EDITORS, TEXTBOOKS, AND FRESHMAN ENGLISH
(Because English editors of leading publishing houses play a major role in determining what kinds of books will be available to us, and because they often have a better sense than most of us about what is happening in Freshman English throughout the country, I decided to pose the same four questions to three editors: Jane Ross (Holt, Rinehart, Winston), Richard Welna (Scott, Foresman), and Thomas Gay (John Wiley). Their responses to two of my questions are printed below. Their answers to the remaining two questions will be printed in the spring issue. G.T.)

1. Many people in publishing and teaching seem to feel that the day of the “relevant readers,” the “now textbooks” on women's lib, ecology, race relations has passed, that the vogue is over. Do you agree? If so, how do you account for the sudden passing of a trend that for a short time was so pervasive?

ROSS: I really don't feel that the vogue has passed, only that it has passed as a vogue. We should now see concern for ecology, women, racism, etc. well integrated into the English texts. But that is only part of the answer. In some ways the “now” readers themselves have disappeared — in a poof. The underlying factors are probably the generally conservative political climate, the economy which keeps the job situation tight and means increased administrative control and, in many cases, less classroom freedom. Other reasons? The students have had a good exposure to the “now” subjects through the media and in their high school classes — almost everyone already has a 500 word paper on sexism, the population explosion, etc. And, again possibly because of the economy, many students are insisting, quite as decidedly as they insisted on “relevance,” on basic skills and the mastery of those skills so that they can get satisfactory jobs.

GAY: At their peak, there was an enormous demand and an enormous market for “relevant readers” and black literature anthologies. That has passed. Now, please realize that I am making that statement based on what I know of sales figures — another editor might have different figures — and these figures indicate the market isn’t buying.

There has been an enormous amount of talk about texts on women’s lib, ecology, etc.; however, the market demand is not (or has not been) enormous. A great deal of smoke and few abortions.

Since September, I have spent seven weeks traveling from the east to the west looking for the answer to the decline in popularity of several kinds of books. I have found no answers for all of them; however, the following may say a few things about “relevant readers.”

In 1967-68, the “relevant readers” seemed to offer a new dimension of life to the classroom. It seemed a chance to offer students readings about things going on around them “now” . . . readings that would interest them. I gather, however, that many teachers found that the “now” materials were interesting but that they were not always the best models of good writing. Others found that while the books claimed to be “now” (and perhaps were when the manuscript arrived at the publishing house) they were really “then.”

I am not saying that I would not publish a text along these lines. I would, however, take a very hard look at such a proposal. I believe that an exceptionally fine text even if it’s “relevant” can make it. Any such book less than exceptionally fine, I believe, would be a financial disaster for any publisher.

WELNA: Yes, definitely — especially if we’re talking about texts devoted to specific social issues. For publishers, the problem was first one of timing and ultimately one of economy. Such books could be published quickly, but not quite quickly enough. No sooner did you get your book on race relations out than the kids were into ecology or whatever. And the more general collections dated rapidly too. As one teacher pointed out to me, there’s nothing duller now than a collection of pieces taken from 1970 issues of Saturday Review, Harper’s, Atlantic, etc. But a few of the books published during the “relevance period” that tried to probe beneath surface manifestations to somewhat more enduring questions and that had educational concerns beyond the immediate are still finding a market and will probably continue to do so.

2. What does the near future seem to look like in the field of Freshman English textbooks? Will we be seeing more traditional readers, rhetorics, handbooks? Or do you see other trends, other interests beginning to develop?

ROSS: I’d say there will be a return to more middle of the road readers and rhetorics — but “return” is really not right. The solid handbooks, rhetorics, readers have continued, through the late sixties and early 70’s, to be the large volume sellers. There will be more modern and more contemporary material in all books, but the organization and emphasis will remain as it has been. There will be experimental publishing — with methods, packaging, content. But it will be the financial support from the traditional books that makes this possible.

