divided into three sets of double windows framed by metal, with sandy-colored window shades. This was the room where I had taught basic writing fall quarter, and as I observed the snow through these windows, I was remembering how important these shades had been on bright September afternoons. They would be pulled down two-thirds of the way over the nine-foot long, six-foot wide, double-
windows in an attempt to shut out the bright sun beckoning through the windows. Yet, the sunlight would persistently call out from the windows below the shades, receiving an answering response from the gold flecks in the lime-green carpet and the gold panelling which covered the back of the room.

Up front, the walls were also panelled in butter-gold, covering the cracked plaster of the landmark building. Fastened to the front wall was a green chalkboard, 4' x 10', framed by silver metal. To the left of the board, a map 24" x 30" of Europe was colored brightly in purple, green and gold, with Italy's boot in bittersweet orange, surrounded by grey-blue ocean. Clearly, the room, itself, invited learning. Then, I saw the sign. It was just a small white sign, located just above the center of the chalkboard framed in black with the words "No eating or drinking in this classroom." This sign jarred my consciousness. Was this to be the theme of this room? Was this message some kind of ominous warning, a prophetic utterance for the class? I wondered how many other classes of students might have sat in this room neither eating nor drinking, neither partaking of a diet that would nourish writing, not drinking in inspiration and motivation which would provide a meaningful reason to write. Had former students ever known the titillating
taste of new discovery of their own life experiences? Had they ever been challenged to find their own writing voices, to find value in their own words? Or had they been fed a deficient diet, perhaps one which stressed mechanics, workbook exercises, or only those things which were wrong with their writing. I meditated.

Then I discovered that "no eating or drinking in this room" could be changed by eliminating the negative "no." Then we would have: "Eating and drinking in this room." I liked that better. The self-doubts, the fears, the undue stress on any part of the writing diet that hindered writing growth could be altered by accentuating the positive. Students in this class could be invited to come, to eat, and to drink. As I continued my reverie, I was reminded of "Wisdom's Invitation" found in Proverbs 9:1.

Wisdom has built her house,
She has hewn out her seven pillars;
She has prepared her food, she has mixed her wine;
She has also set her table;
She has sent out her maidens, she calls
From the tops of the heights of the city;
Whoever is naive, let him turn in here
To him who lacks understanding she says,
'Come eat of my food,
And drink of the wine I have mixed,
Forsake your folly and live
And proceed in the way of understanding.'

Looking down at a copy of Joseph's syllabus, I saw that, likewise, students were offered an invitation to this class. Advisers had encouraged them to sign up for
freshman composition. We had promised a program designed to help them grow in knowledge and understanding of the writing process. Developing my image further, I realized that the class had seven pillars: (1) selecting and limiting topics, (2) finding a thesis, (3) supporting it with specific details, (4) organizing topics into rhetorical modes, (5) choosing correct words for an audience, (6) weeding out mechanical errors, and (7) understanding writing as a creative process. Students would develop as writers. They would grow in awareness of writing as a creative process so that they might capitalize on each phase of this process. They would have opportunity to grow in understanding of themselves and their world as they partook of our writing feast.

Was this hope without substance? In the end would the class bring only greater despair and distress to, perhaps, already embattled writers? That was the question! However, there was the claim that basic writers could learn to write and even write competently in freshman composition.

Quite a claim, one might say, perhaps tantamount to evangelistic oversell. Yet I believed the claim was not without substance; we could extend hope for writing achievement to students. The enormity of the task outlined or set forth in this invitation overwhelmed me as
I sat there in the lifeless room, worried that anything that was going to happen to student writing might, perhaps, have already happened. Then, that notion was quickly dispelled as, though out of the woodwork, students began pouring into the room, bringing instant life: energy, force, and faith for a successful new quarter. Matt, Mork, and Chip bounded into the classroom, stopping abruptly when they saw Joseph and me. Apparently, our presence was like a dash of cold water on their boisterous happy-talk. In a somewhat subdued manner, they chose seats and meekly lined themselves along the back wall of the classroom. A middle-aged woman whom I knew from my neighborhood rushed into the room out of breath.

"Mrs. Epling," she panted, "Am I in the right room?"
"Are you looking for freshman composition?" I asked.
"No," she replied, "I'm looking for Geology 123."
"This isn't it. I'm sorry."
"Oh," she groaned; nervously pulling out her class schedule from a red-leather purse. "I see," she exclaimed. "This is room 214; I need room 513. Well, bye; this is the shortest class I've had yet." Shaking her head, she exited the room just as several other girls hurriedly took their seats, peeking surreptitiously at their watches as Dr. Joseph Seward rose from behind his desk at the front of the room.
Greeting the class and introducing himself, Joseph explained that I would be interacting with the class this quarter to learn more about how college freshmen learn to write. Joseph continued, "Please raise your hand as I call your name. Correct me, also; I mispronounce quite frequently." After checking attendance, Joe encouraged the class to express their ideas during the quarter. That way he would do less talking, and they could take a more active roll in their learning, he reasoned.

Students glanced over the syllabi which Joseph had handed out. The students would write eight papers: two each of description, narration, exposition, and argumentation persuasion. Next, he explained to the class that in freshman composition, there would be emphasis placed upon certain skills of writing. Going to the board, he listed the categories or areas he would be referring to in class. He would talk about writing in terms of (1) mechanics (grammar, punctuation, spelling, sentence structure); (2) diction or word choice; (3) organization (how to put words in sequence to organize ideas or concepts); and (4) content, which he considered the hardest of the four skills to talk about in the abstract, explaining that this skill depends on what the writer wants to say. He said that he would talk more about this in conferences.
Joseph, then, held up a robin-egg blue paperback, the class textbook, entitled Commanding Composition. While he stood, with book poised in air, a plaintive wail came from the back of the room, "Oh, no; I've brought the wrong book!" Empathetic laughter erupted from the class, while Joseph smiled appreciatively, not at all surprised at this predictable turn of events.

With classroom management chores out of the way, Joseph next wrote on the board four questions which students were to respond to as an in-class writing assignment. They were to report on their writing experiences in high school and/or college, their writing confidence, what they liked most and least about writing, and what they would like to concentrate on in class. Students' responses to these questions will be discussed in Chapter Four, "Climate."

The take-home assignment for that first day was a questionnaire designed to elicit further information about students' writing concepts. Even from the very beginning of the quarter, students' ideas mattered. There was a desire to know these ideas in order to help students learn to write.
Three Perspectives of Writing Experiences
P.O. - Participant-Observer
S. - Students
T. - Teacher

Figure 1
Developmental Stages During Life Span of Writing Class
CHAPTER THREE - NOTES


2 Lofland, pp. 1-4.


15 Levinson, p. 7.

CHAPTER FOUR

DEVELOPMENTAL STAGE ONE: CLIMATE

The time for learning to write for twenty-four freshman composition students at Rio Grande College and Community College was Winter Quarter 1980-1981. Most of the students would have written little before this class and the amount of time allotted for teaching them the writing task seemed far too short a period. Although encircled by the challenges of too much to do and too little time, those persons in English 113 would not surrender.

During those first weeks in the classroom, a learning environment was being created. Students and teachers were assessing the trustworthiness of their writing world. As time passed, there was a classroom sigh of relief that maybe freshman composition "wouldn't be too bad." Herb Cohen spoke of the importance of developing trust in this way: "Our world may be one of walking paranoia, but trust is the universal lubricant. No one will ever tell you anything worthwhile unless you are trusted with that information." Students began to write about worthwhile things even during class Developmental Stage One, Climate.

Before focusing on some of the students' writing done
those first weeks, let us consider how the classroom climate might be described. How could it be defined and understood?

Or is the emotional climate an essence as elusive as a moonbeam and just as difficult to capture? Is defining climate merely a feeble attempt in capturing the nebulous? In spite of the apparent initial difficulty in capturing and defining climate, the fact remains that climate existed in that classroom. It appeared to be a set of complex forces, influences, and prevailing conditions which strongly influenced the writing experiences in freshman composition.

It is somewhat easier to understand climate as related to weather because we can assess this type of climate with a thermometer. But how can we measure the emotional climate in a classroom? Like the wind, climate can be felt, known, experienced. We can see effects of its presence. But can we measure it with a thermometer? Hold it in our hands? See it? Smell it? Touch it? Taste it? Yet emotional climate is, nevertheless, a reality. When we experience it, we make judgment about it. We say that an emotional climate may be supportive or destructive, positive or negative, encouraging or discouraging.
When a new relationship is established in a marriage, for example, there is a special emotional climate or aura about the early weeks. In fact, this time period is called the "honeymoon" phase characterized by exceptional compatibility or harmony. The word honeymoon, itself, means a sweet (honey) month (moon), so for that first month, theoretically, there is trust, joy, harmony, agreement, and cooperation in the relationship. Moreover, we speak of climate during the early days when a new president takes office as a "honeymoon" period, a time of support, harmony, and good will.

Likewise, in this freshman composition class during stage one, climate, there existed an emotional environment which might, in a sense, be described as a "honeymoon" period—a trusting, harmonious, comfortable, supportive writing climate. Both students and teachers appeared to experience a climate of trust, support, hope, and cooperation in teaching-learning writing. Joseph's attitude toward establishing a learning climate was revealed in an early journal writing:

I see myself as the person in charge of creating a learning environment for the students. My role is not so much to teach as it is to set up experiences for the students which help them to learn to write most efficiently. I feel that writing, like swimming or tennis, cannot be taught; one can only provide a suitable environment for the learning to take place, and then provide constant
feedback to the students. In this dialogue between student and teacher, good writing can develop.

Granted that a suitable climate for writing was necessary, how, then, was such an environment or climate created for successful writing to occur? In other words, what were the components which created the emotional climate, the honeymoon period, of the first four weeks in class?

Expectations, Experiences, Attitudes, and Understandings

First of all, central to establishing a supportive writing climate was understanding something of desires and expectations, writing experiences, attitudes, and understandings toward writing which students and the collaborating teacher brought to the class.

As we have seen, twenty-one students had completed Composition/Communication Skills (English 104), a class designed for those with little experience in reading and writing. During the eleven weeks in English 104, these students had done three hours of classwork and three hours of individualized lab work, developing skills in English grammar and usage, reading, and writing sentences and paragraphs. The other three students in the freshman composition class were enrolled on the basis of placement test scores in the upper fiftieth percentile and a good ACT score.
Mostly, these students would take the class because it was a required course; however, they had expectations, nonetheless. In this class, they would learn how to write. Some wanted to learn to write essays, some wanted to write better to get better jobs, others wanted to improve already adequate writing. Students wrote "I would like to express myself more clearly and with greater ease," and "I'm looking forward to this class to reinsure my writing habits." A student who bypassed English 104 wrote:

I would like to write what I want to say not what someone else wishes to hear. I do hope the class will make me a further experienced writer; for my high school class did not. It was not that we did not write enough papers, it was the fact that we did so with little or no instructions. I don't like the pressure of a sink or swim situation. But then, again, who does?

Intermingled with expectations, these students also brought fear of failure, fear of the blank page, fear of thoughtless or wordless minds. "Fear of failing . . . is what I like the least." And another wrote: "The only problem that I am often faced with is what to say. Now what do I say next, you see my mind has gone blank."

The teacher of record, likewise, brought expectations, as well as fears to the class. Joseph would be teaching writing following the objectives set up in the new composition program in existence only three months at the time this freshman class began. He would teach
rhetorical patterns, and students would write essays to which Joe would affix a grade. Joseph's fears were these: Could he help students develop writing competency? Could he make his meanings clear? Could he hold students' attention? Could he grade all the papers required and grade those papers fairly?

Realizing that students would also bring to the classroom former writing experiences, and preconceptions about themselves as writers, I asked students to write a self-report in response to their writing experiences and attitudes.

Twenty-one students responded to the assignment. Reporting on previous writing experience, five stated that they had had "almost none," twelve said "very little," and four indicated "much experience." In high school English classes, students wrote mostly business letters, book reports, or studied grammar and literature. During the basic skills class in college, students reported they spent time on mechanics and began writing paragraphs. One student revealed that the college class "did not do as much writing as we would like. We were too busy in fundamentals of English." Another student reported that English 104 "prepared me for greater challenge, Composition I."
When asked about their confidence as a writer, two-thirds of the eighteen students responding felt "not very confident" or "not confident at all." For example, students wrote: "I do not feel confident as a writer because I have not had a lot of experience"; "I believe I am not confident about my writing"; "I never feel really confident about much of anything"; and "I don't really feel confident as a writer because I'm still suspect in areas of grammar and punctuation [sic]." Reporting that they felt confident in writing ability were one-third of the students such as the student who wrote: "I feel confident as a writer because I like to write and because I like to write with feeling and meaning."

Students also wrote about what they liked best and least about writing. They liked best about writing self-expression of personal experiences, ideas, thoughts, and feelings. They liked least about writing grammar, mechanics, and punctuation, starting, and finding something to say.

Freshman writers bring understandings about writing and related areas to the classroom. Since a nurturing writing climate values these students' words and thoughts, we find the student, again, writing about writing in response to items on an open-ended questionnaire taken home the first day in class. Summaries of the students' responses will be discussed under each of the items.
Since the goal of the freshman composition program was to help students learn to write well, it seemed important to explore students' understanding of what "writing well" means. In other words, how did students describe "good" writing that first week in class?

**Definition of "Good Writing"**

One third of the class defined good writing in terms of well articulated communication. The message should be clear, interesting, and well organized. "Good writing to me is something that when it is read is clear and easy to understand while at the same time interesting, holding your attention."

Other students felt that good writing was writing which "made sense" and which "teaches about life." One student defined writing as "an art of the mind and imagination." Still others explained that good writing is that which expresses the "feelings of the writer," while approximately one-fifth of the class said it was characterized by "good word choice." (A unit on diction or word choice had been taught in the previous basic writing class.) A few thought the writing had to do with style. In good writing, "words and concepts flow." Moreover, it is "plain and simple" and "distinct." Almost half of the class thought good writing was concerned with mechanical matters such as "correct grammar" and "good punctuation."
To summarize, then, students defined good writing, most frequently, in terms of mechanics, clarity, reader appeal, organization, writer's feelings and knowledge of subject, diction, and style.

Early Understanding of Process

Students, predictably, spoke of process as choosing topics, organizing, and writing rough and final drafts. Little mention was made of how the writer thinks about or chooses his topic. There appeared to be limited understanding of the psychological processes involved in learning to write, at this time in the quarter. For example, Mari wrote: "First they brainstorm, or write what they are thinking. Then they rewrite for content and rewrite for grammar." Some students thought the process was "fairly simple, first they must get a topic, not too narrow or not too broad, then get a good topic sentence then expand on your topic sentence," noted Jon. The writing process, according to Lois, is "finding a certain topic to write about and then elaborate on the subject in sequence not to get things jumbled." One student felt there should be something more to process than she could find words to express. "Writers, I'm sure go through many processes, a lot of which I'm not sure of. However, when I'm writing I go through the processes of a lot of hard thinking. . . ."
Ease of Writing Task

"Yes," responded eleven or fifty percent of the class to the question: Is writing easy for good writers? Nine said, "No." One stated "yes and no," while another replied, "don't know." It was interesting for me to observe the answers of those students who said that writing was not easy even for good writers. We had spent class time in the basic writing class during fall quarter discussing this question, and most of those who indicated that even good writers must work hard had been in that class. "No, I believe that writing is hard for everyone but you just haft to work at it," said Matt. Kathleen responded,

I believe that writing, even though it may be easier for a good writer, is never a simple process. To put one's thoughts down on paper is much more complicated than to just say them. There are many things to consider when writing: content, grammar, transition, etc. Therefore even for a good writer it takes time and energy to put a paper together.

We had also, in 104, discussed Malcolm Cowley's Writers at Work and Chip was, perhaps, remembering how long the incubation period for an idea could last. "I don't think it is easy for even the best writer. I've heard they may carry an idea for a story for a number of years before they act upon it."

Those who thought writing came easily for good writers can best be illustrated in Susan's answer. "Yes,
everyone has something that they are good at, writers are
good at writing." This viewpoint is collaborated by
Shaughnessy.\(^2\)

**Writing Goals for Freshman Composition**

Students wanted to learn how to make writing "say
what the writer means" (2), be clear (1), make sense (1),
and be more interesting and effective (8); they also
wanted to learn more about organization (2), mechanics and
word choice (1). In addition, they wanted to learn how
to write business letters (1), use references (1), and
write good paragraphs (2). Finally, they wanted to learn
how to write about a variety of subjects of interest (1),
to write with confidence (1), and to expand writing
talent and imagination.

Interestingly, while almost one-half of this group
thought that "good" writing was characterized by "correct
grammar" and "good punctuation" only one, lone student
wanted to learn about "mechanics and word choice."

Having the freedom of choosing their writing topics
would make the class more interesting indicated nine
students or approximately forty percent of the class,
while two students wanted free writing, five wanted class
participation. Eight others wanted more types of writ-
ing, to continue as in basic writing, help with organiza-
tion and mistakes, to cover great writers' works,
lectures, and lots of creative writing.

Most Effective High School and College English Teachers

Students were asked to respond to this item because it was felt that it would be helpful to get an idea of what students thought a good writing teacher was like and did. These answers would help Joseph and me peek inside the students' minds for their frame of reference of effective teachers.

The most effective high school English teacher invited lots of class participation, allowed speeches, made meanings clear, got the point across and explained assignments. This teacher also gave time, made students want to do well, taught a variety of writing patterns, taught grammar, Shakespeare plays, and was animated in class discussions. One student said it was hard to say. Others said their most effective teacher was very strict, read good and bad papers in class without giving names, was clear on what she was teaching, and took time for students to understand.

The most effective college teacher gave grammar help; "knew what he wanted the students to learn and did that"; "provided interesting and valuable learning experiences," was kind and concerned, helped students to learn in a "good way." In addition, the most effective teacher
helped students get involved in their own experiences, covered material well, and went through topics. Also, the college teacher taught form and order. One student said she was not sure of the characteristics but this "most effective" college teacher was the first one to teach writing a paper, was willing to help and concentrate on correcting problems ("not just say it's wrong"), gave time to help students understand, was patient, and offered something different in each class period.

In summary, both high school and college teachers were effective because they knew what they wanted to teach and explained material clearly, made students want to learn, and took time for students to understand material. (This taking time or patience seemed especially important for this class of former basic writers.)

These effective teachers helped with mechanics, editing, reading critically, and organizing material. Also, the teachers encouraged creativity, and let students write about their own interests. They held student conferences, and graded papers with students, providing one-on-one teaching. Finally, the teacher talked to class as individuals and demonstrated a concern for development.

**Basic Concerns in Freshman Composition**

During the first week of the quarter, students expressed basic concerns about freshman composition. They
were concerned about being understood, doing well, improving writing abilities in grammar and fundamentals, getting good grades, and becoming good, effective writers. One student wanted to be sure that he would get what he was supposed to out of the class while others worried about whether they could "get through it in a respectable manner."

**Teacher Availability For Individual Help**

In addition to the class component of knowing the expectations, experiences, attitudes, and understanding of students, there was another important component of English 113. This component was the teacher's availability for individual student help. The students learned to trust that Dr. Seward would be there for them. Joe didn't just verbalize a willingness to help much like one who extends a universal, innocuous dinner invitation--"You'll have to stop by for dinner some time"--but rather he carried an appointment book to class and proceeded to fill it. Throughout the quarter, and especially during the first month, I saw him buttonhole students who needed help. For example, "Chip, let's spend some time together getting acquainted and talking about your writing progress. I have Tuesday at 10:00 free or Friday at 11:00. Which time would be better for you?"
"Well, let's see; I have basketball at 10:00, but I can come at 11:00 on Friday."

"Great! I'll see you then. Bring your last paper with you; I'd like to go over it with you before you hand it in to Mrs. Epling."

Joseph scheduled twenty-five office hours within his weekly schedule. He not only taught fifteen hours of composition (frequently giving additional help before and after class), but he also arranged to be in his office twenty-five additional hours. He handed out this schedule to the students so they would understand that he was committed to helping them and was carving out plenty of time for this. See Table II, Dr. Joseph Seward's Office Hours.

### Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Hours</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday and Wednesday</td>
<td>10:00 to 1:00</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2:00 to 6:00</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>10:00 to 1:00</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday and Thursday</td>
<td>9:00 to 1:00</td>
<td>8</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
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Taking Time and Explaining Thoroughly

Another component of developing a climate of trust was the teacher's "taking time" to teach writing in measured, precise steps. Many of the writers were just beginners, even though they had completed the grammar and reading requirements of English 104. Students were developing trust and faith in Joseph's teaching progression. The class appeared to breathe a sigh of relief during the early weeks when he did not rush through the class work. Joe took time to teach, for example, such things as specificity, the topic sentence, and the paragraph.

Specificity

During the second class session, Joseph's aim was to teach the principle that he said would be related to all future writing assignments—the principle of specificity. Joe was infinitely patient as he developed step-by-step what being "specific" means. I was reminded that students had indicated that their most effective high school and college teachers had taken time to thoroughly explain class material. A student who had taken English 104 from Joseph wrote on her questionnaire that he had been her most effective English teacher because "you take your time with us so that we can understand our lessons thoroughly and you don't get upset." Another said, "The teacher didn't go so fast so we knew every little point." And yet another student
stressed the importance of "someone who takes time with students to understand." A summary of the statements from all the students in this class revealed that they considered "taking time" and "explaining thoroughly" important traits of their most effective high school and/or college teachers. Joseph did both. He took time and explained in detail. For example, he introduced the concept of specificity as follows:

Being specific communicates. For example, how many students are here today? A lot? A lot is a vague idea. But twenty-four students works. Get rid of general words such as big, little, small, large, all the time, and a lot. Replace them with something specific. Instead of saying the girl was tall, say the girl was 5'2". Be exact.

After this introduction to specificity, Joseph next assigned a class activity called a "phantasy game," designed to elicit responses from the class, to cause them to examine their thoughts. (At the university where Joseph formerly taught, these make-believe situation games had been very popular among students and faculty.) Dividing the class into three groups, Joe distributed a handout, "The Nuclear War," which students were to read carefully. The problem in the handout was to evict three people so that the remaining five could survive. Joe directed: "I want you to feel free to make your own decisions, but you must be able to tell me why you make the choice you do." The students were to study the list of eight people listed on
the handout, to determine which five should remain in an only shelter during a nuclear war.

After reflectively reading the handouts, students began responding freely, without hesitation, talking and arguing among each other the merits of their decisions. After each group told which people should be evicted and which should remain, Joseph asked provocative questions, resulting in an exciting interchange among all of us there that day.

"I think medical aid would be important. The nurse should stay!" argued Chip. Joe probed:

Why did you choose the nurse Mrs. Wright? What qualities would she have to help others survive? Are you making too much of the assumption that the college educated are intelligent? Why did you evict Mr. Scott? What does a "communist sympathizer" mean? What qualities might he have as a person? What do you associate with the label "atheist"? Is one who bears the label immoral, ruthless? Why leave out Dr. Lopez? Why keep the nurse? She was hooked on drugs.

And so the questions and discussion continued until each defended, at length, his choice in an atmosphere of light-hearted bantering, yet one with sobering overtones, as the students appeared to realize that people do need specific evidence to support positions they take.

Joe pulled together the ideas from each group. He pointed out that as students gave him evidence to support their general descriptions of each of the eight persons
on the list whom they would permit to remain in the
shelter, they were moving from the general to the specific.

This happens when people talk and write. We might
also say that we move from the abstract to the con­
crete. Things we can't touch, hear, taste such
as democracy, liberty, hope, or fear are real, but
we can't experience them with our senses. So we
move from the abstract world to the concrete so that
we can feel, measure, etc. In this fantasy game
exercise we made people more real as we moved from
abstract labels to specific details.

Next, Joseph moved to the board to further elaborate
the steps involved in making the general more specific. He
wrote four sentences:

1. Young people today have no morals. [The class
   stirred uneasily at this.]
2. Young people today wear immodest clothes. [They
   relaxed a little.]
3. Teenage girls like to wear informal clothing to
   school. [Sure; some do.]
4. Geraldine wore blue jeans to Mr. Scott's English
   class last Thursday. [Acceptable.]

The class could readily see that most people would be
willing to accept assertion four, but they would have much
trouble accepting assertion one.

Just before the class period ended, Joseph reiterated
that as we move from the general level to the most spec­
ific, we have less difficulty accepting what is said or
written. Noisily closing notebooks after a full session
of sharing ideas and taking notes, the students scooted out the door. I sat quietly in the back of the room (Joseph was talking to students) reflecting on the meaning of today's class.

Students appeared to thoroughly enjoy this class session. They had taken copious notes, had responded uninhibitedly to Joe's questions, and had freely asked questions of Joe and of each other. Joseph's taking time to thoroughly explain the concept of specificity had helped students to comprehend. By the time the class had progressed from the introduction, to the phantasy game, to the board work, students seemed to have gained a satisfactory understanding of specificity. This was arrived at in a climate where there was a freedom to share questions (ideas), as Joe set the tone by covering material logically and thoroughly.

The Topic Sentence

During the third class session, after collecting homework dealing with specificity from Lessons 16 and 17 in the text and assigning material on the topic sentence in Lessons 18 and 19, Joe suggested that the students take notes as he lectured on the topic sentence. He began: "The topic sentence is a controlling idea. The writer uses this idea to control writing much like a
driver uses the steering wheel to control or drive a car. This sentence is always a complete sentence, a statement or assertion containing a complete subject and complete verb."

Joseph then wrote on the board, "I would like to talk about dogs in this paragraph." He asked rhetorically, "What's wrong with this?" Continuing, he answered, "The most important thing is that it doesn't say anything about dogs; it just says 'dogs.' This is a poor topic sentence." He then wrote another sentence on the board. "My dog, Michael, makes me happy in three different ways." Joseph concluded that this topic sentence would tell the writer or reader the key point and the plan for development.

He continued to elaborate that using numbers in topic sentences is one key to an effective topic sentence.

Another technique for formulating topic sentences would be to take a subject and ask, what do I think about something? What do I believe about nuclear weapons? Then answer the question. I think that nuclear weapons are __. So we have two techniques to help: The number's game (two reasons why something works, three variations of a melody, five courses in college) and (2) the "what do I believe about something" technique. Avoid the most common vague words such as many, several or few. There are many reasons is a "no, no." Say, "The three reasons most important to me are __, __, and __. Focus; be specific.