Trends: More emphasis on skills. More emphasis on literature. Increasing competition from the mass market publishers, a return to “recommended” adoptions at many schools as others go to an “individual” adoption system, more electives, more media, more accountability, more humanization.

GAY: This is a loaded question. I don’t think any editor would want to give away his best thoughts about the market. I do, however, feel that there are several obvious indications of things to come. I say that with reservations as I find the English textbook market to be very capricious at the moment.

I do sense that we will see more traditional anthologies, rhetorics and handbooks. I think, however, that the rhetorics and handbooks will be relatively brief. There seems to be a definite trend to one term courses and instructors in these courses seem to be looking for books of 200-250 pages.

I think that there will be fewer anthologies published. They will, however, remain about the same size. I think their popularity will increase in the mid to late 70’s. I realize that it is fashionable to put them down at the moment; however, they are still one of the best bargains a student can find in a bookstore.
On a recent trip, I noticed in a college bookstore that if the student were to buy all the books required of him for a Freshman English course he would have a book bill of $27.00. Later that day, when I met the teacher, I asked him if he had any difficulty getting his students to buy all the books he required. He replied, "They do complain a great deal but they are only inexpensive paperbacks." When I told him that the entire package cost $27.00 he looked horrified. "But they are only inexpensive paperbacks." Today for 5 or 6 dollars a student can buy an anthology that includes selections that would cost him 20 to 25 dollars if he were to buy the materials separately.

I think we will see Freshman (or remedial) English texts published that follow an individualized or self-paced approach. They will allow the teacher the freedom to work more closely with the student and the books will lead the students through drill.

I believe that we will see less use of film in the Freshman English classroom for the next few years.

WELNA: One of the interesting things about working in Freshman English is that in many ways it's a microcosm of the larger culture. Attitudes and trends that develop in American society are often rather quickly reflected in Freshman English courses. So now it seems to me that we're in for a period of neo-traditionalism in Freshman English, and books of traditional form—handbooks, rhetorics, standard readers—seem to be making something of a comeback. This may be partly a matter of convenience— a student is more likely to bring one or two books to class than twelve or fifteen—and partly a matter of cost: a dozen paperbacks can be pretty expensive, and many colleges now have either formal or informal guidelines on cost of student materials—some as low as ten dollars a course. But mainly I think the return to traditional texts stems from a desire to get back to basic principles of composition and literature, and of course these books do provide systematic instruction. (And in terms of quality, it's in these kinds of books that publishers probably serve English teachers the best. Generally speaking, basic textbooks, intended for the long haul, are very carefully planned and executed.)

Even though the forms of books we publish in the future may be conventional, the content may not be. The changes and innovations of recent years have not been entirely forgotten. Anyone who's been examining handbooks and rhetorics over the last ten or fifteen years has noticed, I'm sure, the influx of a more familiar prose style. Textbooks seem to be in a decline. Views about language, about what's standard and what's not, expressed in conventional textbooks, are changing rapidly. The whole concept of the writing process is altering: writing is not only a communication skill but also a means to self-awareness. So I don't think that a return to more conventional modes of instruction necessarily signals a return to conventional modes of thought.

There are other interests around: films, and beyond that, media composition and a general concept of literacy which encompasses both verbal and nonverbal modes. This sort of thing is very likely to become a part of general college education, although what role English departments will play in it is an open question. On another front, there's modular instruction, not only at the remedial level but on up. But this may create some problems for publishers: a warehouse full of 32-page pamphlets is not exactly a publisher's dream.

Mainly it's difficult to predict the future in Freshman English because English generally, it seems to me, lacks a sense of itself as a discipline. (It's no fresh insight, but I blame the lousy job market as much as anything else.) When 5,000 teachers can't find jobs, the 30,000 or whatever it is who do have jobs begin to wonder about what they're doing.) The Speech people, after being kicked around for a good many years, seem to have found themselves pretty well. They still have public speaking, but now they also have interpersonal communication, and they have rhetorical analysis, which they're applying in insightful ways to all kinds of contemporary utterances, from a used-car salesman's pitch to a presidential address. They're offering students a variety of ways of building bridges between the Self and the Other, and it seems to be going pretty well.