Students were, then, directed to write a topic sentence about college students, using the "I think," "I believe," or "numbers" approach. If they did not want to
write about college students, they could also write about the military draft, the murder of John Lennon, or homework assignments.

Joe and I circulated among the students as they worked on topic sentences. Mork, wearing a white nylon jacket with "The Singers" emblazoned across it in red, raised his hand. Looking at Mork's sentence, "College students are more mature than high school students because there [sic] on their own," Joe encouraged him: "The idea is excellent, but there should be spelled they're. As Joe moved on to help another student, I asked Mork: "How are college students more mature?"

Mork appeared to have grasped an understanding of specific examples as supporting sentences for his topic comparing the maturity between the high school and college student. He answered: "They must manage moving away from home, getting places on time by getting themselves out of bed in the morning, budget their money, save time for study and things they enjoy doing, and survive on cafeteria food."

Next, I crossed the room to Susan, who now had her hand up ready to show me her sentence. "College students attend school for three reasons: to meet new people, to get on their own, and to learn a trade." I responded, "I see you like the number's game, Susan. This topic
sentence suggests the way you will organize the paragraph. Good." (Susan, a thirty-one year-old mother of three children, is now taking her second English class, studying to be a teacher.) Susan is seated next to Mari. She, too, is an older student (thirty-seven), has four children, and works full-time as a nurse's aide. Her first sentence read, "It is a good thing for housewives to become college students," but she scratched this idea out and wrote a second sentence which made use of numbers: "Housewives make good college students in three ways."

"Your topic sentence is fine, Mari. You could certainly talk about these three ways in a paragraph. Tell me, though, why you think housewives should become college students. You see, I, too, am a housewife back in college and I'm wondering what motivated you to return to college. Would you write me a paragraph about this and bring it to class Thursday?" She said she would.

"May I please copy your topic sentence, Mari? You know you students will be my teachers this quarter." She nodded: "Yes." I then copied both topic sentences.

"But, Mrs. Epling, you copied down my first sentence, too, not just my good one."

"Yes, Mari. I want to see the 'starts' students go through before the final sentence. Few, if any writers, write perfectly the first time through."
Mari shared her reasons for returning to school in the following paragraph which she brought to the next class session.

There is a couple of reasons why I am back in school, my husband and my four children. The main one, I believe, is my husband telling me, How can you know anything if you don't read. Well, I just can't seem to sit down and read a book nor a newspaper. I want to and I have tried. I didn't think to much of him telling me about reading till he started saying it in front of my children. Which hurt me, and made me feel dumb in front of them. They need to read to get their school work. So about five years ago, I have been talking slowly about going back to school to see if I could do it. Plus, I think he thought I was just talking. So this year he told me, if I want to go to school why don't I go and see about it. So I did. But, when I did, I went on ahead and signed up. It was a little shock to everyone. He really couldn't believe I did it at first. And I am still wondering if it is right myself. I think I should be home with my children; which are growing up so fast. I have a daughter that will be 15 soon and three boys that are 12, 8, and 2 years old.

Behind Mari sat Kathleen who had written her first topic sentence on homework assignments. "Homework assignments are at times better than in-class assignments because the student is not under the pressure of time."

"What do you mean 'the pressure of time'?" I asked.

"Would you elaborate, please?"

At first I just like to write my sentence or paragraph and then I go back, like the first time. I'll write three drafts and then I'll write one. Then I'll write it again. Even starting, I need time. I like to sit and think before writing. That is why I don't like to write in class. The feeling of pressure from the class makes me nervous.
Kathleen's second draft read: "English paragraph assignments make better homework assignments because the student has more time for creativity."

(Kathleen had been in my English 104 class when we had discussed composing as a creative process involving searching, seeing, and structuring.)

Kathleen explained that she meant "time to sit and think about the writing, time to make it more interesting. In class, I write what comes at first, but there is no time for a second draft. At home, I have fewer distractions."

"Are you bothered much by class distractions, Kathleen?"

Yes, I hate them. The big noises don't bother me, the little things like the click of a pen, people tapping their feet irritate me. Then, too, there is less pressure in writing at my own desk. I'm just more comfortable in a familiar setting as long as I'm secluded. In class there are so many people around. I need seclusion. A place where there is just you and the paper!

The third draft which appeared to satisfy Kathleen read "English writing assignments can be written with greater ease as homework than as in-class work because the student has more time for creativity, has fewer distractions, and less pressure at his own desk."

As I looked up from Kathleen's paper, I noticed that Joe was returning to the blackboard. Complimenting the students on their grasp of topic sentences, he directed
the class: "Notice, now, how we can further sharpen topic sentences." He wrote on the board: "Animals make good pets." Joseph continued, "How can we give this sentence more direction?"

Matt called out, "Change animals to cats!"

Mork joined in, "Cats make good pets for old people, children, college students, and English teachers."

"Why?" Joseph challenged, obviously enjoying the idea of cats for English teachers. (He was unsuccessful in hiding the twinkle in his eyes.)

Another student piped up, "Because they are small, easy to take care of, and do not eat much."

"Yes," laughed Joe. "You have sharpened up this sentence. It works like magic. The more specific you become, the more you have to write about, while the more general you remain, the less you have to say. I know this seems a paradox, but it's true." The homework assigned for the class was writing a paragraph in which details could be added to support the topic sentence which had been generated during class time.

At the end of the class period, Joseph wrote an evaluative journal entry for me, assessing the strength and weakness of today's session.

Most of the students appeared alert and attentive, but I had difficulty keeping a group of three or four in the back involved in the class activities. Only when I invited the class to try writing topic
sentences on some subjects which I had listed on the board did they become involved in the learning process.

Pacing seemed to be a problem in this session—originally I had planned to have the students immediately generate a paragraph from one of the topic sentences they had written, but there was not enough time for that, so I deferred the writing until the next class period.

I felt that we had a productive session and visible evidence that the students had grasped the concept of the topic sentence fairly well during the period. The tone of the class was businesslike, but there was also time for short jokes, bursts of laughs, and creative questions about the class activities.

**Paragraph Development**

Students handed in their assigned paragraphs today, December 13. To summarize, Joe moved from writing a topic sentence to paragraph development. Referring to Aristotle, Joe explained that all writing has a beginning, a middle, and an end. For paragraphs this would amount to an introduction, which is the topic sentence; a body which would include the sentences of development (perhaps five to seven sentences); and the concluding sentence. While writing the body of the paragraphs, if the writer "squeezes" and nothing comes, he should change the topic sentence to an assertion or a point of argument. In some paragraphs of description, the concluding sentence could be a topic sentence, "flipped upside down." Or the writer could restate the topic sentence in expanded form. In any case, after the discussion the writer should end up knowing more
than when he started. Then, the last sentence should reflect new understanding. "Writing makes us know what we didn't know we knew," asserts Joe.

Further strategies for writing concluding sentences for a paragraph were given. Students could use a quote or a personal thought. "Something will connect and you use a quote or you may choose to show the significance of what you have written—just don't bring up new ideas. In real life, one thought leads to another. But in these early paragraphs avoid this." Joe stressed the importance of a concluding sentence in order to give the paragraph closure or completeness. "Perhaps restating the topic sentence in expanded form will be the easiest to write at first," pointed out Joseph.

**Variety in Writing**

Various types of writing were assigned during the "honeymoon" period. Trying new writing modes helped sustain students' interest in their writing. Students tried their writing wings today, December 18, by developing paragraphs using analogy. Joe explained that an analogy is a comparison of similar or widely dissimilar things, leading to a discovery of perhaps a fresh new understanding about both things. Stepping to the blackboard, he wrote "How is a man like a tree?" From different parts of the room came the responses: "They both have trunks!"
"They both have arms!" "They both grow!" "They both need water to survive!"

"Good!" smiled Joe. The class was to give reasons why they thought the two things they compared were similar. They could compare an object and a person, two objects, two persons, or freshmen men and women. (This last suggestion sparked some whispering and snickering from Mork, Jim, and John, seated to my right.) "Try a crisscross arrangement," Joe said. "Go back and forth with parts. Just experiment and use your imagination. Now write for a while."

The students appeared to be intrigued with this new approach for discovering similarities; they began immediately to write. Other than the quiet sounds of pens dancing in circles across paper, scarcely any sounds could be heard. At the end of period, many analogies had been produced. Susan wrote:

Eng. 113 is like learning to ice skate, because you may be going just fine, and suddenly you come to a bad place in the ice and you find yourself on the ground. When you first begin to write in Eng. 113, you are afraid to write your first sentence because you are afraid the second sentence won't come to mind. Such is the case with learning to skate; your first steps are wobbly and difficult. We must remember that it takes time to smooth out the rough places in anything we do. As our ankles become stronger with practice, our minds also improve with each passing word or thought that comes to mind. As we learn to glide the words seem to flow more freely.
Joe commented on her paper after class: "This is excellent work, Susan. You have a real knack for finding unusual comparisons. This one is both timely and insightful."

Goldie compared love to peanut butter.

Love is like peanut butter because they can both become sticky situations. Love is wonderful and when it gets its start it leaves a wonderful taste to your life. Peanut butter on a sandwich makes an ordinary piece of bread taste a great deal better. Once love gets underway in a relationship we find that each person involved wants to make the other one stick to certain rules or guidelines. After eating a few bites of peanut butter your mouth begins to become sticky and prevents you from taking another bite just as love can hold you back from seeing another person. However, just like peanut butter makes a nice supplement to jelly, and you often wonder if you want it with your peanut butter to perhaps make it less sticky, so too does doubt supplement love because love can make everyday decisions a bit more sticky, because there are two persons involved.

"Goldie," wrote Joe, "This is a very clever analogy. I have a little trouble understanding the thought expressed in the last sentence about doubt. How does it 'supplement' love? Perhaps you need to look for another word here."

Lucile wrote about libraries and churches.

Libraries are like churches because in a library you must be quiet in order for the other persons within the building to be able to comprehend what they are reading. In a church you must also be quiet in order for the members of the congregation to be able to comprehend what they are reading or hearing.

A library is a place for learning about specific things, many different things. A church is a place for learning as well. Here you are learning about God, His creations, His works, His love. In a library you can learn countless numbers of things. In a church there are also many things you can learn. A library holds information about many things, including God, and
religion. A church holds information about God and religion, but also you can learn about people, life, various places around the world, and the troubles one faces throughout his or her life. A library is a temple of learning and life. A church is the temple of God, love, learning, and life.

Lucile had written two paragraphs for her paragraph assignment. Joe gave some positive feedback and suggestions for later papers. "You have an interesting analogy here, and you are attempting to flesh it out with specific detail . . . . Good."

Hortense wrote:

Freshmen are like graduating seniors because both are looking into a new and exciting future. Freshmen are coming to college for the first time. Seniors will be in the real world for the first time. Freshmen will be meeting many new people. Seniors will be meeting many new people. Freshmen probably will be living away from home. Seniors will probably be moving away from home. Freshmen feel the fright of moving into a new atmosphere. College students would be thankful that they have the chance to attend college. Graduating seniors should be thankful that they graduated from college. Freshmen are like graduating seniors because of their new and exciting futures.

She had really absorbed the "cross-cross" pattern which Joe had outlined on the board. He suggested, "What this paragraph needs, I think, is transitional expressions to link the sentences in the body of the paragraph. This is good tight writing. I'm sure you're going to do well this term."

Mari compared spring to a big family.
Spring is like a big family because it's like a new start in our lives. Spring starts with small seeds and grows into many things. A family starts with small growing children. Then spring develops into full growth. As children grow into adults. As winter starts the leaves fall away. As true to children falling away from home. Then winter comes and is alone because everything is gone and covered. So is the family the two are alone. Then spring is back budding, so is another family.

Joe encouraged Mari. "Very good, Mari. You are learning to explore your subject and to create mood in your writing. We call this control of tone."

Matt wrote:

Winter is like women because they are unpredictable. Winter is like women because a winter day may be 60° one day and 20° the next day. Women are like winter for women are unique like winter because winter is unlike any other season and women are unlike any other species. Winter can be beautiful but dangerous, like women can be beautiful but dangerous in their own way, not so much bodily harmful but just dangerous to the heart and soul. Women are like winter for women may be there one day and gone the next. Winters are like women for winter may also slowly go away. The only thing about some women is winter will leave for sure but women may be there forever. But you must admit that women are like winter because they are very unpredictable.

"Matt," commented Joe, "This is really fresh, exciting writing. I enjoyed the analogy and thought that it was well done. Perhaps there are other aspects of winter that are also unpredictable that you would also like to consider?"

I asked Joe to evaluate today's writing experiences. He wrote:

The students began to work on their papers. As I walked around and looked at what they were writing, I was impressed by some of the clever analogies they had developed. The students, however, had difficulty
in developing their analogies in detail, and they were not as attentive as they had been earlier. I felt as if I were policing them a little—this is not one of my favorite teaching techniques.

Toward the end of the period, however, the class seemed to be intrigued by the analogies they were creating, and the students were sharing their writing with each other of their own accord. I was pleased at this development.

I'm going to return the papers to the students the first class period in the new year for revision. My impression is that this class is developing a good grasp of paragraph writing and will soon be ready to write complete themes.

Joe indicated that the exercises from the textbook had "laid the groundwork" for the in-class analogies. He thought the text was "more valuable than most because it provides many small opportunities for writing." Joe believed that repetitive practice in writing skills produces growth in writing ability.

I agreed with Joe that today's session was quite successful. The students visibly enjoyed the discussion on analogy and produced fresh, insightful paragraphs. Joe had presented a challenge and turned the class loose. They were quickly off and running, appearing delighted with the connections they were able to make. Their paragraphs contained both fireflies and flintstones.

After class, Joe and I, again, discussed today's session. Joe had not rated his teaching performance as highly as I had. We spoke further as we walked across
campus. Still dwelling on the writing experiences with analogies, Joe reflected:

As class sessions go, I would rate this one as perhaps average in terms of my performance and perhaps average or a little below in terms of student responses. I feel that during the new year I should use more class activities to involve the students directly and depend less on lecture. Today I tried to vary the format a little by lecturing some and then having the class write, but we need some other activities to give more variety to the class.

**Freewriting: Some Attention to Process (Invention)**

During the second week of class, Joe wanted to give help to those students who might be having difficulty finding something to say. They might need help retrieving information stored in the unconscious mind. For example, Susan wrote, "The only problem that I am often faced with is what to say. Now what do I say next? You see, my mind has gone blank."

When there is a conscious striving, a grit-the-teeth determination to find something to say, the writer may end up with a "blank" mind, as Susan reports. Herbert Spencer extolls the value of relaxed attention while searching for words.

When endeavouring to recollect some name or thing which has been forgotten, it frequently happens that the name or thing sought will not arise in consciousness; but when attention is relaxed, the missing name or thing often suggests itself . . . with the cessation of strain the true association of ideas has an opportunity of asserting itself. ³
Joseph and I discussed the value of encouraging students to write freely without their worrying about what to say or about premature editing. As a way to help students think on paper, Joe directed the class to buy a spiral notebook for freewriting and other types of journal entries. He explained that freewriting was a way to get the words flowing onto a page, a way to prime the pump, enabling students to produce subject matter.

Students were to bring the notebook (journal) to class each day. Joe would reserve five to ten minutes of class time for persons to write what they were thinking and feeling. Sometimes, he would make suggestions for specific responses to questions such as "how did it all turn out?" In addition, the students were to write twice a week or so out of class. They were to bring the journals to conference with Joe and could pull out particular topics or entries they would like to share with him. Joe would write a journal of his own and would share it with the class.

The class began freewriting in their writing journals December 16, 1980. The first day I wrote along with the class. We were to write freely; the only requirement was to begin when Joe directed and to continue for the allotted time (without stopping), even if we were to write only "stuck, stuck, stuck." After writing, the students were to underline key ideas that impressed them from the freewriting.
Selected samples of freewriting follow which seemed to capture the rich "mental life" of the teachers and students. First of all, I'd like to share my writing because it captures the early in-class writing behavior of the students and Joseph. (This material will be double spaced for more easy readability.)

"Both Joe and I are writing with the class. Students in the back are saying to each other What goes in it? Anything? 'Yeah, anything.' I can hear the pens' hostility, as they are scratching the paper. The class is quiet—no talking now as the students get caught up in the flow of their thoughts. It is interesting to note how this process works. Writing begets writing like a little water added to an old-fashioned pump will motivate or encourage that pump to pour out thick streams of water in a short time . . . . It's truly fun for me to free write like this, but I'm missing the opportunity of seeing the students write, so I will probably refrain from writing another time. The boys on the back row have stopped writing and are contemplating. Little snorts or sighs are emitted from their nostrils. The girls are quick as they write. A few are thinking. Susan, with left hand to forehead, seems deep in thought. Lucille pauses to take off her coat. She hurries on, so as not to miss
a precious minute's writing. Joe writes on, seated in front of the class at a student's desk, his head bent low over his writing journal. Matt sits motionless except for his pen which busily digs into the page. I notice that Kathleen goes back over her writing to meditate on what she has written; her lips move somewhat and her mouth curves with effort as she picks up the pen again."

After our ten minutes were ended, Joe read to the class what he had written:

"Today is the first day of our freewriting exercises. I wonder how this system will work. It should produce writers who are not afraid of the blank page, and if it does that, it should certainly be worth the effort. I am really excited about the possibilities for growth within the group of students. So far they seem interested in class and ready to learn the new expository skills that we will explore together in English 113. I am hoping that we all have fun and learn a great deal about writing at the same time. I am also concerned about finishing up the paperwork that is on my desk and making headway in marking homework assignments and themes. Perhaps I should assign 'the Birthmark' in my English 123 class for
Friday. On the other hand, it is the day before the Christmas break begins, and perhaps the students will not feel up to so heavy an assignment. Tomorrow is Wednesday, and that means that I must prepare materials for three classes. It shouldn't be difficult to prepare enough for English 104 as they already have their paragraph assignments and are working steadily on them now. In English 113, however, the students will need some direction on how to produce their first full length theme. I need to duplicate a couple sample essays so that I can show them how to do the assignment. That should be a big help.

He then asked, "Would others like to share any part of your writing with us?"

"Oh, no!" groaned John, scooting down in his seat at the back of the room, trying to hide. Chip said, "I don't want to share my writing. It's personal." At first, Lige said no. Then he said, "Let me share a little bit." He read us his concerns about "small town schools." "Not me!" concluded Matt.

Joe did not press the students to share further, but explained to them that he had noted certain points in his own writing which he had underlined, such as the idea that freewriting "should produce writers who are not afraid of the blank page," his concern about "finishing his
paper work" on his desk (Joe would write about the heavy paper load from fifteen hours of composition, frequently), and preparing material.

Jonathan's writing revealed his worry about an upcoming test and about finances.

"The important thing now is that I've got an electricity test tomorrow that I know absolutely zilch about. I have a vague idea of what's going to be on it but the thing now is to study that. He went over it last night and all the test is going to be is math, and math isn't exactly my favorite subject. It's getting pretty close to Christmas and I've got all my shopping done. I know when break comes that I won't have a vacation. I'll have to work every day because I have an insurance payment to make by the first. I'd like to take at least a week to do that, but where am I going to find time? I can't work and do body work at the same time. I want to sell my car so I thought if someone would take my car and fix up the pickup—plus give me boot—I'd do that, but no luck so far. The world situation seems pretty gloomy. Russia's about to invade Poland and we're liable to step in. If we go to war with Russia somebody, the winner, is going to rule the other. " 
June and her family had moved from a large city to a remote country area. Her writing revealed her disenchantment with country life.

"Looking outside at the weather, it looks so drab. It seems that every time I've been in English class the weather has been dreary. Hopefully it will turn into snow, which will make everything look so neat and clean. I'm wondering what my children are up to this moment. I hope Seth got off to school with a good lunch first. My husband was supposed to go hiking and cave exploring this morning, but I doubt very much if he drug himself out of bed. Maybe Thursday, he will help me round up the geese and get them in a pen. I'm so afraid they might get hit by a car, which brings me to the dog; I didn't see her anywhere this morning. She's too young to be out in the woods alone. Homesteading these days isn't what it's cracked up to be. I hate to say I'm a failure, but if we don't start being more conservative we may as well go back to the city. Heating with only wood has been our downfall I'm afraid. It's too restrictive when a person wants to go away for the weekend."

Pledging was apparently much on Jim's mind. He shared his own views on "Greek life."
"Even though I can't express in detail the happenings of pledging AE, it's an experience. We're up every day at 7:30. We dress up 4 out of the 5 days of school. We carry paddles and we get signatures from our active brothers each day. At night we have 2 hour study tables, followed by a meeting every night in our pledge master's room. We, the pledges, have our own meeting to go over the next day's agenda. Even though the work can get hard at times there are just so many good times. The whole idea about joining a fraternity has just hit me. It carries responsibility, unity with your brothers, punctuality and overall it makes you a better man. To be able to spend time with your pledge brothers is exciting. I've drawn closer to 12 guys on campus than I have some of my own relatives. It's a great feeling to know when you need help or just need someone to talk to that there's some 40 guys just on campus who will take time out and listen. Yesterday, I received my Big Brother and we haven't in the last 3 days not met and sat down and talked. I've just begun to really get to know some of the other actives also. It's a feeling you can't explain to see a whole fraternity cheering for you at a basketball game. This is the first time since on campus I really look forward to getting up and starting the day. It's also
the first time that I've got up for breakfast in years. Ha! just kidding. Since I'm pledging that's all that's on my mind and I want the knowledge they have to share. Even though personally I think I'm putting my studies aside at times, eventually I'll get back in the groove and hit the books a little bit harder. As the term goes on I hope to get my assignments done but I would like everyone to bear with me on certain occasions and I'm sure there will be days when I'm just fed up."

The perils of the social life of a young freshman girl can be seen through Kay's eyes.

"I've been in college for over a quarter and I'm now living in an apartment. I live with Cindy Smith who is from Tiffin. It is just a two bedroom, with a kitchen, dining room and bath room. It is a better place than the dorms. Last night I went to the Lambda Omicron Phi's rush. It was a lot of fun. We played pool and played all sorts of games. I got home around 12:30 p.m. I forget where the rush was held. When I got back, I discovered that Cindy had chained the door shut . . . I really panicked. I went back to Davis and Carol told me to knock on her window. I did but it did not work. So I opened the door and yelled in. Finally Cindy opened the door and let me in. What
happened was, Cindy got in late from practicing and she thought I had already gone to bed."

Even though Chip would not read his writing aloud, he let me have it for this study. He, obviously, was going through a time of personal pain.

"Today is the first day that I can say I'm totally free in about 4 years. I did what had to be done and stood up for myself. The words that I chose are not the right ones sometimes but it's the only way I know. I've lost someone that was very special to me. How I can replace her I do not know. But I've got to be free to do the things I want to do and say the things I want to say without answering to someone. I've made other people mad in the process and the damage is irreparable so there is no turning back. I can't fit into a mold of what someone else expects me to be. All I want is respect in return for anything I do. Free to grow a beard if I want to, free not to be going somewhere all the time and free to express my opinions where they are not scoffed at and taken lightly. Things will be rough for awhile but I feel I will get over it all in time. I'll hate the sleepless nights and the torment they bring. But I'm going to emerse myself in my work now. I know I have done many things wrong and I'm to blame for a lot of bitter feelings
but it was building for so long and I just had to say
something. I wouldn't feel right going through the
rest of my life with all these bitter feelings inside
of me. So now it's over and time to begin anew. I
think I'll go it alone for awhile cause no one can
replace the person I've hurt."

Susan, a busy mother, was concerned with the upcoming
Christmas production at her church. Also she liked the idea
that she could write without having to worry about edi-
torial matters. (Her personal goal the first day of class
had been to "write grammatically correct.") She seemed
pleased to be able to shed this weight which so easily beset
her.

"I like to write when I don't have to worry about what
to say or put down. I'm not going to think about no
silly old punctuation. That makes it especially more
fun. I hope he doesn't give us a lot of homework or
papers to write over Christmas. Do you suppose he is
a good guy or a scrooge? Talking about scrooges, our
youth fellowship, junior choir, and primary department
are putting on a musical drama entitled The Sixth
Grade Scrooge, and they are having a lot of fun with
it. The children who have solos in the play just do
a wonderful job. I wish everyone could see it. I
didn't realize until we started our production what
great talent we have in our church. The characters in the play are David, Mother, Father, Bah L. Humbug, Mr. Goodguy, Mike, Marie, Jason and Kim. David has just smashed his bike in the first scene and Mother and Father are really chewing him out for riding his bike without permission. He broke his foot, but the parents aren't thinking about David, they are more concerned about the Christmas parties they are going to have to cancel and the Christmas vacation ski trip they are going to have to give up."

The variety of concerns of the class members during this ten-minute freewriting was captured in some detail through a writing technique which helped break through the barrier of "nothing to write about." Freewriting for ten minutes was a way of inventing for these freshmen.

After class, I went to the student center with Matt. He had been in my fall basic skills classes, and I had asked him if he would be willing to share insights about his writing with me. He seemed pleased to be a part of my study. We spent about two hours over cokes talking. I would like to share Matt's views about writing and life. Our dialogue follows.

"Matt, do you do much thinking about your subject before you write?"
"When I know I'm gonna talk for something like an interview, I sit down; I think about it ahead of time, a lot. I think of questions they might ask me, so I can think of real good answers, like for job interviews."

"How is talking like writing?"

"I like to think things out so I won't offend people. Mostly if I've got a problem--like yesterday--a problem with a girl friend. I called her. All day long I practiced what I was gonna say or tell her--knew I was gonna call her. We've broke up now, only talk once a month; when I talk to her I like for it to be right!"

"How do you see yourself as a writer?"

"I'm not a very good writer."

"Why do you say this?"

"I can say words ten times better than I can write them down. I don't know why. Today I got into it, first time I've written my feelings. This was the reason I wouldn't read it when he wanted me to read it." (Matt was referring to his freewriting he had not wanted to share in class today.)

"Why were you able to get 'into' it?"

"I don't know. Depression--very depressed lately. I don't know what I felt like."

"How has writing helped you learn about yourself?"

"If I'm real happy, the paper is a bunch of enthusiasm; if I'm depressed, depressing paper . . . Happy like
going to a circus or a basketball game. Mrs. Epling, if you want to read the free paper, freewriting we did in class, well, you can."

"Thank you, Matt; I'd like to."

Matt ran out to his car to get the notebook.

"There!" He handed the writing to me. "It's not too great. Dr. Seward said 'write what you feel, what you're thinking.'"