English, particularly at the point at which it impinges on the general college population—that is, Freshman English—has, it seems to me, something unique to offer students, something that no other department in the college or university offers, through the acts of writing and reading. But maybe Freshman English teachers could do a better job of defining it and marketing it.

ON READING PROGRAMS FOR BLACK STUDENTS
Marianna Davis
Benedict College

Curiosity stems from an interest in and an awareness of something that is perceived by the learner as something of value to him. This curiosity has no limits nor is it bound to test scores or teacher grades. In formal educational settings, it is, however, often affected negatively by the attitudes of teachers and the "pygmalion" reactions of school administrators. This is especially descriptive of the teaching and evaluation of reading at the college level.

David Lee, in the current movie Sounder, exemplifies for me this curious learner who is determined to learn how to read. Through their interaction with this young, aggressive black youth, a sensitive white woman and an understanding black teacher introduce David Lee to a form of individualized instruction in reading. One of the obvious social rewards for him is his reading aloud to his family seated around an old wooden kitchen table at night.

In our colleges are many David Lees who yearn for knowledge and understanding, but who suffer at the hands of dispassionate teachers who understand neither nature nor nurture as interacting forces in reading readiness. While reading specialists and/or teachers squabble over which method is better than another, the David Lees become frustrated, thereby reacting strongly against all kinds of reading instruction and testing.

A reading program that emphasizes the extension of ideas and values to decisions and actions is highly desirable for black college students. Here the emphasis is on receiving communication from the printed page and testing the author's message. In this way, the program moves with a philosophy of education which links knowing and doing. To embarrass black college students with "baby ray" word perception techniques and with literal interpretations that totally ignore the black experience is to be unprofessional and guilty of dehumanization. Therefore, until college reading departments address themselves to teaching reading through the skills of high level thinking — unique concept formation, manipulative and experiential vocabulary, critical thinking — black students will continue to rebel against inane reading programs and self-righteous reading teachers. Upon achieving high level thinking skills, not only will students take reading tests without resistance, but will inevitably score high on them.

Finally, any reading program that enrolls black students must recognize that these students are not deficit models; they may be different, but these differences are positive entities that allow for improvement and extension of skills. Many of these differences can

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be described as latent talent and power. A program that seeks to destroy these differences is caught up in the webs of misinformation and will fail before it begins. It should.

ON THE TEACHING OF FRESHMAN ENGLISH:

Notes of a Retrenching Radical

Joan Bausn

York College, CUNY

In my salad days when I was a graduate student, green in judgment and cold in blood but believing the opposite, I taught freshman English with a zeal and devotion measured by a pure attachment to a standard I myself was hoping to attain. I had then a strict sense of supporting correctness, the Institution of my choice, and the entire tradition of Liberal Arts. This period did not last long, but while it did, I taught from a traditional syllabus of my own devising, a kind of generous appropriation of the Harbrace Handbook in substance and form (freshman English then was exclusively a course in composition), gave many C's, and grumbled about recalcitrance while sympathizing with "them" in class. I was dedicated, eager, and hard-selling in my devotion, and I produced interest. But I also produced an intensity that had more to do with ego than with course content. Still, it was a substantial performance, even though the side show at times replaced the main event. And the audience had been receptive — to itself as a class, to college in general, and to Society as the sum of its professional possibilities.