Matt continued talking about his depression. He has four brothers and five sisters who live about two hundred miles from him and he misses his family. He explained his freewriting to me:

"The real reason I wrote like this is I can't stand more getting hurt: dad dead, this girlfriend. I was crazy (about her), and I went straight down hill from there."

Here is Matt's freewriting:

"The days are long, the nights are weary. I feel as if the walls surround me, are going to close in on me. I feel shut up as a mouse must feel if he should get in a trap. I'm worried. The thoughts that flow are thoughts of disaster and torture. The one feeling that bothers me is that feeling no one gives a darn about me. I'm all alone in a field of strangers, as a flower must feel in a patch of thorns, that if you move too much or try to get out something is going
to happen to you, that your sap will all come out if you and you will be just a dead flower on the ground in the middle of a thorn bush. No one can get in to help. The cry for help is muffled by the sound of the thorns or people around me, the flowers. One flower can be lovely by itself but a bunch of flowers can be beautiful. I want to be with the other flowers out of the thorns that surround me. But how? How can I get out and be a flower with all the others? The question has been bugging me for over a month now. The flower is me, the thorns is my depression and the other flowers are the people around me, the thorns are also people who don't care, who don't want to care, they are the people who should be shut up and can't get out no matter how they try. A child am I again with no one to care for me. I guess I will try and make it on my own."

I have included segments of the interview with Matt because during it he revealed that for the first time (in class today, using the freewriting mode), he had been able to write about his feelings. Later on Matt will find that, more and more, his writing will provide a "listening ear" for him when he is trying to cope with painful emotional experiences. He points out that writing has become the high school friends he has left behind. "I can talk to
"it" [the writing] and it won't talk back!" Matt permitted me the privilege of peeking into his mind to better understand his emotional needs, and his attitude toward writing. He needed a friend to communicate with. Writing, more and more as the quarter progressed, became that friend.

It is important to remember that the writing we've been examining here has come from what I envision to be the "non-writers" or "unsuccessful" writers in high school and/or remedial English. I have included several samples of students' work to show that freewriting appears to help students break written communication barriers. Students have been able to, indeed, write "freely" about those things which matter in their lives. In addition, I wanted to show writing "details in the respondents own language in order to minimize distortion."^5

That freewriting was successful and enjoyed by this class was evident by student comments throughout the quarter. Lois's final evaluation of the course illustrates the feeling held by most of the class. "This class I really enjoyed because of the freewriting. One day I'd come into class feeling really out of sorts and I could sit down and release all of my frustrations with a pen and a piece of paper."
Reflections About Christmas: In-Class Writing

The first in-class writing assignment after the holidays was designed to tap into students' reflections. "Write about what you think was important or significant about Christmas," directed Joseph. While most of the class willingly complied with the writing assignment, a few in the back of the room had difficulty starting. They talked for several moments to each other before beginning, but soon all were busily writing, pausing periodically to reflect.

I noted that Chip wrote about a half page and then stopped to clean his fingernails. He seemed to be in deep thought, oblivious to his surroundings, as he cleaned his nails. Then, he picked up his pen and attempted to write again, but apparently couldn't. Finally, he laid down his pen (without writing further), folded his arms, and remained motionless, as though frozen in that position. (All continued to write but him.) Moving over to Chip, I sat down in the empty chair to his left. "Chip," I whispered, "since I'm trying to understand more about students' writing experiences, could you please tell me why you have stopped writing? What has happened?" He began to talk.

"I guess that with the death of my grandmother, Christmas turned into something that didn't have much meaning for me this year, plus the other problems I have to
deal with in our home." Chip shoved the writing he had completed in front of me.

"Christmas this year was fun but it happened too fast to enjoy any of it. Our family went to my sister's house and we watched my niece and nephew open their presents at the speed of light. Then I went out to my girlfriend's house to watch her brothers and sisters unwrap their gifts. They didn't wait 5 minutes between them opening one and ripping open another. And when all the presents were opened they went back to being the usual spoiled, smart-mouthed kids they always were. Christmas this year was just a transparent happiness over the problems we all knew we would have to face again the next day."

I felt embarrassed that I had intruded on Chip's private grief with my questions, especially when I remembered that he had not wanted to share, openly, any of his free-writing the first time we wrote in class.

"I'm sorry, Chip."

"It's all right, Mrs. Epling."

Later, after class I again returned to Chip, explaining that he and the other students were, in a sense, my teachers. I had wanted to understand why his writing had stopped so abruptly and definitely.
Chip said, "My Christmas experience was a bad one and as I was writing I found my thoughts were sarcastic and not pleasing to myself so I thought I should stop. These kids are like my own. Normally, I wouldn't write anything negative."

"Do you like to write only positive things, Chip?" I asked.

"Yes. It's hard for me to write something critical about someone else. I wouldn't be good on the political scene. I couldn't write criticisms."

"That's interesting, Chip. I'd like to talk to you further about this." (I realized that he understood critical writing as merely fault-finding.)

Reaching Toward the Whole Essay: Transitions and Parallelism

Joe explained to the students that readers should be able to move effortlessly through writing without strain. Transitional words or phrases are used to accomplish this by helping the readers move from one thought to another. Since the class had been assigned homework on ways to achieve coherence by the use of transitional devices, Joe made an in-class assignment which would test students' understandings of transitions as well as other points he had covered earlier, such as specificity.

Joseph distributed copies of a paragraph which he wanted the class to read. Students were to study the good
points and bad points of the paragraph and write comments that an English professor might make. "Make corrections, comments, anything you feel like writing on it. Imagine you are the teacher and you want to help students to learn to write better," suggested Joseph.

After the class had spent some time studying the paragraph, Joe asked "How does the writer use transitional words or expressions? Mork, do you see any?" Mork hadn't found any. Susan volunteered, "How about 'for one thing'?" "Yes," responded Joe. "In addition," called out another student. "How about 'another feature' and 'still another'?" asked Joseph. "Can you say 'thirdly'?" wondered Kathleen. Joseph responded, "Third is better."

Joseph directed the students to try rewriting the paragraph: adding transitions, cleaning up errors of punctuation, fattening it up for better development. "Even better, refer to comments you wrote as suggestions for revising the paragraph. Use the list of transitions I gave you so that the paragraph really flows smoothly."

Later, the class was divided into three groups and Joe and I circulated among each group listening to students talk about what they had done to improve the paragraph. "Would you write down answers from your group, Matt?" asked Joe. In the group near me, Mork asked, "Do you want me to write
for our group? (Joe nodded yes.) O.K. who wants to say what?"

The students talked freely about the paragraph. They pointed out the transitions they had added such as "next," "another disadvantage," etc. Also, they changed words from general to specific, drawing on their earlier class assignments. Matt volunteered, "Where it says 'building,' I put specific, 'the Career Center.'"

Finally, those taking notes for each group reported. The groups had combined and reconstructed sentences, using subordination. They had also deleted excess words, added transitions, changed general words to specific. In addition, they had pointed out faulty logic. For example, "Short water fountains would be a disadvantage, rather than an advantage, to tall people," Mork concluded.

Today, January 8, 1981, Joe wrote about the progression of class work in a journal entry:

I would really like to work with the class more on transitions, and I think a follow-up discussion using the paragraph I handed out for the students to revise on Tuesday might be one way to do it. I want to re-emphasize the need to tie sentences together so that they are easy for the reader to follow.

I'd also like to talk with the students a little bit about parallelism, since they just did an exercise on it last night. I noticed that some of the students in my other composition sections had difficulty with the concept of parallelism for rhetorical effect. I'd like to work on that a bit also.
I'm also concerned about the fact that we are four weeks into the quarter, and we still have not written a full-length theme. I think I'm going to start talking to the class about their first theme today, perhaps giving out theme topics if possible.

Joe began today's session discussing the concept of parallelism, since students had had difficulty understanding the exercises in their workbooks.

Expressing a fondness for the television show "Sesame Street," Joe explained that he had found an effective way to teach parallelism as he had seen it presented on "Sesame Street." The theme of the particular show which Joe referred to was "One of these things is not like the other." Joe sketched on the board the following diagram:

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"Now, which one of these things is not like the other?" quizzed Joe. "The one without the stem," responded Susan.

"Yes," affirmed Joe. Making all four blocks parallel by adding a stem, he pointed out that parallelism attempts to express related ideas or content in similar grammatical form. For example, in Edward Kennedy's statement, "The cause endures, the hope goes on, the dream will never die,"
there is parallel subject and verb order as well as parallel short, terse sentences.

Joe wanted to encourage differences rather than similarities in students' writing, but he explained that if the form was too different or abrupt, readers' understanding would be blocked, hence the focus on parallelism.

To review, components of this freshman classroom climate included valuing students' words and ideas; providing individual student help during twenty-five office hours; taking time and explaining class work thoroughly; assigning a variety of writing opportunities; and evaluating student writing by encouraging comments, rather than by grading "fragile, tentative writing abilities."6

These first four weeks, the "honeymoon" period, were crucial for helping students develop confidence in their ability to learn to write. Koch and Brazil emphasize the importance of establishing a nurturing classroom climate early. "If the students are not motivated to think about language and to want to write better, and if student fear of writing and the composition classroom is not reduced at this early stage, then what happens afterwards may be futile and self defeating."7
CHAPTER FOUR - NOTES


5Lecture by Donald P. Sanders, "Qualitative Research in Education" Educational Foundations and Research 800, The Ohio State University, 5 November 1979.


7Koch and Brazil, p. 2.
CHAPTER FIVE
DEVELOPMENTAL STAGE TWO: PROCESS

Class Developmental Stage Two, with its emphasis on process, unfolded a month into the winter quarter. Moving from the class session on parallelism where similarities in ideas and forms were stressed, the class arrived at a discussion of writing as creative process where differences were valued, where things fresh, new, and "unlike another" were desirable.

It seemed important to move from talking about and looking at products, i.e. words, topic sentences, and paragraphs to an exploration of the process which produced these products. What did students know about the writing process? Joseph was sensitive to my desire to introduce writing as process; students could be aware of their patterns of mind before they began writing essays. As indicated by their answers to the question asked earlier in class "What process do writers go through?", students (predictably) had limited understanding of the psychological components involved in writing. Mostly, they viewed process as writing a rough draft and correcting this draft.

Joe's encouragement of my sharing writing as creative process was another example of the "honeymoon" climate, a
climate dedicated to fostering understanding and developing writing competency. There appeared to be some corroboration that attention to process could lead to greater competency in writing. Edelsburg had suggested that "knowledge of the process itself may help to make writing happen." Moreover, Carroll found that students of teachers trained in process showed significant growth in writing. Also, Bartholomae suggested that if writers did not know how they were to behave—compose—comparing their composing process with a process described by the writing teacher could improve their own writing process. The primary objective of my presentation, then, was to heighten students' awareness of their psychological life so that they could be in touch with their individual creative flow. In a sense, this class period might be termed the "entrance of light" period. After the class session on process, students could perceive writing in a broader, deeper dimension.

Joe and I felt that the timing was right, i.e. after the students had experienced writing "unconsciously and spontaneously," they were now ready to become conscious (become aware of the "activity of the mind—the consciousness of being conscious") and to gain some measure of control over their writing. Both "consciousness and control appear only at a late stage in the development of a function," posits Vygotsky. In working with basic writers,
Lunsford found, too, that writers "learn by doing and then by extrapolating principles from the activities."  

My role switched from observer to participating teacher as I lectured on the concept of composing as a creative process. Joe and the students were active listeners—taking notes and asking questions—as I discussed the complexities involved in producing a piece of writing.  

My own understanding of writing as a creative process came about, in part, from two seminars taken at The Ohio State University during my doctoral program in 1980. "We all tend to go around the world with our eyes closed unless someone opens them for us," articulates S. F. Hayakawa. My eyes, if not closed, were only half opened to seeing how students learn to compose, before Professor Donald R. Bateman's seminar on "The Composing Process" and Professor Robert Bargar's on "Individual Development and Creativity." They were the "someone" who opened my eyes to a fuller understanding of the dynamic, psychological qualities of creativity and the composing process.  

I defined the composing or writing process for the class by examining some of the phases which writers go through. My definition was this: Composing is what the writer does as he uses words to weave a web of meaning by passing through phases of the creative process. Or stated another way: Composing is the creative process through
which a writer goes as he uses words to weave a web of meaning or produce a product. This process encompasses searching, seeing, and structuring, words I coined to describe the phases of the process.

Composing in all its complexities, seems to be a truly creative endeavor embodying key elements of creativity: wrestling with obscure, new meaning; seeing meaning clearly through flashes of insight; and expressing meaning through form. Creative means "bringing something new into being."¹⁰ This something new can be an unusual or statistically infrequent response, and a "sustaining of an original insight . . . a developing of it to the full."¹¹ Each composing response may be considered a new event, arrived at through the creative process of discovery, development, and structuring. What goes on, then, during the creative act of composing? Let's turn the process back to its initial stage, a way of looking at process as suggested by Vygotsky.¹²

**Motivation to Compose**

The creative process begins when there is external or internal motivation to compose. For example, the class assignment of a theme may be considered external motivation. The assignment initiates an unsettled state of mind, a condition of anxiety. Inner debate begins, "I must get that paper started. What on earth will I write about?
What does this freshman composition teacher want me to write about? How can I get a good grade? I'd better order a pizza first, etc." There is a sense of initiation-avoidance. As the conflict rages, a student is drawn to initiate the writing activity while, at the same time, he may feel an irrepressible urge to avoid the task. Apparently, even professional writers experience this difficulty when they attempt to approach the composing task. Finally as the due date for the theme draws near, the mounting tension or anxiety may be considered a positive force, since the energy provided may destroy the old calm mental status quo and bring into being a "something new." Moreover, the tension and anxiety may have arisen, in part, as a protest to the mental equilibrium being disturbed.

At any rate, in an attempt to reduce tension arising from the chaos and activity of the inner mind by doing something, the writer may prepare to compose by ordering pizza, popping corn, or making a long-distance telephone call. Apparently (for many) some ritual is needed to initiate the composing action: Hemmingway sharpened pencils, Keats dressed in his best formal attire, and Schiller kept a drawer full of rotten apples which he sniffed for inspiration.
Searching

By now, there is a growing awareness of what Ghiselin calls a "commerce with disorder."15 There is an attempt to create some sort of order or meaning from the chaos within by a process of selecting and rejecting from the vast, rich inner reservoir of the fertile mind. This phase could be called the "searching" phase.

Within the mind a boiling, churning, turning, spinning activity may now be taking place. Ideas pop up and are rejected; words suggest others; thoughts surface and then dive back to an unconscious depth. Ghiselin points out that this richness of mind is not "static like a letter file or still like a pond" but is changing continually. "All psychic life is activity, for even the maintenance of the established pattern is a reactivation, with inevitable variation of content and emphasis."16 So, from this active resource of mind, the writer must select his nutrients for creating. There is stored there all the experiences of life: sounds, smells, sights, tastes, feelings, readings, thoughts, pre-verbal understandings, composition models, words, and memories.

While all the raw materials needed to nourish the creation-to-be are there in the stockpile, it is difficult to know what to select and reject to make meaning. Creators "may knock on silence for an answering music, then pursue meaningless until they force it to mean."17 A struggle
goes on, not unlike Jacob's wrestling with the angel. Jacob
would not release the angel until the angel blessed him; the
writer wrestles with meaningless or murky meaning and form
until he is blessed with a flash of insight. The writer's
blessing comes when he can see an answer, some meaning, or
a direction.

The writer may select and reject, advance and retreat,
stop and analyze in an attempt to make clear. He may, as
it were, take a stick and probe the reservoir causing a
word to emerge, an experience to be remembered, a vague
premonition to surface. The creator may be taunted; some­
where there is a whole, a configuration, a pattern. There
is something worth saying— but what? The writer endures
tension and considers alternative possibilities because
of an energizing "hunch" that something new is struggling
to surface. Back and forth goes the process: word
influencing thought and thought influencing word. ¹⁸ A
thought, like some formless blob, may be elusive before it
finally settles down into a word. Words and thoughts may
activate each other as they function to make meaning clear.
It is a struggle to give birth to a piece of writing.

Seeing

Finally, at some point between the time of conscious
striving and a time of relaxation— a time of transition—
the writer may see something new. Insight occurs. This phase may be called "seeing."

After studying, reading, initiating and avoiding, selecting and rejecting, the writer may awake one morning at dawn with thoughts hammering at his consciousness with such persistence that he may grope for the light switch, pencil and paper. Concepts or meaning may come through images, like cream forming at the top of a crock of fresh milk. The writer has only to spoon off the cream. The words and concepts will come and more will form. Another image may be that of a boil needing to be lanced. The infection—if you will—the disorganized, feverish, churning activity must be permitted to build freely before the pressure can be reduced.

Then, a wholeness or healing can take place. Rejecting certain words, thoughts, experiences is not unlike the draining of infection from a wound so that a healthy pattern may form. A third image might be an imagined drop of seminal fluid viewed under a microscope with the frantic activity of the spermatozoa seeking an egg to fertilize. Thoughts seeking words and words influencing thought may be like the attraction of a sperm for an egg. Now, the writer may encounter material which surfaces from an unconscious dimension in the form of images, and these images are clues or germinal ideas to develop. Unlike some
insight which comes essentially complete, other insight may come as a mere fragment of some whole.

This experience of insight or seeing may serve to pull the writer now in a direction of searching for some form into which to channel the ideas. Even at this point, he may feel (like Henry Miller) who said that when he composed, he obeyed instincts and intuitions, knowing nothing in advance. Miller wrote down words "secure in the knowledge that later they will [would] be clear and meaningful to me." So the writer may write concepts on paper, still selecting and rejecting as he goes along, aware that there is some emerging form. He may also be aware of an intensity of dedication and commitment to the birthing of this creation.

Structuring

As order begins to come from disorder, the imagination may be working freely. May revealed that "imagination influences form with its own vitality; form keeps the imagination from driving us into psychosis." There may be a sense of joy, of excitement, of accomplishment from having participated in a creative process. There is a feeling that "this-is-the-way-things-are-meant-to-be." The writer may reject preconceived models of form, believing that he cannot fit emerging new ideas into old conceptual frames. He may want no old wineskins for his new wine.
As he continues to write, freely now, he may experience what Britton says sometimes happens. If the going is easy (and it may be at this stage) the writer is barely aware of selecting and rejecting alternatives. He may have discovered that words can shape an activity (in this case, composing) just as a mold gives shape to substance. It may be fun to watch where the words lead, without any predetermined mold.

Even at this point the writer may not know precisely how he will structure his new idea, what path he will ultimately take. He may not know exactly where he is going, in terms of an ending, but he does know where he has been on his "voyage of discovery." Perhaps with time, his unconscious will produce new insight or a way to elaborate original insight. As he continues to shape his ideas, during the final stage by revising and editing, he may still search until he has some sense of a "right" pattern, a sense of "esthetic fit."

I tried to capture for the class the dynamic quality of writing as a creative process. While we have considered the writing or composing process as separate phases, these phases are not mutually exclusive. All phases are interrelated, but one phase holds the dominant position at any one time. (See Figure II for Phases of Composing as a Creative Process.)
Figure 2
Phases of Composing as a Creative Process
In addition to presenting writing as process, I shared with the class some findings on brain function as related to creativity and composing, discussed in Chapter Two. Then, I asked the class to respond to my lecture on composing, giving me feedback about what made sense to them and what they had experienced in their own writing experiences.

To summarize, the purpose of the lecture was to help the student writers think consciously about the psychological dimensions of composing. Most of the students had not thought about process in terms of patterns of mind. (However, a few in the class had been in my English 104 section when I explored writing as process in this fashion. Some written responses reflected students' acquaintance with composing as a creative process.)

Following are excerpts from students' writing responses which reveal how students perceived the lecture on writing as a creative process.

**Students' Responses to Writing as a Creative Process**

Chip, Matt, Susan, Mari, and Kathleen had heard me discuss writing as process when they had been in my basic skills class. Their answers reflected their earlier introduction to the creative concept. For example, Chip write: "All of it was clear because I have heard about the process before." Alluding to the searching, seeing, structuring
phases (phases which can continue after a draft if completed), Chips described an author seen on a television interview: "After he finishes a book, he keeps it for a year or two refining, honing, and polishing it further." The creative process does not end abruptly because a draft has been completed. The mind may continue to reflect upon what was written, how it was written, and how it might have been written.

Other students' comments revealed their fascination with brain activity in composing. (Emig had suggested that attention to the brain was basic to understanding the writing process.) This class focusing on brain function wrote: "Unfinished tasks do remain on your mind until they are complete"; "the brain and its workings and the thoughts never ending . . . made sense to me"; "your brain never stopping even when you sleep and after you turn in an assignment is what I thought was interesting."

Still others wanted to know more: "I really think that I would like for you to go into it deeper and in more detail"; "I thought the study of the unconscious was very interesting and would like to know more."

Searching for something to write about from one's life experiences captured the imagination of the students. "The way we use experience as a tool is very smart," observed one. Another thought that the discussion on how to retrieve
information or experiences from the brain made sense, "how to get the information flowing that is stored in the brain."

Goldie reported that the part of the lecture which she most understood was the way seeing or insight came. "I have found myself waking up mornings with fresh ideas in my head as to what I could possibly write about."

Kathleen observed: "The writing process which you explained was very much like what I believe I go through when writing. It made sense the way you explained it—but when a person tells another how to do something it always seems easier than the actual process."

"Everything made sense to me," wrote Susan. "It was like you could read my mind. That is how I wrote my paper. . . . I thought a few days on what to write about and I used your process you put on the board." [She had remembered from English 104.]

Others wrote, "Overall the discussion was beneficial"; "I liked the talk"; and "having it explained to me showed me exactly what all those things that happened to me, the worrying, the wondering. . . . has been made clear to me."

Hortense gained a greater understanding from the diagram which I had written on the board. She wrote: "The creative process becomes clear to me by realizing there is an unconscious systematic approach. By your diagram, I understood the mental process leading to the
first words that begin to form, then the logic that takes place when one's own ideas form on the paper. It's complicated and simple at the same time."

There was an unusual comment made by a student which became an "entrance of light" to my understanding of teaching the writing process: "I feel that one important factor that was left out of the discussion was that many times we are not afraid of the blank page; however, we just do not wish to reveal our personal feelings in such a manner."

This comment would continue to remind me that for some students, failure to find something to write about was not a fear of the blank page but was the desire to keep private their feelings and thoughts.

Joe shared with me his response to the lecture. He had applied the creative process phases to his teaching freshman writing: "What I remember most clearly about your presentation is how closely it fits as a model for my own experience as a teacher--(1) experiencing what the needs of the students were--(2) seeing what had to be done to work on these problems--(3) synthesizing the materials for the students--(4) and then generating from that synthesis the substance of the discussion-lecture format. It does precisely model what goes on in the creative format."

Joe's response provided an interesting turn of events for both of us. How appropriate that Joe's "something
new" about teaching writing would arise out of viewing the phases of the creative process.

This developmental stage was brief. Only one class period was allotted to introducing students and Joe to the concept of writing as a creative process. But the presentation made a strong impact on the class. Judging from their responses they understood and could relate to the phases of the process. Later during Developmental Stage Three, students, again, would be asked to write about process as they focused on writing essays.

How were climate and products a part of this stage? Within the class climate, I talked about composing and creativity, I received feedback from Joe and the class, leading to a modification of my model on composing theory (I eliminated the phase, "synthesizing"), and Joe applied the creative phase to his own teaching. Even during this class session, there was a dynamic quality as students, Joe, and I learned together. In addition, Developmental Stage Three was operative even during the one and one-half hour period. Students and Joe produced writing in response to the lecture. Once again, ideas could be written about freely—ideas mattered. We were all learning together more about writing in the freshman classroom culture.
CHAPTER FIVE - NOTES


5 Vygotsky, p. 91.

6 Vygotsky, p. 90.


8 The material presented during the class lecture on "Composing as a Creative Process" came from a paper I wrote for Education: Humanities 925, taught by Professor Donald R. Bateman, The Ohio State University, 1980.


12 Vygotsky, p. 125.


14 Ghiselin, p. 114.

15 Ghiselin, p. 4.

16 Ghiselin, p. 12.

17 May, pp. 107-108.


19 Ghiselin, p. 186.

20 May, p. 146.

21 May, p. 148.


23 Vygotsky, p. 28.

24 Ghiselin, p. 184.

25 May, p. 148.
CHAPTER SIX

DEVELOPMENTAL STAGE THREE: PRODUCTS

The fifth week of the quarter, we arrived at what I later perceived to be Developmental Stage Three with a focus on products or essays—the heart of most freshman composition classes.

"Developmental" implies growth or change, so a class which at first glance appeared to have little form or structure had evolved through stages as the quarter progressed. As we have seen, the classroom had provided a nurturing writing climate through a network of components described in Chapter Four. After a trustworthy, safe climate had been established, the second stage unfolded—the stage of process. One might describe this stage in terms of a passage from Genesis: "Let there be light and there was light." The entrance of light permitted insight into the psychological factors related to the writing process. The presentation of composing as a creative process appeared to delight the class, giving students some sense of their own dialectical minds in action. During the third stage, when rhetorical patterns were being taught, the writers continued to subdue and gain dominion over their writing, so to speak.

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During Developmental Stage Three (Products), both climate and process were operative. The writing environment was still characterized by acceptance and support. In addition, the "process" foundation which had been laid earlier would now be further understood, as students reported on mental processes while preparing more complex writing assignments.

Joe and I discussed the students' writing progress in early January. He was aware of the instructional decisions to be made for guiding his teaching canoe safely through treacherous waters. The shallows were on one side—permitting students to write "fun things" only—and the rapids on the other—overemphasizing textbook materials which, perhaps, would permit students to earn a passing grade in English 113 but might adversely affect their developing concept of writing as discovery. Joe portrays his dilemma and its resolution in a journal entry written after Christmas vacation.

"If I emphasize the textbook, I may strangle my students' creative impulses, but I will be better able to monitor their progress. If, however, I give the students too much free reign, I am afraid they may not absorb the writing principles they need to learn in an expository writing course. I see both these extreme positions as dangerous to the students' developmental process."
Joe decided to strive for a balance between the two extremes. While students need some freedom to discover the fun of writing (that's why Joe found freewriting exercises valuable), they also need—and want—direction in their writing which the textbook provides. He sees himself as the moderator who prevents either of the two forces from disrupting the students' developmental process.

The essays produced during Developmental Stage Three reflected, as in a mirror, bits and pieces of students' lives. It is true that some parts of their life experiences had already been captured in the writing done during the honeymoon and the process stages, but during the third stage, students launched out into the deep and began to write longer, more fully-developed essays which were graded. From experiencing climate, to experiencing process, to experiencing compositions of greater complexity the students progressed. However, even during Developmental Stage Three, with its attention to products, climate and process were dynamically intertwined.

Let us examine the way the transition was made from writing one paragraph evaluated with teacher comments only, to a graded essay. How was it possible to make this transition from teacher comments to grades without upsetting the delicate balance of the non-critical or accepting climate which had been established during the early weeks?
As I reflected on what took place next in the classroom, I realized that without much conscious thought being given to transition by Joe or me, student conferences had, indeed, served as a transitional phase from non-graded to graded writing. Joe had decided to evaluate the first whole essay on an individual basis, explaining his criteria for evaluation to the students in conference.

During the class period, January 14, Joe passed around a "sign-up" sheet for personal conferences, to be held Wednesday, January 21 and Thursday, January 22. After grading essays with the students, he planned to assign supplementary materials from the text to help students with any mechanical difficulties they were experiencing.

Handing back student analogies, Joe and I observed how intently students read his comments written on their papers. "Now that you have successfully absorbed writing a topic sentence and developing it with details, we can move from writing a paragraph to writing a full-length theme" Joe announced. He encouraged the students to remember that the basic structure of all writing is thesis and support. The thesis statement, often the last sentence of the first paragraph, is an assertion which controls the whole paper the way the topic sentence controls the paragraph. "While we do not always find the thesis in the first paragraph this position is usually the best place for beginning writers," contended Joe.
Reviewing the definition of a good thesis statement, Joe touched on transitions and paragraphs of development, pointing out that a popular number of body paragraphs for teachers of freshman composition seemed to be three. Joe explained that the concluding paragraph expands or restates the main idea more clearly. In other words, the concluding paragraph should end the theme gracefully so that it does not just come to a halt. "In going through the previous paragraphs of the essay, we now know the subject better," observed Joe. Reminding them that the easiest part of the essay is the middle part while the most difficult parts are the introduction and the conclusions, Joe cautioned students not to feel chained to the five-paragraph pattern. They were, merely, to be guided by it since it appeared to be one effective way to structure ideas.

The first full-length essay was to be written about a personal experience, and students were free to choose their own topics. Joe, after class, contemplated assigning grades on the essays during the upcoming conference. He wished, of course, that he never had to put grades on essays, but he recognized grading as "a necessary evil." He revealed that over the years he had developed the sense of what an "A" paper represents—a work that shows "originality in content, efficiency in organization, clarity of diction, and freedom from mechanical errors."
A "B" paper might have "less originality in content, but would still be structurally sound and relatively free of mechanical errors."

"C" papers would have more mechanical errors and might have "occasional weaknesses in organization (missing transitional phrases and topic sentences that don't fit the material in the paragraph, etc.)." "D" papers might be "seriously weak in one area—contents, perhaps, or mechanics." An "F" paper would have flaws in several areas.

Joe was hoping to be able to see real progress in students' writing. He had already observed a marked improvement both in organization and content. He believed that the trend would continue during the new year. He wanted students to write "coherent, well organized, and concrete themes." In addition, he wanted them to feel free to experiment with fresh writing, with exciting new metaphors, and original expressions. "I'd like to get to know them better as persons," he volunteered, "and to reach them as individuals with unique problems, perspectives, and challenges."

Student Conferences for Evaluating Personal Experience Essays

The big day arrived. At 12:20 p.m., Joe and I entered the office to get the cassette recorder in place.
for the taping of the student conferences. Joe jotted down pre-conference thoughts in his journal. "I have a little surge of adrenalin," he wrote. "I expect this session to go well; I always enjoy personal conferences, more than lecture or full-class discussion session."

While Joe was writing, I meditated on the fact that Donald Murray had found conferences highly effective for teaching writing. He spent conference time asking students questions about their writing such as "What have you learned? What surprised you? How can I help you?" Murray viewed writing as "a matter of faith, faith that my students have something to say and a language in which to say it." Reflecting on his own experiences after a day of student conferences, Murray articulated: "I hear voices from my students they have never heard from themselves. I find they are authorities on subjects they think are ordinary. I find that even my remedial students write like writers, putting down writing that doesn't quite make sense, reading it to see what sense there might be in it, trying to make sense of it, and draft after draft--making sense of it. They follow language to see where it will lead them, and I follow them following language."¹

Several of the students, in our class, had let language "lead them" to say something about family life in
their personal experience essays. Kathleen, Mari, and Kay make the point that there were specific things individual members could do to knit a family together. Brief excerpts from the transcribed conferences of these three students follow.

**Kathleen's Conference**

Punctually at 1:00 p.m. Kathleen entered the office. Politely seating herself, she folded her hands, her eyes glued to Joe's face. After greeting her, Joe used his pen to indicate significant areas on her paper.

Joe: "Well, let's look at your first theme here. Ah, you have a nice thesis here at the end of the first paragraph. That's good. You have four parts, don't you? I like it here where you begin talking about your family life. That's good. Whenever you can relate the general concepts you are expressing to your own personal experience, that's excellent. It's exactly what we want to be doing. It's good. Occasionally, I found myself as I read this theme, wishing for more specific examples. You try to relate the material to your own life situation, especially here in this paragraph. 'Families like mine share feelings and discomforts which form bonds between family members.'

"I would like for you to tell me a story to show me how that happens, and, if you can, reach into your own experience for them. I think that you would really be on
the way to making your writing really concrete. So, I think that is one thing we might be working on in the next few themes is getting a little more specific, getting that extra added detail that would really help to focus the reader's attention on what you said.

"You have a really nice sense, though, of being able to capsulate ideas. Let me show you one place that I particularly admired. Yeah, here's the topic sentence to this third paragraph. 'Happiness does not just happen; it must be learned.' That is such a nice beautifully balanced and parallel sentence. Nice. Nice sentence there."

Joe permitted Kathleen to study her paper before he handed it to me. When Kathleen stood to leave, I asked her if she would write a brief evaluation of the conference, assessing its value for helping students learn to write in freshman composition and offering suggestions for improving future conferences. Kathleen went to an adjoining office to write her evaluation.

"The conference started very positive and that was encouraging! Then I was told what to do to make it better. (Make myself more concrete.) I thought that the paper was written well and I believe that Dr. Seward thought so too. I was pleased with the conference."
Mari's Conference

Mari brought her little two-year-old son, Arnold, to the conference, explaining that her baby-sitter couldn't come today. As Joe used his pen to emphasize points about the essay, Mari held Arnold on her lap, patting him gently on the legs throughout the conference.

Mari: "Am I in bad shape?"

Joe: "Oh, you are in good shape. Your little boy is darling."

Joe: "You've got a really good thesis statement here, Mari. Nice three part thesis statement, just like we talked about in class. That's excellent. You've got a nice transition, too, to the first paragraph of the body. I like the way you relate this concept to your own experience of religion in your life. I think that's good.

"Ah, so, you are being very concrete here and that's excellent. In fact, if I had to say one thing that is really good about this theme, it would be that you are relating the general concepts to what you are talking about, to your own family experience and that's exactly what you should be doing."

Mari: "I know that, but I'm not in the habit of doing that. . . . I have to get myself in the habit of this now. I tried it here. I remembered it there . . . ."
Joe: "Very good. Well, Mari, looking at this paper as a whole, I think in terms of content, it is certainly fairly specific. You're doing a good job of relating the general ideas to specific examples. In terms of organization, it's again fairly tight. Your direction is good and your mechanics, aside from the one punctuation error I noticed, I see no errors in spelling or grammar."

Mari: "I worked hard on that."

Mari evaluated as follows:

"This is the first time I have ever had a teacher and student conference. I think it is good, because it helps to know where I stand in class. Also, it helps me to improve my weak spots before they go on too far. I want to do well, and this will help me to do better in class and homework. It also lets you tell me what you expect out of me. Plus, this makes me believe you are interested in each of us and in helping us get through this class. So, this is good, and I like to have them."

Kay's Conference

Kay carried her little straw basket with a red bandana covering it (she is pledging). She appeared absorbed in Joe's comments, listening thoughtfully throughout. Near the end of the conference, Joe wrote a C+ on the essay.
Joe: "Kay, when you do an introductory paragraph, it is a good idea to start out with a general approach to the topic like maybe you could talk about the importance of keeping a family together, why that is necessary, why that is good, and then after you have talked for a couple of sentences about that, ease into your thesis and then have this as the last sentence in the first paragraph. But, this is really good in that it gives a nice three-part division for the theme and that is exactly what we want.

"Rhetorical questions are questions you don't expect the reader to answer. You say 'Do you respect the private property of your sisters and brothers? Do you let them have their time on the phone?' These are good specific examples of how one can respect another's privacy and so on, but perhaps it would be more effective to put these in terms of statements rather than in terms of questions. If you put them in terms of questions, the reader may say, 'Well, I don't know. I don't have brothers and sisters.' (Ha, ha, I don't.)

"Your conclusion is good because you remind the reader of the importance of your topic. That's excellent. In fact, if I had to pick out one section of this theme that I thought was best, it would be the conclusion. I think it's nice and tight and really wraps up the theme really well."
Kay: "There's one thing I didn't do on this paper. I didn't say 'you.'"

Joe: "Uhuh."

Kay: "'cause I remembered."

Joe: "That's good."

Kay evaluated the conference: "I think the conference helped me very much in learning how to construct a theme. I learned how to use words better. Also, how not to use second person. I think I will improve in the future."

The next student conference will be reported almost in its entirety. The student, Mork, had been in Dr. Seward's basic skills class fall quarter, and Dr. Seward was concerned about Mork's ability to handle the pressures of freshman life: Coping with home sickness, adjusting to new roommates, and making friends. This conference captures Joe's interpersonal skills. It also pictures Mork's out-of-classroom cultures (the larger college culture and the home culture) impacting upon his student life and his writing.

Mork's Conference

Mork enters the office, sporting a bright blue-plaid jacket.

Joe: "Well, let me fish out your theme here."

Mork: "Am I the worst one?"
Joe: "Oh, no. Actually, I enjoyed it. You have a very interesting kind of style, Mork, and there is sort of a warm tone to your writing that I really enjoy. Also, I like this theme because it is very personal. I like the way your first paragraph is developed. Let's look at the essay. " (Hereafter, students' essays and other writings will be double spaced for readability.) Mork's essay follows:

"Life is full of changes, and mine has really changed since I've come to Rio Grande. Sometimes I ask myself why? Why did I come here? It seems so far away from home. Along with my new environment, came some one who means a great deal to me. When I first came here, I thought this college was the pits. I couldn't have cared less whether I stayed or left. I wanted to leave. As a matter of fact I did leave, several times. I went through roommates left and right. It really was awful. I was told things would look up, but I thought to myself when? I have everything I could ever want or need. A car, money, fairly nice clothes, you name it, I get it. It always seemed like it wasn't enough.

"I made new friends, but it wasn't anything like home. My grades were doing fine to my amazement, and I was starting the hard task of growing up. At the end of my first quarter, I met this wonderful girl. She really changed my life. She also changed my outlook on this
place. At last there came a reason for me to stay. We started seeing more and more of each other, and I felt great. I never thought I would find some one in life like her, let alone here at Rio. I'm glad I came here now. One big change in my life is 'I'm in love.' The other is I love it here now." [Mork's conference follows.]

Mork: "I didn't know they were supposed to be in paragraph form . . . I never know how to end one paragraph and start another.

Joe: "OK."

Mork: "So, that is why it is straight down there and I didn't indent anywhere.

Joe: "I think that might be a good thing for us to do as we read through this is to kinda decide where one paragraph should end."

Mork: "It seems like my topic sentences are O.K., or whatever, but it seems like most of the ideas that I want to write about all inner, you know react to each other, just kinda go together and I don't know where to break it off and start a new paragraph."

Joe: "Well, let's look here. OK? When do you actually start to tell the story? What happens here?"

Mork: "Right here when I first. . . ."

Joe: "Yes, this is where your first paragraph should end and your second paragraph should begin. See how there
is a natural break there? And this is really your thesis: 'Along with my new environment came someone who means a great deal to me.' So that tells the reader that you are going to tell a story; you are going to make your point in terms of a narrative, or a story, and here is where it starts. OK? I like here, the way you can manipulate language and use colloquial expressions like this really effectively. 'When I first came here, I thought this college was the pits.' That's really good honest writing. I really like that."

Mork: "I just said it how . . . you know . . . I . . ."

Joe: "How you feel. Yeah, I think we have talked a little bit in class about finding your voice in writing, and I think this part . . . I found myself as I read through this, thinking . . . wanting to know more about the things you mentioned along the way . . . like this sentence here." [Joe points to the sentence about Mork's leaving the college.]

Mork: "As a matter of fact I did leave, yes."

Joe: "Yeah."

Mork: "My roommate, my first roommate was on the basketball team and would do little things to me like one morning at three o'clock in the morning, he poured a gallon of ice cold water on me."

Joe: "Oh, no!"
Mork: "And of course I woke up and this kind of upset me, and when I sleep sometimes late like this, you know he would put shaving cream in my hands and tickle my face with a feather, and I would go like this in my sleep, you know, shaving cream all over the place. He had panty hose lying on my bed one day. It went on for seven weeks and I got tired of it."

Joe: "Must have been great frustration."

Mork: "He'd set my alarm clock for two in the morning, and I would get up and get ready for class, and I would look over and it would be two thirty-five or three o'clock."

Joe: "Is that when you decided to leave?"

Mork: "No, the time I decided to leave, I had just come home round twelve o'clock, and he said something. He always called me a foul name. You know, I just wasn't taking anymore. I was paying for this room, and I'm paying to go here and I don't need to take that from anybody. I'm not hard to live with, you know. I'm easy to get along with, and he said something to me and so I slung my pillow at him; well, my pillow broke. I have a feather pillow; they went everywhere and he picked them up and started throwing them, saying you are going to have to clean this. The feathers landed just like a big lump, and he just threw them all over the room, stuffed them in my sheets, threw them at me. I had feathers in my mouth and everything,
and I said, "that's it." And I called my mother. It's ter-
rible, you know; when you're a guy, you're not supposed to
cry. I don't go along with that anyway, and so I called
my mother."

Joe: "Well, you know, Mork, these stories that you
have been telling are the kinds of things that I would like
to see more of in your theme, so you could use those as
personal experiences for themes. You've got a lot of really
good material right there. I tell you, there is nothing
like the suffering you go through when you are a freshman."

Mork: "Oh, it was worse. My mother said, 'don't join
a fraternity.' That was worse probably than the seven
weeks, and so I couldn't take anymore so I went out in the
hall and I called my mother in Columbus and I told her
'Mother I want to cry so badly but I can't because you have
to be so macho around this place.' That's why people will
talk. And I said 'I'm coming home,' and she said, 'Mork,
don't be funny; it's a two-hour drive.' 'I'm coming home,
Mother. I'm packing now.' My sister said, 'Well, Mork,
you know we have alarms and stuff on our doors. If you
decide to come home, I'll leave the alarm off,' and Mother
said, 'Susan, don't tell him that or he'll be . . . '
'I'm coming home, Mother. I love you . . . I'll see you
in two hours.' I hung up. I went to my room. I got on
my clothes, out of my pajamas, got all my clothes, and I
got in my car. I had enough gas, and I drove 80 miles an hour to Columbus. I was hysterical, crying . . . I almost sideswiped a van. It was really bad and I got in the house--my mother sitting up until two o'clock in the morning waiting on me. I just started crying. I couldn't take it. I stayed there Sunday night, Monday, and Tuesday. And Wednesday, I decided that I had better get back, but I didn't want to go, and the college called my father; he lives down in . . . with my step-mother, a law office down there and, of course, he didn't know anything about this, and he did wonder where I was. I told a counselor here that I was planning on leaving, that I couldn't take it any longer. Well, they called my father, and my father didn't know where I was, so I had to think up something to tell him and I never did think up anything good so he found out about it; 'course, I was upset that he found out about it. It just went on, and on, and on. So, then they put me in this room, another room. I never told the head resident . . . I never told him anything. I didn't want to bother him, but he said that was what he was there for, to tell him. So he moved me in with Bill Jones."

Joe: "Oh, yes."

Mork: "Well, he might be nice to be around, but he's not very good to live with. He chews snuff something awful; it always makes we sick to look at this stuff. Oh! Oh!"
And I would get a sick stomach, and the room really stunk bad, and I didn't want to get it all over my clothes, and he'd chew and spit in the spittoon. Sometimes he would miss because he couldn't see it. He spotted the carpet. I told him I couldn't take it. I got gagged every time I walked in the room, so then they moved me up to the third floor. So now I am with this guy who is very religious, and he is posting signs all over the college, Jesus saying this and that, which is not bad."

Joe: "So you have had your share of bad roommates, haven't you?"

Mork: "This is my third one."

Joe: "Right, we can perhaps look at the theme. You do have a sense of paragraphing here; I notice you did paragraph. You didn't spell wasn't but I was looking here at the paragraphing and the narrative does have a sense of cohesion as story. Let's see the last paragraph, I think too, where you talk about your new girl friend; certainly, that is certainly a very nice concrete paragraph, and here you have a nice little conclusion. 'One big change in my life is I'm in love. The other is I love it here now.' That is a nice snappy way of concluding your theme, and that is something that a lot of students have trouble doing, making a good conclusion. So, that's good that you are able to do that. I think that the things you do need to
work on are certainly spelling and also paragraphing. You need to work on that a good bit. You do have a nice thesis statement, although I think perhaps you need to work on building one that gives you a way of developing a paragraph in the body of the paper. This thesis tells us how the theme is going to be developed, but it doesn't tell us how the paragraphs in the body will be shaped or what the features of the paragraphs in the body will be, although with this kind of theme it would have been pretty hard to write such a thesis. Looking at the four skill areas, certainly in terms of content, this is a very moving paper. I can tell you really wrote this from the heart, and I appreciate that. You have good control of tone. I think that is the best way of saying that, and you know how to get the reader on your side, which is something a lot of writers have trouble doing, and you do that excellently. In terms or organization, as I said before, it's just kind of a problem area."

Mork: "Could be better."

Joe: "I think maybe proofreading will help. One of the things that I like to do--I'm honestly, really a terrible speller myself--One of the things that I do (when I have a paper that I have to turn in), I will read the last word that I have written and then next to the last word and then the third from the last and so on, reading
the theme backwards word by word, and if you do that, your eyes have to focus on each individual word."

Mork: "And if you are not sure of a word, you just look it up in the dictionary."

Joe: "That's right. You see, if you read a theme forward, you can get so caught up in what you are saying that you forget to check for spelling, and also your eye is trained to move more rapidly from left to right because that is the way we normally read. Moving from right to left is much more difficult because we are not used to moving our eyes that way and it makes us focus on each particular word, so that is a good way to check for spelling. I have found it to be very helpful."

Mork: "Thank you."

Mork told us both goodbye, and he stopped at another desk to write his evaluation: "I feel this little talk helped me in several ways. First, I have never felt like I was too good in writing papers, and you have told me with words I do fine. Second, I now know how to proofread better. Thank you! I also want to say I felt very comfortable talking with both of you! Instead of seeing you both as instructors, I saw you as friends. Thanks."

Excerpts are now reported from the conferences of Chip, Matt, and Susan.
Chip's Conference

The class veteran entered, obviously excited about his writing. "I want to do well," he declared.

Joe: "Chip, the best thing about this is that you talk from your heart. You talk about your own family experiences; that is excellent.

"As I say, in terms of organization, this paper is just excellent. You are using the transitions. You're developing paragraphs, well, just outstanding, in terms of organization, word choice or diction. Not only do you use appropriate diction, or word choice, for the assignment, but also you are able to create a mood with your word choice, a nice light tone. You are able to manipulate tone, so again I think that's outstanding.

"You write beautifully, you write just beautifully."

Mrs. Epling: "Chip, could we share with Dr. Seward the experience you wrote about last quarter?" (Chip nodded yes.)

(Chip's ability to create a mood by his word choice had been apparent even when he was in my remedial English class, English 104.) His personal experience paragraph written November 17, 1980 follows:

"I shall never forget the time when I nearly froze to death. It was early January and my unit, the 1st 30th Field Artillery, was on its annual winter training maneuver.

"
It was the coldest winter in Germany in fifty years. I was driving for the battalion Commo officer when we pulled into our position. What I saw was the most forbidding tundra on earth. Lots of trees with snow for miles around. To make a long story short, we set up camp, which involved me in the job setting up my captain's tent, sleeping bag, and pot bellied stove. I knew he would be plenty warm in it. Now I had to find a sleeping area for myself, due to the fact the captain didn't care about my welfare at all. He could have easily let me share his tent. I had to sleep on the bare metal floor of my trailer. During the night the temperature dropped to -5°. I woke up freezing and shivering all over. I lay there for what must have been an eternity. Finally the captain came and woke me up. When I got to a warm area to dress, I found my feet white and stinging. Now every time winter sets in I feel the burning sensation in my feet and relive the nightmare of that night. So that was the way the whole thing ended; then I finally got in the Jeep and I turned the heater on, and I got warmed up and my toes were white; there are a couple of them that are white now."

   Joe: "Oh yeah."

   Chip: "... and when it gets cold and everything, I can feel the numbness in my feet.

   Joe: "yeah."
Chip: "... and I knew they were frost-bitten."
Joe: "That's terrible."
Chip: "Yeah, that's really the only time that ever happened, and I hope it never happens again."
Joe: "Absolutely."
Chip: "That's another night I wouldn't want to go through again."
Joe: "I would like to talk more about your experiences in the Army and maybe draw out some material we could use for theme writing this term."
Chip: "Some of them were what I could write about, and some of them were kinda... I don't know if I could put them into words because there was some really weird stuff going on."
Joe: "I know. I've had a lot of experience with the Navy, and when you get 5,000 men out on an aircraft carrier and you've been out for sixty days, it does sort of alter your perspective.
Chip wrote his evaluation: "I think it's nice that time is taken out to talk to students about the work they do. It reinforces them to either maintain their good work or to bring it up. I like the format and wouldn't change a thing."

Matt's Conference
Matt comes in, keeps his fatigue cap on, scratches his beard while he watches Joe and me. Joe points to
Matt's essay.

Joe: "I really like the structure here, and also I like the personal tone. You certainly have made this very real. You are speaking from your heart. I really appreciate that. Also, your sentence structure is good. I see no problems in terms of sentence structure at all. You also handle transitions well. That's good; keep doing that.

"I'd say, to give you some tips for improvement, to work on maybe proofreading your papers a little more. Here is one thing that I used to use and still use when I need to proofread a paper. I'll start, Matt, at the very end, read the last word, the next to last word and read the theme backward word by word and that makes me focus more on each word as I read it, and I think that if you do that, you might be able to eliminate some spelling errors, and as far as the comma splice is concerned maybe the very last thing that you do before you turn in a paper might be to look through it especially carefully to make sure that you have eliminated the comma splices from the paper.

"I think you have done a good job with this, and I am really pleased with it and with your development so far. Are you pleased and satisfied with the kind of development you have seen in yourself as a writer and the work that you have done? "
Matt: "I never thought too much of myself as a writer."

Joe: "You are much better than you think you are. You really are. You have an excellent style."

Matt evaluated the conference: "This little meeting has been nice and helpful for me to understand more about my paper, than just having words written on my paper for me to evaluate and to think of what I have done wrong. I would like to see a little more one-to-one type of deals in the future, for to be put in the spotlight is much more helpful than standing in the shadows, meaning you telling me exactly what I did wrong is better than figuring it out . . . from what was written on my paper."

Susan's Conference

Susan has commuted from about thirty miles away. She, like Lucile and Mari, is a young wife and mother with three children. Joe complimented her on her essay.

Joe: "One of the nicest things, I think, about this paper is the very beautiful concrete description. I can see that you spent a long time in English 104 talking about sensory description and how to do it because you really handled that well."

Susan's Personal Experience Essay. "The winter season is a beautiful time of year when big, fluffy flakes of snow fill the cold, crisp air and blanket the frozen ground with a lovely crystal, white cover. As a child I loved
the winter season, and I looked forward to it with eagerness. Now, however, when this lovely, white snow covers the highways, I immediately change my thoughts of delight and beauty to thoughts of terror, for it was on a wintry day such as this that I experienced an unforgettable accident, and I shall never forget my thoughts and fears of that evening.

"It all began on a cold, wintry December in 1977. I had been visiting my father, who was a patient at Holzer Hospital in Gallipolis, Ohio. I was in an emotional state of mind, because my father had recently suffered a severe heart attack, and I was not thinking clearly. It was about 5:30 in the evening, when I discovered that the highways were becoming snow covered and slippery. The tires on my car were almost bald; I was alone, and soon it would be dark. I knew if I didn't leave promptly that I would have problems getting home. So I said goodbye to my father and started for my car. It was covered with snow, and other cars in the parking lot were spinning their tires trying to get out of their parking places. Soon I was in my car headed down State Route Thirty-Five toward Jackson. The traffic moved very slowly, and cars were sliding off the road; it was a frightening sight. I gripped the steering wheel firmly, desperately trying to maintain control of my car. Time passed very slowly as
the traffic on the highway gradually decreased in number. As I drove on, I became more frightened, and I tried very hard to remember something good about the awful white stuff which continued to fall on my windshield. How could something so beautiful be so bad?

"For a brief moment my thoughts went back to when I was a young girl. Mother used to dress us up in so many clothes that by the time we did get out into the snow we could hardly move. I remember the fun that I had as a child riding down the hills on a sled beside the house, and I remember that many times that I crashed into a snow bank, which is not what I wanted to do at this moment. My brother, Jim, and I used to play hide and seek in the snow. The idea was to follow his footprints in the snow to find him. One day he out-smarted me by walking backwards in his own tracks, and while I was searching for him, he was inside the house getting warmed up. Like most kids, we made snowmen, built snowforts, had snowball battles, and always stayed outside until our feet were completely numb. We enjoyed thawing out in front of a warm crackling fireplace, and good old Mom always had hot chocolate ready to help warm us up. These pleasant memories helped to calm my nerves. Then all of a sudden my car began to slide. In an instant my car was out of control; it made a 360° turn in the middle of the highway. Fortunately there were
no cars coming, but unfortunately after turning a complete circle, my car slid sideways into the medium of the four lane highway. I tried hard to get back on the highway, but I was stuck. I sat there helplessly hating the snow and wishing I were home. Luckily, after a few minutes had passed, a kind gentleman stopped to help me. He pulled my car back onto the highway, and I continued my slow journey home. Approximately forty minutes later and very exhausted, I was home at last.