In time I became unhinged. So did Society. My salad days behind, I entered the world of the moveable feast — free choice riches, relevancies, radicalism, and riot-directed reform. I gave courses with no formal attendance, no special structure, no stringent requirements and, had I been able to manage it, would have given no marks. It was at this time that freshman English became a literature and composition course, and the tendency was to emphasize contemporary reading. It was not a matter of succumbing entirely to the tyranny of pseudo-hip. The change was symptomatic rather than principled and designed. Aiding and abetting this disorganized period were publishers who glutted the market with "now" books on rhetoric and cut-and-paste anthologies with stated guarantees to provoke. It was not clear to many students how interdisciplinary studies might cross traditional boundaries and still remain disciplines. I went along with many changes prompted by "the spirit of the age" but the changes made me feel better only; they were not essentially the product of thought about how to stimulate or develop the liberal imagination. Besides, many of my students were clearly unhappy with their new freedoms.

I became further unhinged. I grew less demanding in proportion to my growing sense of frustration at not being able to translate enthusiasm into permanent power, and at receiving at the upper levels majors who did not know how to do original research. In my freshman classes there had been some small epiphanies but too few sustained conversions. My syllabus was for most students without manifest continuity, and the disparity between the open classroom and the voluntary burden of the content proved too great. Besides, my class was no longer a "class."

Hastened by open admission, the "class" had become an arbitrary collection of diverse points of view, backgrounds, expectations, and capabilities: students who came from protective homes and from the streets, from hard-working jobs and from lost-and-sleep sessions, from conservative parochial environments and from so-called creative programs. They came because of domestic pressure, out of boredom, to clear the draft and for specific careers. They came by subway, cycles, buses and cars — at eight in the morning, some of them — sleepy, angry, indifferent pill-popping registrants for the required course — veterans, housewives, delinquents, honors students — different ages, different races, dropping in and dropping out.

I increased conference time to meet the increasing heterogeneity. I extended my already excessive paper notations. I offered to read anything from a topic sentence to a final draft. Still, it was a Wordsworthian time: I grew sadder but wiser and moved toward inheriting a "philosophic mind" by abandoning some joyful but adolescent and unworkable games. In return, I took back some discarded techniques I had been too anxious to use with discretion years before. Recollected in adversity, former modes returned with new power, and I began thinking about methods I had only felt out at an earlier time. In some cases I went way back, fifty years, for example, in the choice of old rhetorics with musty post-Victorian titles such as "A Drillbook and Review in the Essentials of Writing and Speaking" because I found such slim volumes economical in their spare, direct, and memorable little lessons, and because I was coming around to the thought that there were many aspects of thinking and writing that students could not get to themselves by experimental means — in four months time. I also insisted on the purchase of a big dictionary and a hard-bound copy of Roget's Thesaurus. And I began to give introductory lectures on logic and semantics, encouraging participation in these subjects only well into the semester. I did not crumple up entirely, however. I recommended with pleasure two elegant and very readable favorites of mine — Strunk and White's The Elements of Style and Sheridan Baker's The Practical Stylist, and I continued to gather my texts from the newspapers and magazines I happened to have lying around that week. I also eliminated all homework, forcing into the classroom alone all thinking, process and product.

Although I still believe it is proper and desirable to disabuse freshmen of the notion of a magic key to good writing, I also think it is desirable to tell them about certain writing techniques rather than hope for complete success in the "pleasures of discovery." An essential fact about urban education today is that it is much more various in its student population than it was a decade ago, with a freshman class that is generally less well read, less articulate in a sustained sense and less socially secure. For many of these students, attending school voluntarily and on a regular basis may be the only established pattern in their lives. This sense is among the reasons why I have committed unpardonable sins.

I have, for example, stopped animated discussions in which I have been omniscient observer to say with outlandish authority, "No, that is terrible." I have been known to circulate lists of verboten words, and phrases and to proscribe at times the use of figurative language, the personal pronoun, or Latinize. I have been heard to state on occasion that a piece of writing was poor, rather than elicit that response from the class, and I have also made arbitrary and ludicrous announcements that paragraphs can develop in X-number of ways. But I have never to my knowledge ever insisted that good writing be a particular mode, or that a particular literary interpretation was correct.

I have, however, compelled attention to problems in semantics and logic, to the sound and sense of words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs, designing the form, hearing out the rhythm, pushing to the limits of the writing clinic all kinds of analysis, committing even the ultimate Wordsworthian heresy of murdering to dissect. Admittedly, this is an unreal, frustrating, and inhibiting practice, but freshman English is the only class that can tolerate this kind of laboratory work, and if the anatomy lesson is not learned here, it may never be learned.

I have thus moved against the current of the time, and I think that such a conservative move is desirable at this time. It does not mean going from freedom to pedantry, from learning-as-participation to teaching-as-lecture. It does mean reconsidering some old devices, unthinkingly discarded, along with new ones that have proved valid. The lecture-statement, for example, can be effective if it is given with confidence, with respect for the students who may need this direction, and with manifest passion for the power of language and for the beauty of the well-wrought communication.

Rules and old-fashioned procedures should not be abandoned simply because they have fallen into disreputable hands: an idea cannot be held responsible for the various practitioners who take it up. Allowing as much time as necessary for self-discovery is an expense that no one can now afford. Political pressures, social unrest and pedagogical variety are all creating demands for immediate results, and while it is unfortunate that academic life should be so expedient in its conception, the fact is that it is so, and "the world" itself can no longer entertain the luxury of educating a generation into sweetness and light — slowly. Retrenchment, therefore, may be the most
argue, is partially the fault of a profession that does not yet have its own house in order; that is, freshman composition is not held together by anything resembling a unified theory. On the other hand, one could effectively argue that there should be no standardized curriculum, i.e., “different strokes for different folks.”

This situation, then, takes us to the heart of our concern: how can anyone—even the College Board with all its resources—devise an objective exam that is universally equivalent to a course in which almost anything can happen and obviously does? Certainly we do not defend freshmen who do not write very well or a composition course that does not get them to write much better; however, we surely must pay close attention to any exam that claims to be the equivalent of some unknown quantity!

Since freshman composition consumes the energies of a large portion of my colleagues in the community colleges, may I suggest the following recommendations about equivalency testing in freshman composition:
1. Seek a strong voice in setting guidelines for equivalency testing on your campus.
2. If you must accept CLEP, give preference to the Subject Exam, and do not accept the General Exam under any circumstances.
3. Do not settle for a passing score below the 50th percentile.
4. Demand the optional essay, and grade it yourself.
5. Examine the complete test yourself. Be sure that it is generally equivalent to the course as it is taught on your campus.
6. Call for the profession to move toward establishing basic and generally accepted objectives in freshman composition.

TEACHING MINORITY STUDENTS: SOME ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

William D. Luch

Rutgers University (Camden)

I read Ms. Susan Koprowski’s article in the last issue of Freshman English News with great interest. I would like to comment on her article and offer a few ideas and suggestions of my own.

Ms. Koprowski says that attitude is important in teaching a successful remedial freshman English course for minority students. This is true, but I have found that most instructors who lack a proper attitude for teaching such courses lack the attitude because they really do not know how to teach the course. There is no way you can really “fake” it in a remedial course, and if you are not sure of your own capabilities then you enter the classroom with a defensive attitude. Teaching remedial English is no easy task and few English teachers are really trained and prepared for what they encounter in the classroom. And teaching remedial English to minority students is even more demanding because of the additional problems of culture and language differences.

The instructor’s attitude and what the course is go together, with each influencing the other. That is, the instructor’s attitude will to a certain extent influence what the course is while in turn what the course is will influence the instructor’s attitude. The instructor who sees the course as just the drudgery of teaching basic grammar obviously adopts a certain attitude. The instructor who views the course as a challenge adopts an entirely different attitude. Certainly the content of each course will be different. Instructors who see remedial English as a true test of their ability to do some real nuts-and-bolts teaching enter the classroom with a confidence and attitude that is quickly communicated to the students.