"Indeed, the passing of time and the unfortunate experiences of life do create attitude changes in people, because I can honestly say that I don't enjoy winter weather as much as I use to. Nevertheless, on this cold wintry morning as I awoke, I heard the happy, joyous sounds of my three children Danny, Kelli, and Rickie."

"'Mom' they yelled excitedly, 'There's no school today; they've cancelled school because of the snow.'

"And my thoughts immediately took me back to the fun I shared with my brother and sister in the snow. However, I shall never forget my unfortunate experience on the icy snow-covered highway, and as I watch the weather forecast on television, I find myself selfishly hoping for no snow. Yet, no doubt, what would winter be like without it?"

Joe: "Well, you have certainly piled on the good descriptive adjectives here. This is excellent. Also I
like the shape of this narrative, too. It really holds my attention. There is a great deal of suspense in this paper. As I read through it the first time, I kept thinking, 'Gee, I wonder what is going to happen.' That's just wonderful that a paper is so exciting that I can't wait to get through it."

Susan: "Sometimes I write things so complicated that after I look at them, I think, 'Well, why did I write that? That's so complicated; I'm not sure where I am going to put all this punctuation."

Joe: "Do you think about that on the first draft; does it bother you?"

Susan: "No, I just write it down."

Joe: "Uhuh, then you go back and worry about it."

Susan: "That's the only way to do it."

Joe: "Uhuh. Really, it is the best way, isn't it?"

Susan's evaluation: "I enjoyed talking with you, and I hope my papers in the future will be just as good as the first one. I don't really agree with the A-. I think I deserved an A+, but considering I did misspell a few words, I'll compromise and take an A. I guess an A- will make me work harder the next time, right? It is very encouraging to hear good comments on something I've worked hard at creating."
Student Conferences Postlude

Several things were obvious after the student conferences. For one thing, a student's essay grade was derived from the average of the grades received in four skills areas: organization, content, diction, and mechanics. The organization of this first essay was evaluated in terms of what Joe expected for a personal experience thesis; creating reader interest and holding it; an expressed thesis statement; and well-developed introductory, body, and concluding paragraphs. In addition, Joe looked for specificity in the writings, many details which would make clear the general assertions.

Also, Joe spoke at some length in each conference about ways to eliminate mechanical errors. Perhaps, more emphasis was placed on correcting major mechanical flaws than on strengthening other skills areas, although attention was also given to these other areas. As I reviewed Joe's philosophy for handling mechanical errors, I realized that the mechanics' grade would often be a guide to the overall grade. Witte, too, indicated that "low-rated papers usually contain far more errors than high-rated papers."²

Another characteristic of Joe's handling conferences was that he began with a solid, supportive statement about each student's writing, not just some superficial
statement but one based upon some specific he had unearthed by carefully reading the papers before the conference. For example, Joe complimented Kathleen for her ability to cap-

sulate a concept "Happiness does not just happen; it must be learned"; Mari for her good thesis statement which related specifically to her own family experience; Kay's good specific examples, her ability to "wrap up the paper," and her strong conclusion which emphasized the importance of the topic.

There were three categories of mechanical errors which Joe considered important: sentence structure errors, as run-ons; errors in agreement, such as pronoun reference and subject-verb agreement; and spelling errors. When Joe encountered errors in a student's paper, he usually pointed out the error to the student and suggested a revision. The student usually was motivated to produce an error-free draft since the grade Joe gave was usually no higher than the mechanics grade.

If Joe felt that a student could not make corrections on his own, Joe would normally give the student an exercise in the textbook or schedule an office appointment to dis-
cuss the problem. Although Joe felt strongly that a good freshman composition program should emphasize mechanics, he did not spend much class time with these problems.

"I find that students do not pay much attention to
grammatical errors," he said, "unless they see them in their own paper." Therefore, Joe's practice was to handle mechanical errors on an individual, tutorial basis.

He complimented Mork for his warm tone in writing and for his ability to manipulate language. For example, Mork said, "When I first came here I thought this college was the pits." "Good, honest writing" observed Joe. During his conference, Mork told one story after another. "I'd like to see more of these stories you've been telling us in your writing," observed Joe. Also, Mork had a "snappy way of concluding a theme."

Mork had written a very moving theme, had written from the heart with good control of tone, and had known how to get the reader on his side. Mork had told about the heartaches of living with three different roommates: One a "religious nut" with signs all over; another who chewed snuff; and another who called him names.

Chip's writing pleased Joe because it was "from the heart." Also, Chip used appropriate transitions and effective colloquial language such as the "air conditioner went on the fritz." Matt, too, spoke from his heart with specific writing, as a whole. "You have learned to take a general statement and personalize it, reflecting your own experience." Joe encouraged, "Matt, you are a much better writer than you think you are."
Finally, Susan filled her paper with good sensory detail. In response to Joe's compliment on details, Susan revealed that her English 104 teacher hadn't liked "bald nouns."

What kinds of things did Joe want the students to work on? It was interesting to note that the negative points were sandwiched between positive ones. After complimenting students, Joe suggested certain areas for improvement.

Joe suggested that Kathleen work on specificity. He found himself "reaching or searching for more specificity." Joe wanted her to tell a story to show how happiness happens. She needed to open herself to talking about personal experiences or others' experiences she had observed or heard about. He also talked about a way to correct her comma splice errors.

Mari's problem area was mechanics. She had a more serious problem with comma splices than did Kathleen. Joe spent about one third of the conference time with Mari helping her understand what a comma splice was and how to fix one.

Kay needed help with eliminating the you form. Joe wanted her to change the you and your forms to the third person. In order to do this, she was to just say to herself, "Well, who is it that is doing this action?" If she couldn't think of any one particular person, she could just say "a person." Also, Kay was to work on word choice,
varying sentence structure so that her style was not so conversational.

Mork volunteered that he had never known how to end one paragraph and start another. "It seems like most of the ideas that I want to write about all . . . go together and I don't know where to break it off and start a new paragraph." Joe explained that in Mork's paper, there was a natural break between paragraph one and where paragraph two should begin. This was really Mork's thesis: "Along with my new environment comes someone who means a great deal to me." Joe pointed out that the reader knows Mork will tell a story to make clear his point, and "here is where it starts."

Chip also had problems with the you form. Joe suggested that Chip say "if a person doesn't work, etc." In addition, Chip should avoid beginning sentences in very formal writing with coordinate conjunctions. In the personal narrative, it was fine. Also, Chip used a non-standard form of burst ("busted").

Matt had problems in diction. For example, he used "could of" instead of "could have." He also had comma splices, so Joe assigned textbook material dealing with comma splices and how to avoid them. Joe directed: "Buttonhole me before or after class and show me the exercise so that I can see that you have done it correctly,
and we will kind of rap a little bit about whether the concepts are still giving you trouble. I have other exercises we can use if it continues to be a problem for you." Joe pointed out Susan's minor spelling errors such as her use of *use* instead of *used*.

In addition to the helpful suggestion already mentioned, Joe stopped between conferences to help Lucile, who had been excessively absent. Patiently, he pointed out that she should start her process paper by listing each step in order. "Don't leave any step out. One student wrote a paper for me in which he said, 'do this, do that' and then said 'Oh, I forgot to turn off the electric first!' I could be fricassed!" laughed Joe, "if the process is not carefully explained in correct order or steps." Joe maintained a light, pleasant tone with Lucile even though consistently helping her "catch up" because of excessive absences must have been frustrating for him.

In conclusion, Joe found positive, encouraging things to say to students about their writing, "using acceptance and approval words." He selected one or two problems to work on and offered specific ways of helping solve these problems. At first the students had appeared a little apprehensive as they arrived at their conferences: They moistened lips excessively, fingered rings nervously, and sat stiffly with eyes glued to their papers. As Joe
began to talk to them, however, using a pen to indicate passages on their papers, the students would visibly relax, finally leaving Joe's office with an unmistakably light-hearted step. After the conferences, students would go to an adjoining private room to write about how they had perceived their conferences. They were aware that Joe and I wanted to know whether conferences could help the student learn to write better and how conferences could be improved.

The introduction of grades on students' writing assignments was done in conference so that students could understand the basis for Joe's grading and so that they could ask questions about their writing. Receiving grades for writing appeared not to be the discouraging, traumatic experience it might have been. Students' evaluations indicated that the conferences were positive and insightful. Joe and I also felt that the assigning of first writing grades during conferences was successful. The conferences were an extension of the accepting nourishing climate of the freshman class already established.

Even students receiving "C" or "D" grades felt the conferences were worthwhile. Perhaps part of this was due to Joe's personalizing each conference. He spoke to Mork about his new jacket; to Mari about her little son, Arnold; to Susan about her cake recipe which he was going to try.
Joe affirmed that conference time was enjoyable for him "because it allows me to deal with the students as people." Joe and I, like Murray, found that, indeed, our students were real people who were authorities on the subjects they wrote about. We learned from them what it was like to adjust to new roommates in the freshman year (reported by Mork), to nearly freeze to death in Germany (described by Chip), and to survive the terror of a snowy accident (shared by Susan).

Special attention has been given to the conferences because they took a week of class time. Furthermore, it seemed important to "clarify what goes on" and to show "the natural order in human behavior," occurring during the conferences. Conferences are especially beneficial in counseling with freshman writers at a time when "the emphasis should be placed on noting positive signs of improvement and encouraging the development of a strong self image."  

Four New Essay Patterns

For the next several weeks (January 27 - February 22), the class would be structuring their writing into various rhetorical patterns: Comparison-contrast, division and classification, definition, and cause and effect. Students would talk and write about their composing processes during the writing of these relatively more-sophisticated
essays. In addition, Joe would continue to emphasize tightly organized essays with stated theses and adequate supporting details.

**Comparison-Contrast**

Joe assigned a comparison-contrast paper due in one week. In introducing the comparison-contrast pattern, Joe pointed out that we compare without thinking. For example, when we go to the grocery store ("make a quick stop at Foodland") to restock the grocery shelves, we look at several different brand names or labels before we buy anything. Why do we do this? What does it mean to compare? Comparison simply means that people make value judgments. We say, "This is better, so I'll buy Brand X." However, when we compare people, we say that they are different. "We might say," suggested Joe, "that my father is different from your father in certain ways."

While searching for a topic to write about, students should begin with "an especially useful exercise," advised Joe. Students were to compare two brands of an item that they might consider buying, such as a car, a stereo, or even a pair of shoes. If this activity did not prove fruitful, students could examine their own lives to consider how they had made decisions about something they had previously bought. Why had they liked one radio or car better than another?
A model thesis statement which students might use for the comparison essay was written on the board by Joe: "I prefer Brand X to Brand Y because of qualities A, B, and C." After students had decided what they would compare, they must then decide which qualities they would examine as they attempted to judge "which was better." For example, if they were considering watches, they might want to compare a Bulova and a Timex to determine which would have better styling, greater durability, and accuracy. Joe assured the students that finding three qualities or characteristics was not essential (two or even four qualities would work), but he elaborated on the idea of three. "Three seems to be a golden number for a five-paragraph freshman theme pattern."

Along with the essay, Joe asked for an outline because "in using the comparison-contrast rhetorical mode, it would be easy to get parts mixed up." (This outline would be the only one required during the quarter.) The students listened intently, taking copious notes while Joe constructed on the board possible outline patterns students could use.

Inviting the class to help him make a decision, Joe began, "Let's assume that I have two girlfriends--one named Ann and the other Mary. Which one should I take out Friday night?" The students leaned forward in anticipation as Joe continued, "Which qualities would be better? I want
to methodically look at some important qualities before making my decision."

After some stimulating class discussion, it was decided that Joe should consider three important qualities: ability to converse freely, height (Joe is 5'3"), and hair color. Completing his outline on the board, Joe turned (tongue in cheek) to the class: "Now, when you decide to go out on a date, remember that a prerequisite is to do an outline!" This comment evoked a wave of laughter from the class. They continued to smile at the amusing idea while copying the comparison-contrast outline which Joe called "an alternating or ping-pong" pattern.

I. Conversational ability
   A. Anne - speaks freely
   B. Mary - never talks

II. Height
   A. Anne - 5'2"
   B. Mary - 5'11"

III. Hair color
   A. Anne - brown hair
   B. Mary - blond

Joe concluded, "I prefer Anne to Mary because of conversational ability, height, and hair color."

As an afterthought, Joe gave another writing tip. Even though the elements in his outline had been phrases, he wanted students' outline points complete sentences. They could, then, use the sentences in their essays. In fact, each main point in the outline could become a topic sentence
while other outline sentences could provide supporting points.

An alternate pattern which could be used for the thesis statement was the following: "I prefer Brand X to Brand Y because of qualities A and B, even though Brand Y is superior to Brand X in terms of quality C." For example, if students were comparing two cars, Ford and Plymouth, they might like the price and style of the Plymouth, even though the Ford might get better mileage.

Other helpful tips were given. The writers were to focus on specific brands which they were to mention by name, such as Kawasaki vs. Honda or Betty Crocker vs. Martha White, in order to give the theme specificity. Also, students were to remember the importance of transitions in two basic places such as between each quality discussed in separate paragraphs, and between qualities within the paragraph. Transition words such as "in contrast," "on the other hand," "although," however," and "but" might be used. Students were to be sensitive and experiment with these and similar words.

During the next class period, Joe and I spent time checking students' outlines to see if the parts were in alternating order. Also, we gave individual help to those students having any type of difficulty generating the comparison-contrast theme.
Mari asked about rewriting previous essays which had been graded and returned. Joe pointed out that they had permission to re-write any paper they cared to. The old and new grades would be averaged together at the end of the term. A revised paper could consistently mean the difference between one letter grade and another. In spite of this opportunity to raise their grades, eleven out of fifteen students handed previously-graded papers back to Joe (for me) without revising them.

The question was raised about the word "compare." After some discussion, the class decided that "compare" means to look at both similarities and differences, so perhaps saying "comparison-contrast" was redundant.

Joe also helped students with words which could be used for value judgment, such as "better," "more suitable," and "preferable." He took out his appointment book and scheduled office time for those who needed additional help with their comparison-contrast essays.

Class was dismissed early today, and I stopped by Mari's desk to talk briefly with her. She had appeared troubled in class. "How are things going?", I asked.

Mari responded, as she hurriedly prepared to leave. "Everybody wants professors that meet their needs; I just don't want to get someone who expects too much out of me and I can't handle it." (I sensed that she was especially tired
this afternoon, and college pressures were mounting.)
In addition, Mari had earlier in the quarter indicated her
conflict in leaving her little two-year old son, Arnold,
for college classes. (In fact, she had brought Arnold to
her student conference.) I also was reminded that Mari
was juggling a home, five children, a husband, and a full­
time job as a nurse's aide.)

In spite of our concern about Mari's heavy responsi­
bilities, Joe and I felt that, overall, today's class had
been profitable. "I have a good feeling about this class
period," revealed Joe, "and feel positive about what we are
accomplishing. The students are learning about writing,
and they are learning how to present their ideas in an
organized fashion."

Two comparison-contrast essays follow which illustrate
students' ability to write authoritatively about "real"
subjects in their world. In the first essay, Mari compares
and contrasts two dryers, discussing costs and ease of
maintenance. Doing laundry for her young family of six
would qualify Mari to speak from experience.

Mari Compares Dryers

"I prefer a Sears Kenmore Automatic Fabric Master
Electric Dryer with less fabric position switch to Sears
Kenmore Automatic Fabric Master Electric Dryer with a six
position switch. And there are two reasons: its lower
cost, and greater convenience of maintenance.

"The first quality to be compared is cost. The Kenmore Automatic Fabric Master Electric Dryer with less positions is fairly inexpensive about $20.00 less than the Kenmore with the six position switch. It is not necessary to have all those positions on the switch. A maintenance man told me electric dryers has less brake down with less wiring. He also said that if you read the instruction that comes with dryers a less position switch can do all the things the six position can do. It can handle all the clothes of today. So with the cost of living now-a-days a family needs to cut cost every way they can. So cutting cost of a dryer plus maintenance is a big help.

"The second quality to be compared is the ease of maintenance. Sears Kenmore brand is the most popular brand nationally known. A Westinghouse or General Electric or any other brand I have found are not as popular nationally. The way I found out is our family has lived in Indiana, Michigan, Oklahoma, and Ohio. We had a Westinghouse once and we moved to Indiana; when we needed someone to work on our dryer we couldn't find anyone to work on it. We called a phone no in the book that came with the dryer. And we went around and around with them, because we didn't buy the dryer in Indiana and there wasn't a dealer close by. We had to pay mileage besides maintenance of the dryer. So we just decided to sell it after we got it fixed."
"Through experience, I have found out it is best to buy nationally known brands for our own convenience, especially when our family has been moving from state to state in the past. In moving we have found there is always a Sears close by. So maintenance is cheaper since they charge by the mile plus maintenance; also buying a dryer with a less position switch is cheaper. Since we really don't need it, we just think we do and it costs more too. They told me the more switches the more problems we can have. The way the cost of living is today you can save if you shop around, and what costs more is not always the best."

Mari, the thirty-eight-year-old wife and mother who wondered if she could possibly learn to read and write when she first signed up for English 104, handled her subject acceptably in terms of organization and content. (Joe later helped her with diction and mechanics). However, her having something important to say and language in which to say it (albeit not all in Standard American English) was evident.

Susan took pride in preparing attractive, nourishing meals for her family of five. (We had "swapped" recipes between classes on occasions.) In this well-organized and well-developed essay, Susan skillfully compares and contrasts breads.
Susan Compares and Contrasts Breads

"At the age of twelve I learned to make homemade bread while taking a 4-H project of 'Yeast Breads and Rolls.' That summer I achieved grand champion honors at the Meigs County Fair, and I was given the opportunity to take my bread to the Ohio State Fair; there I received a superior rating. Now that I'm grown and have to cook for a husband and three children, I often take time to make homemade bread for them, especially on occasions such as Christmas and Thanksgiving. My husband and children love the taste of my homemade bread; however, for everyday use my family and I prefer Heiner's Old Fashioned Bread to my homemade bread, because of the convenience, quality, and price, even though my homemade bread is superior to Heiner's Old Fashioned Bread in terms of flavor.

"In this busy world of today, convenience is an important factor to consider. It is nice to be able to walk into a grocery store and purchase a loaf of bread whenever we need it. When we run out of bread, my son, Danny, can ride his bike to the corner grocery store and buy a good fresh loaf of Heiner's bread in approximately ten minutes. In contrast, if I had to bake the bread, it would take me one-half hour to mix the dough, one hour to let it rise, another hour to knead the dough down and let it rise again, another hour to form the dough into loaves and let it rise
again, and a final hour to let it bake. Altogether, it would take me four and one-half hours to bake a loaf of bread. When I buy bread, I can buy just one loaf at a time, but when I bake bread, I must bake two loaves at a time.

"The quality in terms of texture and flavor of Heiner's Old Fashioned Bread and my homemade bread is quite different. Heiner's bread has a softer, lighter texture and each slice of bread is cut precisely to the same thickness and weight of one ounce. This characteristic of Heiner's bread makes sandwich making much easier. On the other hand, my homemade bread has a coarse texture and a crusty hard outer layer. It does not make good sandwiches, because each time we wish to make a sandwich, we have to cut the bread ourselves; if we cut the bread uneven, our sandwiches become lopsided. Also, the coarse texture allows mayonnaise, ketchup, or mustard to ooze through the bread onto our hands. Although Heiner's bread is superior in texture, its flavor is flat and uninteresting compared to the tastefully unique yeast flavor of my homemade bread.

"The third feature that I examined in my comparison between Heiner's bread and my homemade bread is the price. In most grocery stores today I can buy a loaf of Heiner's Old Fashioned Bread at a cost of about 68¢ a loaf. Likewise, to bake two loaves of homemade bread I will spend the
following amounts: approximately 20¢ for two cups of milk, 72¢ for six cups of flour at 12¢ a cup, 20¢ for a package of yeast, and approximately 25¢ for the electricity to heat the oven to bake the bread. When I added these figures together and divided by two, believe it or not, I got an answer of 68¢ a loaf. Even though the price of the Heiner's bread and the homemade bread came out equal, I decided that I must consider the labor and time involved in making the bread. In doing this I decided it was cheaper to buy a loaf of Heiner's bread.

"In conclusion, because of the convenience, texture, and price, my family and I prefer Heiner's Old Fashioned Bread for everyday use. Nevertheless, no bread will ever compare to the aroma of my homemade bread baking in the oven or to the taste of a big warm slice of homemade bread dripping with melted butter."

Division and Classification

The division and classification mode of writing was introduced in class today. Joe promised the students if they would stop by his office very early each morning, they would understand the importance of the division and classification concept. He pointed out that he attacks his clutter by placing coffee cups in one pile, books to prepare lectures in another, papers to be graded in another, and papers to return in another. "Each day I
take this organic growing pile and divide and classify so that each smaller group becomes a more manageable segment," confided Joe.

"How could students at Rio Grande be classified?" probed Joe. Susan raised her hand. "Would freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior categories work?" she asked.

"Certainly," answered Joe. "Dividing by class works easily. What other ways?"

"Male and female," interjected Mork.

"By classes," volunteered Kathleen, "or by the time of day."

Matt queried, "Why not classify according to activities? Greeks and Independents?"

"What about the way students get to class? Walk and drive, or commuters and residents?" mused Chip.

Even though both terms, division and classification, would be used in talking about this theme pattern, in actual practice students would not see differences between the two for purposes of their papers, explained Joe. An important concept they should observe was to divide or classify according to one principle at a time. For instance, if students wanted to divide a group, they might use the idea of personality traits as the dividing principle.

Revealing his relaxed mood today, Joe noted his ski boot was untied. He exclaimed, "Let me tie my shoe before
I fall and kill myself!" The students smiled at this and turned toward me, observing my response.

"Let's talk about the personality traits of English teachers," invited Joe. "I'll tell you about some I have had. My teachers of the Sixties and Seventies were the laid-back hippie dippies, with old jeans, flannel shirts, hair to the shoulders, who encouraged students to go with the flow, to write their feelings, to let it all hang out."

Holding the class's attention he continued. "Then, there was Miss Priestly, in a three piece suit with every hair in place, who regimented her twelfth-grade class. She was concerned with getting the objectives in and would grab students as they passed her door in the hall, to accomplish this."

He hurried on to complete his classification by pointing out a third type of teacher who would fit somewhere in the middle, who would neither be as laid back as the teacher of the Sixties and Seventies nor so rigid as Miss Priestly.

Joe cautioned the class that, in general, it is not wise to lump people together on the basis of exaggerated traits. In fact, he noted, this type of stereotyping could form the basis of prejudice. "All twelfth grade teachers of English are not like Miss Priestly." However, taking a humorous look at different types of teachers
can provide a light tone for the assignment, as long as students are aware that they are exaggerating characteristics to make a point.

Another possibility for a subject might be the approaches car salesmen use, suggested Joe. He, then, confided that he had recently bought a new car, and when he first walked onto the car lot, a 6'2" salesman, wearing a plaid coat and smoking a big cigar coughed out, "Yeah, whatta you want, Boy?" (Joe is 5'3"). The class erupted in laughter. Matt hollered out, "That's a riot!"

After the class had finished sharing their experiences with English teachers and car salesmen, Joe summarized, on the board, key ideas students should remember in writing their classification essays:

1. Take groups of people, ideas, things, and divide into smaller groups and then discuss each group separately.

2. Write a thesis statement which tells how many divisions there will be. For example, if students in freshman English classes would be the subject, a thesis might read: "Three recognizable groups of students in freshman English class are the note takers, the discussers, and the sleepers."

(Students nod knowingly as they shoot a glance toward John who is having trouble keeping his eyes open.)
3. Choose subjects from people, music, machines, jobs, or other areas of interest.

In short, the assignment was to find a subject, write a thesis statement, and study the text material on division and classification for Thursday's class.

On Thursday, I spent some time reviewing with the class my purpose for being there this quarter. I asked for their help in understanding what they had experienced mentally as they had prepared today's assignment. They were to have selected a subject and formulated a thesis statement for the division and classification theme.
"Tell me what your thoughts were as you tried to think of a subject and thesis statement. Let me peak inside you head," I requested.

Composing Processes of Students and Joe

Matt: "Well, what can I say. On the particular paper we are doing now the choice was easy. It was hunters. I know about the sports. I know how different people hunt and how I hunted when I first started. I know a good hunter from a bad hunter just by speaking to him or her.
One of the best hunters I know is a lady. She is no tomboy either. When it comes to picking something else I usually try and figure out, 'what do I know about this.' Do I know more about this, than this. Hard to understand?
Well, I'll explain. Take teachers, I don't really know
all that much about teachers, and personally, but not personally toward you, teachers just don't thrill me all that much. Things like hunting, boating, or riding motorcycles, that thrills me. The subject has got to have some spark about it before I can really set down and write about it. A person cannot just set down and start to write about something that just doesn't thrill him. So that's how I do it. It may not be the same way everybody else does it but everybody has their own special way about doing anything that they might do and this way is mine. Well, I guess no. 2 would be deciding what to really write about, this would be my searching. No. 2 would be setting back and asking myself what do I really know about this subject. This would be my seeing. No. 3 jotting down the finer points, or not so common knowledge points about the subject, and putting them together would be the structuring."

Susan: "All day Wednesday as I worked around the house, I thought of different subjects off and on. I thought of talking about different types of parents and the way they teach their children, because I am a parent. I also thought about different groups of people in a community, because recently the city of Wellston has been struggling with a city income tax problem, and there are pro and cons to all people involved. After thinking all morning I still had made no definite decision. Today in English
class I got an idea that may be funny. Being a housewife I would know more about different women's ideas of a clean house. I still am confused. But with time getting closer to the deadline I know I must make up my mind. It's like selecting your favorite kind of ice cream cone when you like so many different flavors. As a child I always did have trouble making up my mind. There is a definite stage to go through in writing a paper. 1st, I think about what to write. 2nd, How do I say this or that? 3rd, I scribble down words on a page. 4th, I picture stories in my mind. Like watching a made up TV show and I take out what I don't like. 5, I start to write down events that may have happened to me and then add to my make believe TV show. 6, I write what I see in my mind, and finally I re-write my story for neatness. Anybody who has no problem writing something must be a born writer."

Chip: "When I have several topics to choose from I quickly glance over all of them. I think about the pros and cons of each one and finally make a choice as to which one is best. From then on there is no turning back. During the next days until the assignment is due I continually think of things to write about. Although I'm not obsessed with it, I store things which I might be able to use in my story. My primary fear is in my story not being long enough. I'm always fighting in my mind about my ideas of
material not being good enough and that I could always do better. It's just a brain storm continually going on in my head. Of being afraid that I might leave something out of my finished product."

Mari: "When I leave class . . . I try to forget class for awhile . . . I get in the car to go home, turn on the radio, and I try to think of what is happening at home, the kids coming home from school, what is for supper, and getting ready for work, and also of Tim, my husband, whether he will make it home before I go to work. The last few papers I wrote, the topic came to me in the car. I believe my mind was still working unconsciously from what happened in class. So that is the way I came up with a topic. But I do notice when I am not getting anywhere I have to stop. I find out when I am on something too long I have to quit, because I am not getting anywhere. I have to go over my paper 3 times, I add and subtract then I don't write my paper till the day before I come to class. Then I read it the day of class to see if that is what I want to hand in."

Chris: "When does it begin? Where does it begin? Why does man feel pressured to learn more and more? How can man express his knowledge? Everyone ponders these or similar questions at one point or another, but I wish it was easier to write about. When a student receives a
writing assignment, especially one of this nature, his first instinct is, 'Where do I begin?' This can be a terrible scavenger hunt. Slowly, however, the bits and pieces of ideas come together to form one basic thought. Writing a paper definitely takes a lot of emotion. After beginning the paper the bits and pieces used to form a solid base become more detailed, as if they bloom into the body of the theme. The worst feeling about writing a theme, however, is how do I end a paper like this? Students sometimes feel compelled to make the conclusion stronger than the introduction or the body. Finally, the student must put his emotions aside. If I don't worry about the conclusion, it will come, he must tell himself. Yet, he worries even more. Sometimes a proper conclusion is never found. But eventually a writer takes his paper to a concluding point. I suppose it would be hard to explain where or how these stages of writing begin and end. Usually, after a student feels some pressure to make a decision on what to write, one idea will follow another. It is hard to write emotions on paper and yet, to me, that is basically what a writer does. He expresses emotions with symbols (words) and paints a vision of what he feels on paper."
Joe: "Whenever I know that I have a formal writing assignment due, I begin by deciding--almost immediately--what I shall write about. Then I normally procrastinate on the actual writing for as long as twenty-four hours in which I usually reject my first choice. I believe that I go through this process because I need the time to examine a subject before I feel I have found a way to attack it. My dissertation project will serve as a good example of this process. When I first began it, I was faced with a blunt question from my advisor: 'What would you like to do?' I answered the question almost immediately: 'I'd like to write about Dryden.' After this initial exchange, I went through a period of about seven weeks, during which there was much doubt in my mind about how to approach the topic. One morning, I was re-organizing the books on a shelf in my office, and I ran across an edition of De Ferum Natura. Suddenly I remembered that Dryden had been an early translator of Lucretius; from that point on I felt certain about what I wanted to do; to explore the literary connections between Dryden and Lucretius and to see if Dryden's abundant use of nature imagery bore any resemblance to the nature imagery that is so prominently displayed in De Ferum Natura. The answers to these questions, of course, generated the thesis of my dissertation for me. This, as I see it, is
the creative process, involving initial struggle, a relaxation of effort, and a 'serendipitous' discovery of a writing topic.

"After I begin to work on a topic, I try to get a 'hand hold' on it; I try to see how I can break it apart into units that I can work on. The process is like cutting up a chicken, in that one must look at the subject, see where its 'joints' are, and then begin dissecting it into 'legs,' 'wings,' and 'thighs.' Sometimes this process involves using some particular rhetorical technique; in the case of my dissertation, I used comparison throughout the work, and organized it by types of natural images—a chapter on rain images, a chapter on earthquakes, a chapter on light and sunlight, etc. I find that this process is best for me to do before the actual writing. After I have decided how I shall divide the material, I begin 'shaping' it—I begin to see which specific details will be helpful—and then fill out the plan."

While students wrote about their composing processes, described above, I could almost feel the mental vibrations, like an electric circuit crisscrossing the room. Deep in concentration, Chip turned his pencil around and around; John chewed on a piece of string, looked up, leaned his head over, and wrote. Little Arnold scribbled furiously.
When Joe took up students' papers about their psychological processes involved in writing the classification essay, Matt asked him whether he wrote for me, too. "Of course. Otherwise I would seldom have time to think about such things."

Mork asked, "What if I don't go through phases of the composing process?" I responded, "Don't you Mork? Does Dr. Seward give an assignment and 'presto' you have no mental process involvement at all until you produce a paper to hand in?"

He laughed appreciatively and countered, "Well, I guess I'd call stage one 'mental anguish.'" "That's an apt label for the first phrase, Mork," I commented. Others in the class nodded in agreement.

There appeared to be a playful tone to today's class. Joe contributed his note to the lilting quality of the class atmosphere: "When I was in the Navy, a fellow had a toothpick which he kept in the corner. He always used the same one, saved toothpicks that way!" The class groaned their disapproval at this. Joe quickly changed the subject: "If you need help or would like special attention, now is the time to ask." Matt retorts, "He always has a grammar exercise for me!"

Near the end of the period, before passing the stack of graded papers back, Joe remarked that some of the papers were really, really good, but some were not so
good. He gave the class some points for future writing.

1. Develop the thesis statement as the last sentence in the paragraph. Don't write the sentence first because if it comes first and is developed in the first paragraph, there is no where to go in the theme.

2. Move in the introduction from a general statement to a narrow one. In the introduction, stress the importance of the topic; then move to the thesis.

3. Use the personal approach. "In my experience, I have found . . . " Since the introduction and conclusion, for some writers, are the hardest to write, try writing them last, spending more time on them.

4. For help in eliminating persistent mechanical errors, do exercises.

(In a journal entry written earlier, Joe revealed: 'Last Sunday I saw a 'Peanuts' cartoon in which Peppermint Patty said she felt she was drowning in a sea of commas and semicolons.' Confessed Joe, 'That cartoon expresses my attitude nicely.')

Joe returned the papers, and the students turned hurriedly from page to page to read the red writing—Joe's comments.
"The grades for these papers are mixed; the content also," observed Joe. "When I see uneven results like these, I believe sometimes I don't teach as well or the weather interferes. If you want advice for improvement, I'll be available for conference."

Concluding with a point about mechanics, Joe stated that in many papers he is still finding "you," such as in "you" do the coaching. He asked, "Who does the coaching? Not me. The coach does the coaching. Easy to fix, huh?"

Several students met with Joe and me after class. We discussed taping their composing processes. "Talk to me on tape," I enjoined. "Tell me the circumstances under which you write, what you think, etc. I want to learn from you as you write your classification paper." The students seemed excited as we ended our class session on this new note.

Susan still lingered long after the others had gone. She shared with me her desire to teach elementary school, believing that learning to write well in freshman English would help her write for children. "Maybe I'll write good children's books some day," she said. "A lady wrote a book about the day she turned off the television set; my daughter was so impressed she started reading." Susan wanted to become a good teacher and viewed skilled writing as an important qualification. "Writing will help me when
I get into education and have to write all kinds of papers. I'll get English down... and can take off on other subjects."

Joe appeared to enjoy today's class, in spite of the mechanical errors he was still finding in papers. "I'm very pleased with what we did today," he wrote. "Everything seems to be working out well. I feel that the students are learning their rhetoric and enjoying themselves at the same time." He noted that most of the class were writing better—writing good, tight thesis statements and developing them well. "Today," he concluded, "the class seemed really attentive and each one seemed interested in what Chris was saying to them [about the composing process], and even the boys in the back of the class enjoyed what we were doing."

Thursday we had a very young visitor in class. "My students are getting younger every day," mused Joe, as he spied a little two-year old boy, half hidden in a seat next to Mari. Arnold had visited with his mother, Mari, during the first student-teacher conference, and he was back today. "My baby sitter didn't show up: I had to bring him or not come," volunteered Mari. Arnold with his golden-blond hair, blue eyes, and pink cheeks, was dressed in a green knit shirt. He yawned, missing his afternoon nap. Mari shushed him with forefinger to her mouth.
Because of the snow storm, only fourteen were present today. "Let's write in your journals about the best thing or the worst thing that has happened today," suggested Joe. Chip talked to himself, writing from a center position in the classroom surrounded by a bevy of girls. Susan flipped her black and white pen back and forth as she meditated on the subject. Her eyes never left the page. Mork wrote for a minute, stopped and thought for two, then went back to writing. Matt wrote eagerly, his tongue protruding, while he rubbed his eyes under his glasses. He wore a green and white fatigue cap, a cap which made me wonder if it might have been used for camouflaging Matt in some African jungle.

Little Arnold was given a pencil and a piece of paper which he placed atop a spiral notebook. He scribbled up and down and yawned, alternating looking at Joe and the paper. After much scribbling, he triumphantly pointed to his paper, "Mommie, look!" Appearing not to hear him, Mari continued to write, lost in thought.

After class, I had a brief session with Susan, Matt, and Mari about their experiences with taping their composing processes while writing their classification papers. I had asked them to talk to me on tape about their mental processes while they were actually writing their essays.

Susan reported that as she vainly struggled for words, she quit taping, did housework, watched television,
and finally went to bed. The next morning, however, she had a great idea. "I thought of an idea and wrote it, a great thought. You have ideas in your head. You don't know when a good one will come out!" she exclaimed.

(Susan permits us to peek inside her head while she composes the classification paper on housekeepers.)

Susan's Classification Paper (Composing Processes)

"As I write my paper my daughter is baking cookies. My mind is at ease, and I am very relaxed. As I think of sentences, I write them down. What I wrote sounds pretty good. I came to a blank space, so I got up from the kitchen table, and I left my work right where it was. I watched some television, talked to Phillip, and then put the kids to bed. The kids won't go to bed unless I kiss them good night and tuck them in. I went back to the table and tried to write some more, but nothing would come to mind or it all seemed wrong, so I went to bed. The next morning as I sat in the kitchen and watched two cardinals and a bluejay playing at our birdfeeder some ideas came to my mind, so I began to write once more. I wrote two more pages, and then I decided it was time to do something else, because I wasn't sure what I was going to say about the, hide-the-dirt-under-the-rug housekeeper. The best time to write is when your mind is at ease. If I find myself struggling for words, I quit."
"When I was thirteen I took tap dancing lessons. I remember that while dancing, occasionally I would forget what came next even though I had done the routine several times. My instructor called this a mental block. I think sometimes when I write I get mental blocks, and nothing is there. Once, I was in the high school band. One evening as we were lined up to go on the football field my mind went blank; I had to whisper to the girl beside me to get the show back in my head. I did make it through the show alright. Writing is fun if you're not under pressure and you know what you want to say, but it becomes a real task when you get a mental block...

"I read my theme over several times trying to find things wrong with it. Yes, I did get it finished and I thought it was funny, which is what I tried to do at the end. I wanted something to make Dr. Seward laugh. I hope he enjoys reading my paper. A paper should be more than good grammar. I have read some stories that I really enjoyed, but I have started reading some that I just couldn't finish. I'll bet Dr. Seward does get some papers that are perfect in grammar but boring."

In addition, Susan pointed out that George, her eight-year-old son, had helped her with her classification paper by telling her about his visit to a friend's house. "He told me things like his friend wasn't allowed to touch
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the dresser, only the knobs on the dresser in his bedroom, so I revised everything George told me and used it in my paper."

George's telling his mother about the friend who lived in the show-case house prompted Susan to write her classification paper on the types of housekeepers. This paper illustrates the impact of the home and neighborhood culture upon the college classroom context. Susan's essay on the three types of housekeepers follows:

Susan's Three Types of Housekeepers

"When I came home from school today and walked into my living room, my first thought was, 'Oh dear, I just straightened this room up yesterday.' The children didn't have school today; it was too cold to play outside, and of course they had to have a place to play. The electric train was in the middle of the floor along with the UNO cards, tinker toys, and several other items. As I carefully made my way to the kitchen trying hard to avoid stepping on any toys, I just smiled and said, 'I see everyone had a good time today.' Then it came to me; I knew just what subject to write my theme on, for every housewife today, as in the past, has one duty or job that must be faced. This is the job of keeping the house clean and neat, unless of course she is fortunate enough to have a
maid that picks up after children. I am going to disclose to you through my own experiences three different types of housekeepers which are as follows: the immaculate housekeeper, the moderate housekeeper, and the messy, hide-the-dirt-under-the-rug type housekeeper.

"The very immaculate housekeeper spends every free minute of everyday working on her house. She is totally devoted to it. If something gets put in a wrong spot, she will immediately pick it up and move it. I have such a friend who spends all her time cleaning, shining, and polishing. One afternoon my son, George, went to visit her son Tom. They had to remove their shoes at the door, they weren't allowed to touch the furniture, and they weren't allowed to sit on the living room sofa. I thought George was exaggerating when he told me about all the things Tom wasn't allowed to do, until one day my husband Phil and I went to visit Don and Vel. When we arrived at their house, Don forgot and threw his suit jacket across the back of their good sofa. Vel glared at him. If looks could kill, poor Don would be dead. When she asked us to be seated, we were reluctant to sit on their sofa. Everything in their living room was crystal clean with not a sign of anything out of place. At each end of the sofa were two beautiful glass lamps. I immediately remembered George telling me that Jack wasn't allowed to
turn the lights on in the living room; now I knew why. The room looked like a picture from Better Homes and Gardens. Don and Vel's house was not exceptionally beautiful or expensive; however, it was immaculate. When Phil and I returned home he kicked his shoes off, stretched out on the couch, graciously smiled, and said, 'It sure is nice to have a house that is lived in.' At that moment I realized how much I was appreciated for my efforts to keep a clean house, and I realized that he was trying to tell me that sometimes he liked an occasional clutter.

"I am the moderate type housekeeper. My house gets a good once a week dusting and sweeping and a daily kitchen and bathroom cleaning. The children help out by cleaning their rooms, and they each have a chore to do. Our house is not a museum to display, but it is a home to live in from day to day. My theory is this: cleanliness is next to Godliness, but who said anything about neatness. If my house gets messy, and then I clean it up; it will be appreciated and noticed. On the other hand, if I keep my house always neat and tidy, my family would soon overlook all the work that I do.

"Last of all, there is the lady next door, Crissy Stout, who never takes her garbage out. She also keeps her curtains pulled so no one will see the dirt on the floor. She only cleans her house when she has to, and she
camouflages all the dirt that she can. Dust doesn't bother Crissy, and early one morning I heard Crissy shout, 'I hate to clean house!'

"It doesn't matter whether you're like Vel, Crissy, or me. Just remember, to make a world it takes all three."

Even though Susan (and the other students) wrote effective classification papers, they had difficulty talking to me on tape, during the actual writing of the essays. Chip said that he got "jumbled" in his mind trying to talk and write at the same time. Lucile got "totally disgusted, wasting about twenty or thirty sheets of paper." She had just finished writing the conclusion, she reported, when "other ideas popped into my mind and I had to rewrite the whole paper." Mari confessed that having to record her composing processes made her aware of what her "mind was doing," but she couldn't talk and write at the same time. Therefore, she wrote her essay first, she said, and then read it on tape. (Overall, this venture was not too successful. I wish I had asked the students to just compose aloud--without writing at the same time. It must have seemed like patting their heads and rubbing their stomachs, simultaneously.)

**Definition**

Joe lectured on the definition pattern today. Because the text's discussion was a little disjointed, he
attempted to bring ideas together so that when students read the textbook, it would make more sense. He directed the class to write "Man is a featherless biped that is lightly covered with hair." At first glance, the students did not understand the sentence. Then Joe asked what "biped" meant. "Two-leg," responded Kay. "But why featherless biped?" asked Joe rhetorically.

He then explained that birds, chimpanzies, orangutangs have two legs but are heavily coated with hair. So to properly define a word, students must fit it into a class and then differentiate it from all others in the class. For example, "Dr. Seward is an English teacher (class) who works at Rio Grande College, and who previously worked for the Navy on an aircraft carrier (differentiation)."

By now the students were nodding and yawning. They appeared to be exceptionally tired today. Joe sensed this and quickly moved to the conclusion in his lecture. He pointed out that he had been discussing the classical form of definition and that the definition, itself, would be the thesis statement for their new essay. For example, "Mature love is an emotion (class) that is characterized by feelings of concern for the other person and a spirit of self-sacrifice (differentiation)." The thesis statement could be developed by using illustrations and examples to extend the definition.
The students were busily writing now, attentive since they realized that this was the thesis pattern to be used for their next essay. Joe suggested that the students cite specific examples or illustrations from their lives or from others' lives they had observed. They could use one long story or three short stories to illustrate their definition. Joe reminded students that they could "go beyond themselves" for material in Composition II, but for now they were to draw on their own experiences or observations to make clear an abstract term such as an emotion or an idea. The reader of their essays could not "see" meaning until students' abstract terms were made concrete by examples, illustrations, or narratives. Kathleen attempts to make clear what she means by "loneliness," in the following essay.

Kathleen's Definition of Loneliness

"Loneliness can be one of the most destructive emotions there is. A person can be eaten away, completely destroyed, by this single emotion, loneliness. Millions of Americans suffer from loneliness in various situations and intensities, but all of them classify their emotion as loneliness without actually defining or describing their personal feelings. I have defined loneliness to be an emotion that is experienced when a person is isolated from other people in the physical sense or the mental sense.
"A feeling of loneliness is often encountered when a person is isolated from his family and friends. It is human nature to have a desire to associate and communicate with other people. Nevertheless, many people's chain of communication is cut off due to single living, a recent move into a new area, or because of a mobility handicap, such as arthritis, forcing them into a state of seclusion or loneliness. A freshman college student is a perfect example of loneliness due to the separation from loved ones. For the first time the student is totally separated from his parents and the security of his home, placed into unfamiliar surroundings with no family or friends to provide reliance and companionship. The freshman student often goes through a deep state of loneliness for the first few weeks, while he is building new support systems.

"Even though a person feels lonely when he is physically separated from loved ones, he can also experience loneliness when he is in a crowd, because of his state of mind or the attitude of the crowd. Just the presence of people does not ensure that a person will have companionship. A person's mood, the atmosphere he is in, the reason the group has assembled, and the other members of the group play an important role in whether a person feels a part of the group or secluded. For example, a Japanese student in an American college classroom may feel set apart
and alone. In addition, a person opposing abortion in a pro-abortion discussion group could have feelings of disassociation and loneliness. Consequently, one should keep in mind that even though a person is of an opposing opinion or is different in a physical way does not necessarily mean that they have to feel isolated or lonely.

"Everyone experiences loneliness from time to time. It may be because there is no one around to talk to or that there is no one around who feels the way he does at that time, therefore causing feelings of seclusion and loneliness. However, one should remember that no one has to feel lonely. A person can direct his energies in a more creative direction such as sewing or writing. As a result, one is not lonely; he is just alone with himself."

**Definition Essay Subjects.** An overview of "definition" papers revealed that when given the freedom to choose their own subjects, students wrote about experiences related to coping with problems in the college setting or in their personal lives. Definition subjects: Emotions and other abstracts are shown in Table VI.

Of the emotions listed in Table VI, two might be considered positive emotions, and nine are negative. Other subjects classified under the label "abstract" may also be viewed as positive and/or negative. For example, Susan wrote about "marriage"; Chip about "patriotism" in positive
Table 3

Definition Subjects:
Emotions and Other Abstracts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emotions</th>
<th>Abstract</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fear</td>
<td>Anxiety (Anxious)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love</td>
<td>Impulsiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hatred</td>
<td>Butterflies (Nerves)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loneliness</td>
<td>Joy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jealousy</td>
<td>Pain</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

terms. John wrote about "brotherhood" and Jon about "spring fever" (wanting away from it all) in a negative manner. The negative subjects reveal struggle and stress while the positive reflect hope and success. See Table VII for emotions and abstract subjects classified according to positive and negative topics.

Table 4

Emotions and Other Abstract Subjects as Positive and Negative Topics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Love (3)</td>
<td>Loneliness (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joy</td>
<td>Impulsiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage (housewife)</td>
<td>Jealousy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patriotism (veteran)</td>
<td>Pain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anxiety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Fraternity Pledging)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Cause - Effect

The excitement in the classroom today, February 17, was almost tangible. Most students were present, and Joe encouraged them to come to see him during office hours if they had questions about a particular theme grade or final grades. "It may be hard to catch me after class!" warned Joe. He quickly handed back re-writes, late papers, and collected odds and ends. He then announced that the last paper would be written in class during the "two-hour-final" block. "The only kind of work which makes sense as a final in freshman composition is an essay final," stated Joe. This final paper would be a cause and effect analysis, and students could bring to the class a dictionary and notes. Joe, then, proceeded to introduce the cause-effect pattern.

"Why do things happen?" questioned Joe. He continued, "Why were the hostages released?" He explained that the most natural thing is to look at something and wonder why something happened. What were the reasons? He discussed reasons as an "analysis of causes." On the other hand, he pointed out, one might look at effects and ask, "What effect did something have?" Again, he referred to Iran as an example. A commentator he had listened to earlier had suggested that granting asylum to the Shah had had an effect on Iranian students. He diagrammed the causal cluster on the blackboard as follows:
Whether a rhetorical pattern is called cause and effect analysis or effect and cause analysis, there is a degree of interrelatedness, he pointed out.

"If in a snow storm tomorrow, I fall and break a leg, I will go to the hospital." Joe reasoned. "I won't be able to dance, I won't be able to walk." He, then, emphasized the point that the activities mentioned above are unrelated to each other, but they are all related to the central cause-effect relationship.

Joe, then, recited for us, "For want of a nail a shoe was lost, for want of a shoe the horse was lost, for want of a horse, the rider was lost, for want of a rider, the battle was lost." While it is often difficult to determine what is cause and what is effect, he would like students to focus on either cause or effect in their final papers. This class was to begin thinking about their topics, thesis statements, and supporting evidence to be used in their final in-class essay to be written in one week. He listed on the board some illustrative topics other student had found successful: Causes of student apathy, causes of divorce, effects of studying consistently
throughout the quarter, effects of sleeplessness, and effects of alcohol. (Here Joe's humor could not be suppressed: "Pledging fraternities this week, students will have ample opportunities observing and detailing the effects of the latter topic," he quipped.)

Next, Joe pointed out fallacies in logic the class was to avoid (the class was listening intently now, taking notes). The most common fallacy in logic, posits Joe, is the post hoc fallacy, "After this, therefore because of this." For example, a student wakes up on a beautiful day, and he rolls out of bed on the left side. (He usually rolls out on the right). He believes that any bad luck he has will be a result of rolling out on the left side. There is no relationship between rolling out on the left side of bed and happenings of the day. Joe admonished the class to look closely to see reasons why something happens, to look for real causes.

Another error in logic is the either/or fallacy. Joe cited an example which happened yesterday as he was getting coffee at the communal coffee pot. One of the nurses complained, "But Joe, men don't like fat women. Would you like a 500-pound Mama Cass or a 105-pound Twiggy?" Obviously, the flaw in logic here was presenting the reader with two extreme choices. In reality, there is a broad spectrum of choices, multiple causes,
or effects. (The writer should acknowledge or explain the broad spectrum of choices so that the reader will see that the writer is being fair.)

Joe also wanted the students to avoid fence sitting, refusing to say what the causes or effects are, "could be this or that or none"; and slanting. If the students ignored relevant points which did not favor their position in an essay the reader would be less inclined to believe the writer. It is best to acknowledge the other side of the coin, if a relationship of trust is to be developed with the reader. For example, if students wrote about the negative effects of love, it would be fair to acknowledge some positive factors (perhaps near the end of the paper). "Try to give the whole picture," challenged Joe.

Students wrote for the entire period the last day of class, before final examination week. First they free-wrote in a writing exercise called "writing roulette." Each student wrote for ten minutes, exchanged papers, read what had been written, wrote ten minutes and exchanged papers again. The students, predictably, wrote about finals, going home, sports, grades, and next quarter. Also, they wrote advice to in-coming English 113 students, and an evaluation of the class and research, suggesting ideas for improvement for the next freshman composition course. Last, the class responded to a questionnaire about their writing
habits during this quarter. (These class writings will be summarized in Chapter Seven.)

During the finals week, students wrote cause and effect essays. Kathleen, an above average student, wrote about a subject important in her daily life: marathon running. Even for a "final" paper she felt comfortable writing about a subject meaningful to her.

Kathleen's Essay on Marathon Running

"A desire for physical fitness is sweeping across America. Thousands of people are joining health clubs, riding their bikes to work, or jogging to keep themselves 'fit.' But, the desire of some people does not stop with a physically fit body; they must challenge themselves by entering a ten-mile marathon, joining a thousand mile cross-country bike ride, or swimming across the Ohio River. In order for a person to reach the physical excellence required to run a ten-mile marathon, he must be mentally disciplined, dedicated, and always strive for improvement.

"A marathon runner must be mentally disciplined to block out the pain of running. The runner may think about what he is going to do when he is finished. He may also look around at the scenery to keep his mind off of his running and how tired he is. Also, when a runner approaches a hill he will try to 'psych' himself up and tell himself,
'This is easy. I'll just glide up this hill.'
From time to time the runner will tell himself,
'Take a break. Just stretch those legs out and relax.'
But all the while he continues to run.

"In addition to being mentally disciplined, a marathon runner must be dedicated to stretch out and run every day. This is because the body begins to retrogress within two days without physical activity, therefore denying everything the runner is working for. Before the runner begins his run for the day, he will stretch out his muscles to eliminate a possible injury, such as a pulled groin muscle. Then, after the runner has finished running he will do fifteen minutes of warm down exercises to prevent the muscles from tightening up and cramping. All of this may not seem important to some people, but to a disciplined marathon runner it is essential.

"Finally, a marathon runner must always strive for improvement, trying to beat himself. This is because the runner's improvement will plane off if he does not increase his speed or distance. The workout will become increasingly easier and less challenging for the runner. Instead, a marathon runner keeps in mind this slogan,

'No pain. No gain.'

"Marathon running is not easy. It takes a lot of mental discipline, dedication, and desire. But, there is
always an exception to the rule, the one runner who does not have to try, never practices, and still always seems to do excellently on the day of the marathon. This is what is known as a 'natural,' and he is naturally disgusting to those of us who have to work extremely long hours in preparation for a marathon, only to be out run by a 'natural.'"

Matt's last theme piqued my curiosity. This is the first time he had written from an impersonal, third-person stance about a subject. Who was "John Love?" Was he a figment of Matt's imagination or some family member whom Matt did not want to identify? Some of the specific details would indicate that Matt may have been close to his subject—details such as the "1980 Pontiac Firebird" and "getting up every morning at 7 o'clock was a way of life." Although we do not know the source of Matt's subject matter, we can see that he was able to effectively manipulate his language to respond to the cause-effect requirement. He could focus on a main idea and develop it with supporting details, earning him, a basic writer, a "C" for the quarter's work in freshman composition.

Following is Matt's final theme.

Matt's Essay on Effects of Job Loss

"For John Love, a husband and father of two lovely children, the loss of his job as a factory worker had
crucial effects on his life style as a whole. In his unemployed state he experienced financial difficulty, psychological difficulty, and physical difficulty.

"John is a loving husband that loved to provide for his family. He had just bought a new house in the country. The house was a two story white house with black shutters. The family was very proud of this house but now it looked as if it would be up for sale in the near future. John had also just bought a new car for his wife Jane, a 1980 Pontiac Firebird. He thought it would be nice for Jane to have her own car. Now, without money coming in regularly the car and the house and many other luxuries would have to be put aside for the necessities.

"The psychological difficulties were now starting to show after three weeks out of work. For John getting up every morning at 7 o'clock was a way of life. Not to get up and have no where to go was becoming more than he could handle. Fighting with his wife became a pastime as the boredom of being at home all the time was finally taking its toll on his mind and his body.

"John was now losing weight and the stress had caused an ulcer to develop. Once 170 pounds, John was now 155 pounds, three weeks out of work. He was never a man to have anything go wrong in his world until the loss of his job. Things aren't getting any better, but when the cause ceases then the effects will disappear.
Obviously, Matt had understood the cause-effect pattern as taught by Joe. In an autobiographical sketch written in my remedial English class, September 11, 1980, Matt had written: "My main weakness in all classes is lack of understanding. I feel that when I understand something I can usually get it." He understood thesis and support. He understood the cause-effect pattern and could structure his ideas into this type of form.

During Developmental Stage Three: Products, students were exposed to a crazy quilt of writing patterns. In spite of their having to follow teacher-assigned rhetorical modes (valued by freshman composition society) students, however, were not hindered in writing development. In fact, the discipline imposed by the rhetorical patterns--patterns dictated by course objectives--provided controls or boundaries which students appeared to desire.

As Joe continued to instruct, patiently and precisely providing direction, students had little difficulty understanding and writing essays of narration, comparison-contrast, classification, definition, and cause-effect. By following Joe's guide to essay structure, students were free to spend most of their time searching for "something new" to write about, rather than struggling with decisions structure.
Also, during this stage, students learned to discuss their psychological processes in terms other than "I wrote a rough draft and then I corrected my errors."

Indeed, they behaved, more and more, like writers: struggled for elusive new meanings, learned to relax conscious internal controls, and during a time of relaxation, perhaps, witnessed something new emerging. They could, then, shape their new creation into new winesacks (the rhetorical modes, other than narration, were new to most students).

Being aware of their composing processes (while preparing teacher-assigned essays) give students a sense of "being in charge." They found that to maximize their own writing as creative process, they must commit themselves to engagement with their art. Fresh ideas (insight) did not come as a flash until they had searched, struggled, worried—worked hard—on their essays. Only then did the new idea emerge—perhaps as a faint idea or sometimes as a strong image. In other words, they witnessed in their own writing experiences the practical value of understanding and developing writing skills and the discovery of fresh, new ideas through the creative process.

Some understanding of skills and creative process did not, however, eliminate their anxiety over each new assignment. Each week, they looked at a blank page and asked "What can I possibly find to write about?" No
matter how well, or successfully they had written in previous assignments, some anxiety appeared with each week's writing. However, these basic writers in freshman composition were not alone with their anxiety. As Murray pointed out: "The most inexperienced student writer shares with the most experienced writer the terrors of the blank page." The problem of finding something to say is the problem all writers share.

Even so, students appeared to derive comfort from knowing that stored in their own brain was more material than they could conceivably use. Had they not demonstrated to themselves that they could produce words and make meaning? They had done journal writing, free writing, brain storming, audio taping (very quickly even, when necessary). They could take rough thoughts, words, and write, restructure, and re-think—repeating this dynamic process until finally words would say what the writers wanted them to say. The "something new" would fit the rhetorical pattern, taught in class.

Students grew in confidence and competence as they wrote essays of varying modes, striving for strong theses and supporting details. They also felt confident because they had the opportunity to rewrite the essay as often as they chose (even "good" writers didn't, necessarily, get it right the first,—or second or third—time). However,
in spite of the fact that rewriting would raise students' grades, students did not re-write as often as one might expect.

Moreover, in their essays, students wrote about basics: attempting to find understandings and meanings from their life experiences. (In their papers, students could create order and harmony out of dissonant experiences.) For example, Mork wrote about his problems adjusting to life as a freshman. Less traumatic, but nonetheless basic, Mari wrote about selecting the proper dryer for her family of six, and Susan compared and contrasted store-bought and home-made breads. The writers found something new to say (about life experiences) and words with which to say the new.

In conclusion, students gained an appreciation of process, of more complex writing patterns, and of their own worth and capabilities as writers. Within the nurturing classroom climate, they became more sensitive to their psychological processes, and came to believe in their abilities to master various essay assignments. Also, they began to understand that both agony/ecstasy are part of becoming a writer. They were confronted with the "frightening and truly liberating knowledge that words are used to create a man's [and a woman's] world and that words let him "know what he sees, and that the more he sees the more there is."
Moreover, it was interesting to note that the words students used to create their world ("the way they worded") were fresh, unpretentious words. Students did not appear to be tempted by the unnatural, "bloated" diction, denounced by Ken Macrorie in *Writing Without Teachers*.

**Subjects in Composition: Marker Events**

Some students may attend college, in theory at least, because they want to learn now to enhance the quality of their lives. College can help them "drink of life fully, drink all it can give," as the songwriter says, whether a quality life is spelled out in terms of a better-paying job, greater self-understanding, or learning for learning's sake. In the freshman composition class, students were searching, developing, pipping their way out of an eggshell, so to speak. Even in a structured class such as English 113, students had indicated by their choice of topics that they had a desire to write about subjects important to them. They wrote about life: past, present, and future. They wrote to learn, to discover, to make sense out of their own experiences. This type of writing led to a greater understanding of themselves and others.

All of the writers in the class were at the early adulthood era (maybe the most dramatic of all eras), of the life cycle which Levinson says "begins at 17 or 18
and ends about 45." When the class began, more than one third of the class were between ages 18-20, the "early transitional level," the "bridge from adolescence to early adulthood and is part of both." These young adults were making choices "to establish self in the adult world" characterized by "crucial turning points" and "extraordinary growth."

It was not surprising, then, to find students writing about subjects which reflected their growing independence. For example, Jud, 18, wrote about "the problems of the maturing teenager" and Jim, 18, about "my brother who changed." Then, there were the students living in dormitories who wrote about adjusting to life with roommates. Students' writings reflected peer pressure to drink, take drugs, join or not join fraternities or sororities.

Commuters revealed, in their writing, the encouragement or discouragement they received from their families. Mothers with young children, such as Mari, wrote of the difficulties of walking a tightrope and balancing home, college, and an outside job. A young veteran, returning from the service, wrote about problems of re-entering the family circle. Still others touched on the stress and adjustment arising from the death of a mother, parents' divorce, loss of girlfriends, and problems with parents—all this a microcosm of life. All this static, all
these life experiences were brought into the classroom.

In other words, students did not enter freshman composition as a blank book but rather as a book with indelibly inscribed pages from their lives. Before students could write about more remote or impersonal subjects effectively, they had to clear their minds (computers) of static and noise—those problems clamoring for attention. Students were striving to adapt or make sense of life events and experiences.

Since writing in freshman composition did not require library research, other than incidentally, the subjects that students wrote about came from their life experiences and observation, in large. When they had some freedom of choice in selecting subjects and felt comfortable enough to do so, they wrote about those life experiences which occupied their attention or about events which had made an impact on their lives. Levinson calls such happenings appropriately, "marker events." These events are further described as an occasion which has influenced a person's life such as "unexpected trauma, marriage, divorce, good fortune, illness, and advancement or failure." (Following is a list of essay subjects classified and designated marker events.)
Essay Subjects: Classified and Designated Marker Events

CARS

How to Tune Engines
2 Cars
Cars Like People

CHANGES IN LIFE

Changes in Outlook on Life
(Losing Job and Effect) *
Changes in Attitude
toward Marriage *
Problems of Maturing
Teenager
Forming Wrong First Opinion *
Causes of Divorce *
3 Factors Happy Family Life
Causes of Friction between
Teens and Parents *
Effects of Physically Abused
Children *

*Problems of Maturing Teenagers
Divorce *
Family Shares
Holding a Family Together *
Family Communication
Big Families to Army
Happy Family Life *
Happy Family Qualities
Happy Family Requirements
My Brother who Changed *
Losing Job and Effect *
Elements of Happy Family Life *
2 Brothers: Lion-Fox
Changes in Attitude toward
Marriage
Causes of Family Friction
Large Families to Grapes
Factors in Happy Family Life
Marriage Like Ship Enroute to Sea*

CLOTHING

How to Sell Clothing
Men's Clothes
COLLEGE LIFE

Rio Grande College
Freshman Like Senior
R. G. vs. O. U.
College Students to Farmers
Types of Students
Here at College
How College Students Change
from H.S.*
First Days at College*
Classes of Education

DRINKING

(2) Effects of Drinking

EMOTIONS

Fear*
Love*
Hatred*
Pain*
Anxious (stress)*
Impulsive*
Loneliness*

FOOD

Italian Spaghetti
Cookies
Comparing Pizza
Banana Split
Fresh Apple Cake
Hot Dog
Cake Decorating
Homemade to Heiner Bread

FRATERNITIES

3 Fraternities*
Brotherhood
Questions of Greek Life*

HAIR AIDS

Pro Style vs. Gillette
HOBBIES

Organic Gardening
Handwriting Analysis
Comparing Stereos

HUNTING

Use and Care for Loading
Rifles
3 Kinds of Hunters
How to Load a Rifle
Kinds of Hunters

JOB RELATED

Working Classes of People
Hospital Visitors
Kinds of Housekeepers

PEOPLE

Kinds of Housekeepers
Hospital Visitors
3 Types in Restaurant
Working Classes of People
Rural vs. City People
Types of Clowns
Types of Customers
Cars Like People

ROOMMATES

(2) Roommates*

MISCELLANEOUS

Motorcycle Detectors
Dryers
Comparing Diapers
Napalm Bomb
Libraries Like Churches
Unforgettable Accident*

SEASONS

Summer Like Blooming Flowers
Winter Time
SEASONS (Cont'd)

Spring Fever
Winter Like Women
Winter to Ice Cubes

SPORTS RELATED TOPICS

Motions in Hitting a Baseball
Basketball Plays
Baseball Coaches
Running Marathon Requirements
Basketball Play "Rio"
Three Groups of Coaches
Baseball vs. Football
Sports Cars Like Athletes
Three Types of Basketball Coaches
Comparison of Jogging Shoes
Eng. 113 to Ice Skating
Horses
Importance of Baseball to Man's Development
How Losing Affects a Coach*
How to Become an Accomplished Wrestler

TYPES OF RESTAURANTS

Types of Restaurants

U.S. & WORLD NEWS RELATED

Hostage Crises Effect
In the supportive climate of this English 113 classroom, subjects from assigned essays and journal entries converged. Almost all of the writing done by the students this quarter appeared to be real, experienced-oriented writing.
CHAPTER SIX - NOTES


8 Levinson, p. 21.

9 Levinson, p. 54.

10 Levinson, p. 54.
Assessing students' and Joe's end-of-quarter ideas about teaching and learning writing was an important part of this study. Because I viewed the students and Joe as co-researchers, I needed their perspectives to complete my classroom mosaic. Responses came from a two-hour videotaped panel discussion ("Experiencing Writing in Freshman Composition") and a questionnaire on writing habits. In addition, students wrote advice to incoming freshmen and an evaluation of their freshman composition class.

Panel of Discussion

Kay, Mari, Susan, Lucile, John, Chip, Matt, Joe and I participated in the panel discussion. We, first of all, began by discussing the composing process. Susan reported that her technique for inventing something to say was to use everyday experiences. She spent "lots of time worrying, struggling, selecting and rejecting thoughts and words--an average of "three hours per page." Matt felt that a necessary ingredient for invention was "a good imagination." He affirmed that without an imagination "I don't believe you can write anything." Chip reported
that he just sat and wrote (giving little thought to invention beforehand), finding what he wanted to say as he wrote.

John indicated that his invention process had changed this quarter. Before this class, he would procrastinate until the last second and it "put a lot of pressure on me. But now," claimed John, "I find that if I go and do it right now while it's fresh . . . I just put the ideas down--it's there for me." He concluded that after class he is motivated to write and will hurry home to write while his mind is "cooking." Lucile would just meditate for a few days "until the paper is really written in my mind."

I asked the class if they had experienced insight. Could they "see" something new to say after a time of struggling and searching? Several replied, "Yes." Matt elaborated: "I've laid my pencil down and said, I'm not going to do this [write] anymore . . . I quit!" Then I would get up the next morning and say, 'Oh yeah; that's it!' I'd walk over and in ten minutes I'd have everything I'd thought about."

When I asked the class what had helped and encouraged them in their writing, several responded that being permitted to choose their own subjects was very important to writing success. Chip reported, "I feel that, then, you have a subject that you enjoy writing about." Matt, too, was motivated by choosing his subjects.
"That's why I enjoyed writing my papers in Eng. 113. He (Dr. Seward) gave us a choice and we could write about things that we wanted to write about, didn't have to write about no particular thing. We could write about an experience and put that with imagination and write a paper. That's what I enjoyed about it."

Susan, also, revealed the value of student choice. "It helped me along in this class, also, because if I couldn't use the experiences and background and what I have been doing over the years . . . if he had stressed you write on this certain subject, I'm afraid I wouldn't be able to pass it."

In answer to my question about what discouraged writing, Matt responded freely:

"I know it is essential; you have to do it, but I think the grading of the paper is bad; that is just my own thought because you sit down, and you thought you did your best. You come up with a 'C.' You say, 'Well, I must not be as good as the person that got an A.' But I know the grading part is a very essential part . . . but I just don't like it."

Susan disagreed with Matt. She felt grades were positive things— that students wouldn't try "if you didn't have a grading system." There would be a lot of students in the class who "wouldn't put much effort into their
writing and wouldn't try as hard as they should."

Other students indicated concern about grades. Chip and Lucile wondered what subjects for their final papers would bring good grades. Lucile worried about the teacher being interested in what she was saying. That "bugged" her. Joe responded to the concern about pleasing the teacher: "I like almost anything if the person is interested . . . if it is something I don't know about I'm informed, and if it is something I do know about, I identify, so either way, if the writer is interested, that makes it exciting."

The easiest essay pattern for the students appeared to be comparison-contrast, while the most difficult structure was definition. For example, Lucile revealed that she had had trouble writing an extended definition about fear. Joe suggested that in the future she discard the subject and choose a subject she'd had more experience with, "something that you feel more in tune with."

The panel discussed the persistence of certain mechanical errors, such as the comma splice. Kay was still plagued by this error, and she offered some insight into why this old error still haunted her. "When you sit down in 104 you say, 'Now I am looking for comma splices in this sentence.' I can pick out the comma splices and
correct them. When you sit down to write a paper you are not sitting down and looking for comma splices. You are sitting down and looking for a topic to put down on the pages."

Joe explained why eliminating all mechanical errors was difficult. Students were manipulating four different skills all at the same time: content, organization, diction, and mechanics. He elaborated: "It is like learning to drive a standard shift car. You have to push down with your foot and steer and also have to learn to shift the gears . . . I can understand why you feel that 104 is a lot easier than 113 because in 104 we manipulate things so that you are only dealing with one skill at a time, whereas in 113 we turn you loose and you have to manipulate all of these skills simultaneously, and it is hard."

Kay interjected: "And once you do something for like twelve years in school [comma splices], it is hard to get over it in one quarter."

Students complained that they didn't start to write soon enough in school. "They should start children in the fourth grade writing short little stories . . . They should do that, but they don't."

Students were asked to trace their writing growth. Mari, for example, revealed that she was now confident
she could do the college writing required. "It's like
I'm some . . . I can be somebody." The work had not been
easy for her, however. "I think my husband discouraged
me a lot when I was talking about going to school. I was
down pretty low, and I had a hard time, I guess, start­
ing. The Learning Center helped me then a lot, too, to
get out of that fear."

Mari continued, "You see, I can do it if I put my
mind to it." I replied, "Yes, it gave you confidence in
yourself as a person."

"Yes," agreed Mari: "That's what I needed."

I asked her how she felt about her experience in
freshman composition and being a part of the study.

"I enjoyed it. I have found out a little bit about
my mind and the way it works, where I have never been
aware of it before . . . and because you are doing this
study, I feel that I am finding out more about myself . . .
I feel great."

Mari had to leave to go to work at the hospital, but
I asked her what parting thought she might have to encour­
age adults not to be afraid to try college. Mari responded:
"I am 38 years old, and it was hard for me. First, I had
to commit myself and make myself say I am going to try
it, and that is the hardest thing to do, is to say I am
going to try. I had talked it over with my family, had
talked it over with friends. They said, 'Oh, go ahead, go ahead, go ahead,' but it doesn't work that easy. They can say that. It's not them. But, it took me five years of discussing it with my family and everybody before I got enough—what do I say—guts. . . . I still, once in a while, wonder why am I doing this, you know. Is it just me, or am I trying to prove to my children . . . that mommy is not dumb? I don't know."

Joe, then, reported on his mental life as teacher of this writing class. He spoke about his ten years of teaching composition and the time necessary to handle the paper load, the "oceans of papers."

"If you have seen my office, you know what it looks like. I sit there and I think, am I really giving these students enough? Am I giving them enough attention? Am I preparing for class? Am I evaluating their papers enough, and there is a lot of guilt and self-doubt. Things like that. And then, too, after you have taught a subject for a number of years, you begin comparing your performance one year with what you did last year and the year before and the things you see other teachers doing and I know I go around like, gosh, I should be like her. I should be doing this . . . and I should bring in apples . . . and I wonder, am I getting stale? Am I really stimulating these students enough? That's why I like to get feed-back
from the class and out-of-class conferences about how you feel about my performance as a teacher.

"It's difficult to, especially, I think, to put comments on papers that are really helpful. I'll sit and I'll think; 'Well, now here is an error and I know how to correct it, and I could put one mark on the paper to do it but will the student learn how to correct the error, if I do that?' So, sometimes I will just correct it. Other times I will write an extensive comment on the outside of the paper to show the student how to correct it, or sometimes I'll stick in an exercise paper and ask the student to do it in hopes that that will help him learn to overcome the error, but I still wonder. Does it work? Is it working? And that is all part of the teaching process, struggling against that—in trying to see positive aspects, trying to see development—trying to pull the course together for you folks at the end so you will see what you did in English 104 is really related to what you are doing now in English 113. And what you are doing now in English 113 will relate to what you are going to be doing next term. I really worry about that. That goes through my mind a lot."

"How do you feel about having been a part of the research?" I asked.
Joe replied: "I have really had a tremendously good time. I have enjoyed it. When I first agreed to do it, I was a little bit worried about it—being scrutinized. I thought, 'Gee, maybe ... maybe this won't work out so well' ... After I got into it, I saw how it worked and became comfortable with the techniques. I really felt good about the whole experience and enjoyed it. I really did."

Joe continued, "I've learned a great deal about how I teach and more about how I want to teach in the future. Every day I make note of little things that I am going to do differently next term, or things that I am going to stress next term that I didn't stress this term. I have learned a lot about pacing assignment from having Mrs. Epling in class. If someone is there, you are more apt to be aware of what pace the class is going. There're some parts of the class that I want to slow down and some that I want to speed up."

I reminded the class that I had told them earlier Joe and I would be students and they the teachers, at times. Then, Susan interjected, "I have gotten a lot out of this English 113 because I like the way you explain how to make the thesis statement, how you give us examples. ... I had to write a paper for Education 101 and when I sat down to write that paper I thought about how to develop the whole paper ... what I learned in English 113 helped me write that paper."
Susan's comments illustrated that learning to write in freshman composition prepared students for success in other classes. (Susan earned an "A" on the definition paper for Education 101, using the skills and understandings she had gained in Composition I.)

**Summary of Students Writing Habits**

A total of sixteen respondents (Joe and fifteen students) reported their writing habits at the end of the quarter. First, they indicated their favorite time for writing. The time they functioned best appeared to be about equally divided among the morning hours (6:00 A.M. - noon), afternoon hours (noon - 6:00 P.M.), and evening hours (6:00 P.M. - midnight), with the evening hours being slightly more popular. One half of the group wrote best during the evening hours, and almost half indicated that a good time was the morning and/or afternoon. (Several respondents checked two or more times.) Only one student functioned best during the wee hours of the morning (12:00 midnight - 6:00 A.M.).

The kind of setting most conducive to writing was a quiet room at home, reported one-half of the writers. Three wrote best in the library, three in a room with people. Only two found the school most conducive to writing.
Special circumstances in the writing setting which aided writing varied. Some circumstances (mentioned a number of times) included music (radio or T.V.), cold drinks, quiet, hard tables and/or chairs, lots of room, plenty of paper, and a room with a window.

Writers elaborated as follows: "Nothing in the setting really helps me; I have to be calm, relaxed, and in the mood for writing, no matter where I am," Mari replied. "It depends on what I am writing about. If I am writing about nature or weather or the out of doors, I like to be able to see them. But always I like it to be quiet when I write, and I like a wooden chair." Matt likes "a hard table and chair with music playing in the background."

The writers, unanimously, reported that they wrote their first draft of a paper in long hand as opposed to the typewriter. In addition, while writing the rough draft, only two writers revealed that they had to get each sentence "just right" before going on to the next sentence. The other students reported that they just kept going, leaving corrections, additions, or refinements for the revision stage. Joe, interestingly, remarked that he revised "a little" while he wrote. "I often find that I need to preface my remarks with something--I write 'from the middle out.'" Matt commented that he just wrote the paper and glanced over it. "That's where I go wrong; I don't put enough effort looking for mistakes."
The respondents described in some detail their pre-writing habits. They talked to other people, looked at magazine articles, jotted down thoughts, ate something, turned on a radio to clear their minds, and just sat and meditated.

Pre-writing appeared to be important for most students' best writing. One student wrote: "My pre-writing details go on in my head. I start out thinking of what I want to say. It doesn't come to me at first, but there are just periods when it all comes to me at once. I know what I want to write. If I don't have time to really think about it in my mind, I have found I can't write like I'm capable of."

Kathleen writes to get her ideas. She revealed that she begins after the assignment to "write down thoughts, anything that comes to mind pertaining to the paper." Her pre-writing leads to "a direction of the paper."

More than one-half of the writers indicated that they did not sketch out (outline) any plan for their papers. Three writers said that they did prepare an outline before writing the rough draft, and two indicated that they sometimes prepared an outline. One student noted that he just sat down and wrote--"what comes out is my final draft."

The revision process for seventy-five percent of the respondents consisted mainly of changing individual
words, rephrasing sentences, or correcting mechanics. Others indicated that they made substantial changes—deletions or additions of big chunks, expanding or trimming sections, and shifting parts. Writers reported: "As I revise my paper, I usually end up adding a great deal to my paper because I find myself coming up with more and better details as I'm writing"; "when I make revisions it's usually over the areas pointed out by the teacher. However, while doing so, many new ideas will pop in my head and I sometimes make drastic changes." Joe revealed that he added material—"more examples. explanations, etc." Only one respondent indicated that substantial changes were made when writing the final draft. Others reported that they, mostly, just made a fair copy of their revised copy. However, Kathleen noted that "it depends." When she has two rough drafts, she doesn't change much for the final draft. "But if I have only written one rough draft, there will be many revisions."

More than half the class consulted dictionaries at some point in their writing, but only three mentioned that they sometimes consult thesauruses. Only one writer was conscious of writing style. Twenty-five percent of the respondents recast sentences to improve their rhythm, gracefulness, clarity, economy, and emphasis.
Writers specified the number of pieces of writing they did on their own initiative in a typical month. More than half the class wrote from two to six letters per month. Kathleen kept a daily journal of 50-100 words, and two others wrote poetry. Joe indicated that he wrote "five short stories and two poems per year." His short stories ranged from "five to ten typed pages--the poems from twenty to fifty lines." John, the senior student, revealed: "In total honesty I am not a person who does a lot of writing. I do not keep a diary and do not write many letters. But I have learned to enjoy the act of writing." Only two students reported doing no writing.

In writing assigned papers, more than seventy-five percent habitually burn the midnight oil the night before the paper is due. One student reported: "I burn the candle down all the way." And yet another explained, "A midnight oil burner, but I usually leave enough time the next day to make the revisions. That way I can sleep on it and run the paper over in my mind. You'd be surprised as to how much can come to you as you sleep. I know I often find myself jumping out of bed writing things down that have come to me in the night."

Matt revealed that he started on his paper "the last minute." Another writer needed "to be pressured pretty hard before I ever start the paper." Kathleen indicated
that "there have been papers I wrote the night before because of a pressed schedule or because nothing had come to write about. She liked to take time to "cool off" and "revise," but "this is not always possible."

Students' principal strength as writers ranged from a good imagination, organization ability, to originality. Weaknesses in mechanics seemed to be the principal weakness for more than seventy-five percent of the respondents. Other weaknesses included lack of specificity, lack of examples, a "loss for words," and failure to allow enough time. Yet another student felt her greatest weakness was in the psychological processes which "takes so long, sometimes, [I] never can decide." Joe reported, "I am not really an original thinker. In Victorian terms, I have flashes of insight but am not a steady thinker. I have not learned how to 'burn with a hard, gem-like flame.'"

The respondents indicated what had contributed most to their development as writers. Answers varied as follows: "Not a demanding teacher but teachers who would take time to discuss work with an individual student. Dr. Seward has really helped me excell as a writer. The tips he has showed us in class have helped me tremendously." Other responses included deadlines for papers, self-criticism, and writing practice.

Finally, writers made additional comments about writing habits. Matt was still on his soap box about grades:
"I enjoy to write, but I hate being graded on my ability to write. Some people can write and some people can't. What some people think is a good paper, others may think is bad. I do my best, I think, I enjoy reading my own writing but the grading is awful. It's like saying you are a better writer than the person who got a lower grade than you, and vice versa. I enjoy writing but for me to do my best is all that matters, not a letter grade. If I know I did my best, that is all that matters to me."

There were two negative comments; one student thought her mechanics were "deplorable and I need help with my writing generally," while another stated a hatred for writing.

The good news was that there was growth. John reported that he felt he had really grown as a writer this quarter. "Before this quarter I didn't have any confidence in my writing at all. Now I have enough confidence in my organization and structure. I feel I can write a very good paper." Other students felt that Composition I had helped them to write papers for other classes. "I feel that this class has helped me tremendously, and I plan on remembering most of it to help me in the future." Joe added: "I view writing as craftsmanship--it is analogous to cabinet-making. A writer's ideas are his raw materials. He shapes those ideas by using the rhetorical modes of
development—then he polishes and adds finishing touches."

Advice to Incoming Freshman Composition Students

The students wanted incoming freshmen to know that freshman composition was "time consuming." The new students would not just "sit and take notes," but would do much writing. They "will not have written so much in their lives."

Also, students will learn to write "the right way, writing and developing papers to the best of your ability." Freshman composition is "a big learning step. You learn to put down on paper what you want to say." In addition, students will learn how to arrange material in proper sequence "to interest your readers and keep his interest to the end." Above all, students will learn the basic structures for "writing meaningful composition."

In spite of the great amount of time required for writing and re-writing essays in freshman composition, the students perceived the time spent learning to write as profitable because "knowing how to form a paper is important." Also, students indicated that the new freshmen should understand that they could write about things which interest them. "It is a very enjoyable class if you get involved in your paper; really write on the things you like because they're not forcing you to write on a specific
subject," In fact, freshman composition is defined by one student as writing about one's own interests because "that's what writing is all about."

Ten out of nineteen students indicated that incoming freshmen could prepare for freshman composition by knowing and reviewing grammar and punctuation. Furthermore, new students "must start off on the right foot." If they get behind, it is "very tough" to make up. "So stay on top of it." Also, freewriting as much as possible will prepare students for freshman composition, according to several students. For example,"it really opens and lets me see ideas for topics that I probably never would have considered." Then, too, students should "set aside one whole notebook just for your thoughts of the day or things in general." Another thing students should be aware of is that they should not "be afraid to ask for help." That is "why teachers are here." Also, reading "literature, current events, stories--fact and fiction--helps to stimulate mood and ideas." Above all, "just have a good time when writing. Don't make it a bear to sit and have to write a paper because you are, then, not emotionally or mentally into the paper." As one student suggested, "Please yourself with your writing. If you feel that your idea is good, stick with it. Dr. Seward will be flexible."
Students can earn good grades in freshman composition by taking the time necessary to write good themes and by allowing time for revision. In addition, students should have papers done on time, do what is assigned, attend class faithfully, and listen carefully to the instructor.

Students can learn new things about the writing process, such as freewriting, a technique for finding something to say. "When he freewrites, he has all the happenings right in front of him and may know how to deal with them." Matt felt that students could "learn what really is happening in your head when you are trying to write that paper." Another student claimed that even though the composing process was a very organized process, "I don't believe [it] can be comprehended in one quarter." Whether or not the composing process can be comprehended, new freshmen will find the information about the composing process intriguing, concluded most students. "Unless you have already been in contact with the processes that go on before you actually begin writing, I feel this will be interesting for everyone to learn."

Finally, in freshman composition, students can learn about themselves by writing about what interests them. "Writing is being able to express on paper what you feel and think." In addition, students can learn much about themselves by reading their own thoughts written in journals
and "what they write about in freewrites." One student reported that he wrote about "anything that is happening to me, whether my dog died or my car's out of gas."

Another student wrote that "a person can learn more about himself just by going over and really reading the papers they write because I feel that your writing is you."

Students also revealed the importance of not only writing about topics of personal interest but also of using one's own language. "He shouldn't write down the longest words in the dictionary for writing. Students had ought to write just like they talk." Again, another writer suggested that new freshmen write about "innermost thoughts and sharing them with people regardless of their friendship toward you."

Other suggestions for helping students learn about themselves included the following: "writing the truth, being honest when you write," writing papers about oneself and one's own experiences so that writers may learn "a lot they might never have known before."

In conclusion, responded Matt, "this class brings out something in a person you did not know was in there, but there is proof on the paper."

It was interesting to look more closely at the advice of two students: Susan and Matt. Susan is more grammatically oriented, aware and sensitive of the mechanics' component. She struggles and pays close attention to usage. She belongs at one extreme end of the class spectrum.
She believes that new students can prepare for freshman composition by "reviewing your English grammar."

"If you are a new English 113 student, I would advise you to listen to your instructor and follow his advice which he gives you. When you are asked to write a paper, write about something that interests you as an individual, because that is what writing is all about; writing is being able to express on paper what you feel and think. You can prepare for Eng. 113 by reviewing your English grammar. But if you just came out of Eng. 104 with a good grade, you should have no trouble."

Matt, on the other hand, is at the opposite extreme of the class in mechanics and usage. He is fully aware of his difficulties with usage and spelling but doesn't let these problems overwhelm him. His understanding of writing as a creative process seems to have enabled him to fly above the label of "writing failure," a label one might affix to Matt's writing if mechanics, alone, were stressed.

"113 is all about writing, you learn how to write the right way and not just scribble down words on paper, there is not really any way you can really prepare yourself for 113 only knowing your basic English and how to
construct sentences and paragraphs. To earn a good grade in English 113 you must put time and effort into your work. You must show interest to want to learn and show signs of what you have learned in your writing. You must, like me, learn how to compose. Learn what really is happening in your head when you are trying to write that paper. You can also learn about yourself, through your ideas, you can write ideas and thoughts that you may have never really realized you had. It will fascinate you to learn what your brain tells you in the deep hour of sleep. All this will come out some way in your 113 class. You will get a subject that you think you know nothing about and a little while later your brain will start telling you things that have been locked away for so long. Its fascinating. I have had fun and will never forget my experiences."

Evaluation of Class and Research
Seventeen out of twenty students had positive things to say about the class and the research component. Students indicated that they had progressed in writing skills. They believed they had developed the writing competency to handle any other writing assignment. Two of the three negative responses had to do with receiving lower grades than students desired, and one felt that the research self-reports, etc. doubled their work load and interfered with other class work. One other negative response dealt
with the student's desire to write a research paper rather than shorter essays. (Illustrative student comments follow.)

"One day I'd come into class feeling really out of sorts and I would sit down and release all of my frustrations with a pen and a piece of paper."

"I have come to the conclusion that I can write effectively, and with a little help and guidance here and there can write the things other people would want to read."

"Before I came to English 113, I felt uneasy about writing . . . I will leave this class with considerable confidence in my writing."

"The class never got boring, and writing for the first time in my life became a fun thing—not an English teacher flunking you because the writing wasn't concrete or too many structural errors."

"This class has helped me know that I could write. It also helped me to know a little about how my mind works in doing homework papers and how to prepare my papers for class."

"I liked being used as an experiment because that gave us a chance to write our opinion of things on papers, and then somebody could learn or enhance their writing ability or thoughts through these papers."
"The class has really helped me in many ways. Before I didn't know anything about writing, and now I feel that I could sit down and write a decent paper." "This class will help me in my ways. I've learned to write better, and that will let me write more often. I can write for other classes more confidently. The class not only showed how but why and I really liked that."

"It has helped me to organize my ideas, and it has forced me not to think in general terms about anything. I find that I look closer and harder at everything I read and see. So the results of this class have definitely been positive."

"I feel this class has helped me to become a better writer. It has taught me things about the creative thinking process that I didn't know before. I always thought writing was a task; now I find it enjoyable. I'm only sorry it has come and gone so quickly. I did not agree with some of the strict grading of the papers, feeling that one who writes should first please himself before his teacher, but all things considered, it was a rewarding class."

"The choice of topics gave each student a chance to pick out something to his liking and write about it. I didn't think I would like English when I first came here, but it is about my favorite class."
"I felt the research done by Mrs. Epling is an important part of the class because she brings up points in her talks that are subconsciously taken in and reflects in our writing. Her presentations have definitely left a mark on my writing."

"Being part of the experiment is really an experience that will stick with me a long time. Not all college students get a chance to have their papers checked so closely, not only for mistakes but how and why we wrote them."

"I guess to be honest I never thought about our class being used as an experimental class or whatever. But it really never bothered me too much. The grading was hard, and that may be because we were an experimental group. I don't know though. Maybe that's just my imagination."

"The discussions Mrs. Epling presented are interesting and added variety to the class. I guess we as students should feel privileged to be the stars."

"I felt that our class has been the roughest class for me to personally cope with. Having Mrs. Epling here to observe was very interesting, and I enjoyed hearing her ideas along with Dr. Seward's. But I must say it has been challenging for me and agonizing as well."

"Being used as an experiment is something I've never been a part of, and I have found it exciting. The thing
that sticks out most in my mind is the fact that I do go through the stages Mrs. Epling talked about. I run through the thoughts in my mind over and over before any writing begins. I try to have the basic idea for each paragraph in my mind before I put words on the paper. I've always written in this manner, but I never knew it was a unique part of writing before my experiences in this class. I have enjoyed this class and it has broadened my knowledge in writing, and I am looking forward to Comp. II."

Susan focused on essay structure in her closing comment. "This has been an interesting class. I have enjoyed writing my papers. I think that I will start a journal at home after this quarter is over. It would be interesting to see what I would write from day to day. Maybe I'll learn more about myself. In this class I have learned how to organize a paper. This helped me when I had to write a paper in Education 101."

Matt is still trying to resolve for himself the issue of grades. "I liked the class, and I liked the teacher. The experiment was no big hassle. The real bad part about the class was being graded on our ability to write. I know that writing will play a great role in the future of our lives, but being graded, that's bad. It's like going out here and running a race and losing. Did you lose
because you didn't give the race all you have? No, its because you were just not as good as the other runners. That's like writing, one person gets an A, and you get a C. Is it because you didn't put your best foot forward, or didn't give it your best? No it's because you gave it your best, and your best is a C. On the other hand, the other person gave it their best shot, and it was an A. Some people can write and some people can't. I just feel that the grades don't really mean that much. The real thing is giving it all you had and doing the best you can. And if a C is the best I could do, then I am proud as I can be of that C. Don't think I'm getting on you because I'm not. It's just the best you can do is the best you can do."

The end-of-quarter assessments suggest that there is something we can do in the freshman composition classroom. We can provide a climate to facilitate the development or potential creativity in our students. Without neglecting attention to writing skills, we can let students know that we value the intuitive, problem-solving potential, and the reorganization of their life experiences through writing: We can let students know there is merit in their experiences and in their viewpoints (told in their words).
CHAPTER EIGHT

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study focused on what Shaughnessy called an "embarrassingly rudimentary" question: What goes on in the college composition classroom? A review of the literature revealed a paucity of research employing an ethnographic approach in this important writing setting. In spite of the fact that we know little about what goes on and less about what should go on, large numbers of college freshmen find themselves in composition classrooms each year.

Earlier research using the "field" or "case" methodology examined the writing experiences of young children and adolescents. More recently, a few studies have dealt with the writing experiences of college freshmen. While these studies have provided valuable information, many unanswered questions remain. Furthermore, earlier studies have often depicted students writing in contrived settings, composing aloud. Descriptive studies of college students experiencing the writing process in their actual classroom culture are needed so that insights may be drawn for developing theory and for improving strategies in teaching writing to young adults.
This research was undertaken to examine the writing experiences of basic or remedial students in a conventional freshman composition classroom, employing an ethnographic perspective. Specifically, the study investigated and described (1) basic writers as they wrote in freshman composition, (2) components which created the writing climate, (3) student's composing processes, and (4) kinds of writing and occasions for writing occurring naturally in the classroom culture. The aim of the study was to create a classroom picture through the eyes of the collaborating teacher, the students, and the participant observer by description and interpretation so that others could gain, vicariously, a deeper understanding of what goes on in the writing classroom culture.

This eleven-week field study was conducted in a freshman composition classroom of a small college located in Southeastern Ohio where a new composition program was entering its second quarter. Twenty-one of the twenty-four students in the class had successfully completed the remedial basic skills class with special attention to grammar and usage, reading, and paragraph development. The students ranged in ages from eighteen through thirty-seven when Winter Quarter 1980-1981 began.

The participant observer had taught freshman composition for several years before returning to the
classroom as a researcher. The researcher served as helper and on occasion as teacher, but never as a grader of student writing.

Information was gathered from the researcher's notes, questionnaires, audio tapes of students' out-of-class composing, video-tapes of selected class sessions, selected rough drafts, selected writing from basic skills classes, and interviews with teacher and selected students.

Early in the quarter nine students were selected for closer study. The teachers together chose these students for what seemed significant reasons to them. Kay was an average writer, Matt made the most mechanical errors, Susan, Lucile, and Kathleen were strong writers, John was a senior, Chip was a returned veteran, and Mari was the oldest writer. Also, six of the nine students had been in the teachers' basic skills classes, the preceding quarter, enabling rapport to be established more quickly.

While some analysis of the data occurred throughout the quarter, more intensive analysis occurred after the quarter ended and the researcher could spend the time necessary for close examination of the data. Searching for a hidden class agenda, attempting to find meaning, the researcher came to understand the data in terms of developmental class stages: Developmental Stage One, Climate; Developmental Stage Two, Process; and
Developmental Stage Three, Products. The classroom story was narrated in chronological order within each of the class stages. Some interpretations and conclusions were interwoven throughout the presentation of data chapters, but further conclusions will be presented here.

Conclusions

The data obtained from the research setting indicated that a supportive, nurturing writing climate existed in Composition I. As in the earth's soil, plants grow best in rich, fertile ground which provides ingredients necessary for nourishment and for a well-balanced diet, so, too, students learned to write best in a classroom climate which provided elements needed for nurturing students' growth as writers.

Several components interrelated in the freshman composition classroom during the "honeymoon" stage to create a supportive writing climate. For one thing, students' words and understandings were valued. From the first day in class, students behaved like writers—they wrote. They wrote about writing experiences, attitudes, understandings, expectations. In addition these students had what Peter Elbow calls "basic": an interested, enthusiastic audience in the two classroom teachers, an audience that "listened and took their words and meanings seriously."
Another component of the climate was the collaborating teacher's classroom procedures. He reduced stress for the students by presenting material in small units, allowing plenty of time for students to understand before he continued on. Students appeared to have little difficulty following the progression of the class assignments, as they saw themselves achieving as writers in Joe's carefully measured sequencing. Growth was facilitated (as students confronted writing tasks) by eliminating grades from students' work for the first four weeks. Encouraging, motivational comments were written on papers instead.

In addition, Joe was available during twenty-five office hours for individual tutoring and guidance. His availability for the students appeared to flow from a sense of caring about the students and their growth, and students perceived his actions as such. Joe's taking time to teach and being available for individual help created trust in the students. The importance of the teacher's behavior is supported by Withall. "The teacher's behavior is the most important single factor in creating climate in the classroom".  

Near the end of the quarter, Chip wrote about the helpful comments written on his papers: "He is not saying, oh, heck with them. They're here. I'm just a teacher."
This is just another day's work. He acts like he is interested in each one. He is interested in me and he wants me to do well."

Finally, a variety of writing assignments permitted students to express their own "fresh truth" in a climate which fostered feelings of worth and confidence. "A writer of whatever age has to feel full of himself and have a degree of confidence, belief that he has something to say."3

The focus on writing as a creative process, during Developmental Stage Two, helped students to become more aware of their own processes of mind as they produced in their writing "something new." They came to appreciate the phases of searching, seeing, and structuring, related to their writing endeavors. They understood that creativity is both a conscious, intense application of writing skills and a relaxation of conscious control, permitting the new writing to emerge.4

Students appeared to feel more in control of their writing as they realized that they didn't have to get it right the first time. They learned to behave like "real" writers: to revise, rethink, and restructure until they were satisfied. Providing information about writing as a creative process and permitting students to talk about their own psychological patterns appeared to be of great
help in developing writing skills. Susan wrote a letter after the quarter ended: "I am more aware of what's going on upstairs. Like in the middle of the night, I got the idea for my paper on the teachers [a paper written for another class]. The next morning when I woke up it was still clear in my mind."

In Class Developmental Stage Three, with its emphasis on products, students began to more actively construct meaning from their experiences. Beginning with a narrative essay, evaluated and graded in individual conferences, students wrote more elaborate, more complex types of essays: comparison-contrast, division and classification, definition, and cause-effect. These patterns or forms were "new winesacks" for students' new understandings about old life experiences.

The subjects students chose to write about were bound intimately with their out-of-class culture. They wrote about life outside the classroom—past, present and future—in an attempt to discover, to make sense out of their experiences. Students behaved in a manner Aristotle described: "A good writer . . . constantly learning, has a full, well-ordered mind; his memory is charged with living forms; and in it he usually can find what he needs." Students had memories stored, just waiting to be retrieved.
Of the more than one hundred subjects the students wrote about in freshman composition, approximately one-third of the subjects dealt with marker events—occasions which have influenced a person's life such as "unexpected trauma, marriage, divorce, good fortune, illness, an advancement, or failure." Students' writing appeared to be fresh, experience-oriented writing drawn from "a world constructed of experiences derived from elsewhere and other times." Stated another way, the subjects of these student writers were "material not previously interpreted or abstracted by others--his or her eyewitnessing, memories, interviews, experiments, feelings, reflections, and reactions to reading." 

Within the boundaries and constraints of this freshman composition class (designed to teach rhetorical patterns), students felt free to write about subjects which pleased them. As they wrote in their classroom climate, the gap narrowed between subjects in their journals and teacher-sponsored writing.

While writing their essays, students reported on their psychological processes. The data generated from their tapes, interviews, and self-reports indicated that class Developmental Stage Two on process helped students to listen or tune into their own inner psychological processes. Without neglecting class work on organization,
content, diction, and mechanics, the class facilitated
the development of creativity in students. Students
learned the value of the intuitive, problem-solving poten­
tial, the reorganization of life's experiences through
their eyes. Throughout the last four weeks while students
were writing full-length essays, they were asked to report
on their composing processes. Calling attention to process
heightened students' perception of right and left brain
relationship, alerting them to what they might expect
(in light of what other writers had experienced). They
could measure their own writing processes against those
of others.

Can young adults develop writing competency in fresh­
man composition? Yes, if we define "competency" as the abil­
ity to respond to writing assignments in an acceptable
manner. The students learned to write essays with thesis
statements and supporting details, using various rhetor­
ical patterns.

Mechanical problems persisted, however, in the
writing of some students. These problems made our sleep
uneasy, but, on the other hand, the writing problems were
seldom the severe problems which characterized students'
English 104 work; i.e. paucity of ideas, blurred syntax,
and disorganized presentation of ideas. The mechanical
errors made were not ones which blocked meaning, and
students continued to work on these, sometimes "catching them" before handing in papers, by the end of the quarter.

Students gained competence in writing ability as the quarter progressed. Students' comments illustrate this writing growth as they perceived it: "It is easier now to write than it was at the beginning of English 113, because the words seem to flow more easily"; "I think I have improved tremendously from when the course first started"; "I have become more confident in my writing . . . "; "I feel that I have grown. I am able to express myself better and am becoming a better communicator."

Matt assessed his writing growth as follows: "I have learned a lot in 113 about my writing. I think I have progressed. I don't think that I am at my peak writing ability, but if I keep at it I think I can progress. At the beginning of 113 I rated myself at about a 2-1/2 now I think I am at about a 6 with 4 more places to go."

The researcher continued to meet informally with Matt, Susan, Lucile, Kathleen, and Chip throughout the 1981-1982 school year. All of these students were progressing satisfactorily in their college studies. Susan earned an "A" in Composition II and Matt earned a "C." Both reported to me in May 1982 that they could confidently fulfill any writing assignment. Susan kept a journal on the family's vacation trip west, and Matt is now writing songs.
In attempting to answer the question about what goes on in the freshman composition classroom, we see that classroom life cannot be viewed as isolated components, merely. What occurred in this particular writing class was the evolvement of developmental stages, composed of dynamic, interrelated links within each stage. Applying the constructs of stages to classroom reality permitted a way of understanding freshman writers in their setting as the class changed in form.

Furthermore, students expressed a growing confidence in writing ability as they learned to structure their thoughts into the new patterns learned in class. They were in touch with their own inner processes of mind and used their understanding about process to write essays with thesis and support.

Finally, students did produce essays with "substantial and relevant content, organization, clarity, and appropriateness of tone"—characteristics of "good writing," as defined by Gebhardt. An informal follow-up of six of the case studies revealed that these students have continued to write successfully in college classes, as of May, 1982 (more than two years since these remedial or beginning writers entered English 104, September, 1979).

Certainly, a developing attitude of faith in their ability to learn to write seemed to affect writing performances in English 113.
Adult basic writers needed reassurance that they could learn, since they had written only a little or not at all. Matt reported during an interview early in the quarter, "I'm not a very good writer," then later to Dr. Seward during his student conference, "I never thought too much of myself as a writer." Through success in small writing tasks and Joe's encouragement ("You are better than you think you are; you have an excellent style"), Matt came to believe (and subsequently proved in other classes) that he could fulfill, successfully, any writing requirement. Mari, also, reported an upsurge of writing confidence as the quarter progressed. "I see a big difference in me . . . I guess mostly it's confidence."

Kernan reports that students in writing classes which provide opportunities for development of self-confidence (among other things) "will improve significantly in writing performance." Moffett likens a successful composition class to good therapy, declaring that both aim at "clear thinking, effective relating, and satisfactory self-expression."

"Writing well" appeared to be important to the students. They indicated that (1) it was necessary for college success ("All through college you have to do some kind of writing for your classes. It's important to be able to present a paper to help you work toward your
degree whatever it is”; (2) every day life ("It is essential in every day life . . . letters, reports, notes"); and (3) job purposes ("After graduating from college a person needs to know how to write for job purposes").

The value of a safe writing climate which should be created during the first few weeks cannot be overestimated for helping students learn to write well. Students feel inhibited in sharing ideas, experiences, and language if the writing context is threatening and critical. Basic writers, who have had little or no success at writing in their past, must have a "comfort zone," a climate that "reduces threat, alleviates fear, and motivates students to become willing, even enthusiastic participants in their own writing development."

The conclusions drawn from the data of this study cannot be generalized to any other freshman composition class. In this particular class, only three students had not been basic writers (as chance would have it); the other twenty-one students had been remedial students. Another unique feature of this class was that the two teachers had had most of these students in English 104. In addition, the class was a part of a new writing program begun three months earlier. Also, Joe's personality and skills as a teacher influenced writing competency, positively. Finally, the fact that this class was chosen for an
ethnographic study gave it a dimension of excitement and enthusiasm, making it hard to know whether writing outcome would be as encouraging given a different set of circumstances.

Moreover, certain components of the climate effective for this group (such as the measured learning blocks, the slower-paced progression, and the time teacher was available for individual help) might not be as effective for more experienced writers in freshman composition. These strategies worked in this situation because they allowed for students' inadequacies in prior preparation for college work. In addition, directive teaching of writing skills appeared to provide a sense of security for beginning writers. On the other hand, permitting students to select writing topics was a key factor in students' writing "for real." In this classroom, we were a community of learners. After the early uncertainties, the students and Joe seemed dedicated to helping me learn about writing in freshman composition.

Even though these data cannot be generalizable to another class, they can be added to the knowledge base. From this base can come other questions, and possible direction for further research in English education.

Joe wrote some conclusions about his role as collaborator in this study, after the quarter ended.
"I greatly enjoyed working with Christine on this project, and I liked reading her descriptions of my class activities very much. As I told her, 'It's just like watching home movies.'

"I think that working with Christine has made me more aware of my role as teacher and the dynamics of the classroom setting. I have come to think of teaching as more of a dialogue between students and teacher—the learning process is something that involves both student and teacher equally.

"I learned that Martin Buber's 'I—Thou' relationship extends to the classroom and that teaching can never be a monologue.

"My reading of Van Nostrand's Functional Writing opened me up to the idea of writing as process, but Christine's right-brain, left-brain approach to it was new to me. I think I found the discussions of the creative process as stimulating as the class did."

Joe recommended:

"I think that it would be helpful for the observer or observers to be with the teacher of record every day during the observation period, whether there was a scheduled class session or not. In this way, the observer would have a better sense of the teacher's routine and also have a better grasp of the teacher's psychological make up."
At the end of Spring Quarter, 1982, Matt came into the Student Center. "Mrs. Eplingl" he exclaimed. "I wrote a song." [My thoughts went back to the insecure basic writer I had in my class in 1980 who "could not use words."]

"Would you write the words down for me?" I asked.

"Yes," he replied. Matt wrote hurriedly before he left for his 2:00 p.m. class. Below is what I call "Matt's Song": (He calls it "Fairy Tales of You.")

Last night as I laid sleeping, sleeping in my bed
Visions of fairy tales danced through my head
I know that they were fairy tales for they could not be true,
They were only dreams I had, dreams of me and you.

Chorus

Fairy tales, oh fairy tales tell me what you see.
Tell me if I ought to stay or if I ought to leave.
For life is just a fairy tale that happens to come true.
Fairy tales oh, fairy tales, fairy tales of you.

What would you do if I should say to you
My visions of fairy tales were fairy tales of you.
I know that you may never be the one for me
But darling let me try to help you see.

Finally, to conclude this study on how students "word," another young writer wrote about writing in these terms:

"Writing is writing, the letter home, the minutes of the last meeting. In words we try to capture a moment, a series of moments. Finally, we are the words."

Recommendations

First, I recommend that further collaborative studies be done in freshman composition classrooms to determine
the interrelated components which foster writing growth and development.

Second, there is further need for studies on teaching writing as a creative process and the relationship of this process to writing performance.

Third, it is recommended that a study be made of class developmental stages as a perspective for curriculum planning in freshman composition and/or basic writing.

Fourth, additional studies are recommended to determine those factors affecting the writing success of basic writers as compared with non-remedial students in freshman composition.

Finally, I recommend that studies be made of other ways to assess psychological processes at work during the writing stages in freshman composition.
CHAPTER EIGHT - NOTES


9Moffett, p. 143.


12 Moffett, p. 145.


14 Koch and Brazil, p. 1.
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