Remedial English is indeed a survival course for minority students, but to ask the students at the beginning of the course to spell out what they need is certainly putting the cart before the horse. How can the students know what they need? They have little notion of what demands will be made on them in their other courses during the years they will be in college. It is the responsibility of the instructor to create a course that will meet the immediate and future welfare needs of the students. And needs vary from college to college. For example, I must make sure that students who take my remedial course learn how to write a three-hour essay examination, the written kind and length of final examination given at my school. The course should have clearly stated objectives which should be explained to the students at the beginning of the course. Frequently during the course students should be reminded of these objectives and told whether they are making progress towards achieving them.

Ms. Koprowski is correct in suggesting that the instructor must be consistent and demanding. To this I will add that the instructor must always be fair. Any rules made for the course must be enforced for everyone in the course. The great temptation is to “let it go this time” and thus avoid a painful confrontation. I have found it helpful to do as Ms. Koprowski suggested and write up all the rules for the course and then make sure every student has a copy and understands them. I have also found it useful to keep detailed records on each student’s academic performance, class attendance, and any tardiness. (“But I couldn’t have been absent that many times.” “But I thought I handed in those three themes.”) A clearly defined course with clearly defined rules that are fairly and consistently enforced helps both the students and the instructor do their jobs.

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February, 1973 220 pages (paper) $4.95

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Address your requests for examination copies to: Jane Ross, Editor—English Language and Linguistics
real problem of communication because of differences in cultural backgrounds and when he is the victim of the old student con game. This is precisely the point where "Liberal Guilt" can neutralize an instructor's effectiveness. Rather than pursue a problem in order to determine if there is a real lack of communication, too many instructors assume that the fault is theirs because they are white and do not understand the Black experience. Never leave the basic issue unspoken. If something is bothering you bring it out in the open before the class. You will learn something about your students and they will learn something about you. If you believe you are being conned then say so. The lack of communication may not be your fault but the student's.

I must grade my course, and I have always been careful to grade each student, black, white, Puerto Rican, on the same basis. Since the students are told what they are expected to do in the course, and since I frequently tell them how they are progressing, by the end of the course each student has a good idea of what his grade will be. Grading is always difficult, but no one is helped when a minority student is passed along by a sympathetic white instructor in order to save the student from the ghetto. Ultimately the student will have to pay for the instructor's misguided kindness.

Grading in the remedial course raises another problem. Most minority students in remedial programs simply do not believe that an instructor will fail them. After all, frequently throughout their years in school they had been passed every year despite frequent absences, low test marks, and missed assignments. Why should college be any different? Students must always be reminded that they can indeed fall in college and that grades do count. The white instructor who passes a student for other than academic reasons does that student no favor since instructors in other departments may not share the English instructor's sympathies.

Freshman English is a survival course for minority students. It is a course that gives them immediately needed skills, and it is the one course that can directly influence their college career almost at once. But just as the course may be something of a shock for the students when they first encounter it, it may also be something of a shock for the instructor who teaches it. Perhaps others will comment on the issues raised by Ms. Koprowski, and I hope they will. But I also hope that others will comment on the background and training of the instructors who currently teach the remedial courses in colleges around the country.

THE TEXAS CONFERENCE ON PLACEMENT, EXEMPTION, AND CREDIT IN ENGLISH

Forrest D. Burt
Texas A&M University
This conference - The Texas A&M University Conference on Texas Programs of Placement, Exemption, and Credit in English, November 16-17, 1972 - was a start in the conferring that needs to happen between test-users, test-makers, and test-policy-makers. Of these three units, the professor, the psychometrician, the administrator, "the professor is the key to the program" - the theme of the Texas Conference. With the present interest level, our plans are to publish the proceedings of the conference in the spring of 1973.

Individualized instruction, accountability, real learning instead of mere schooling, performance objectives - all that is potentially good in these major concerns, which do seem to lie behind the present interest in placement, exemption, and credit in English, will never be realized unless the professor is the key to the entire program. Ultimately, the public, the legislators, the administrators, the tuition-paying parents - all the interested parties - will lose, cheated by a short-sighted, short-term solution that promises superficial efficiency, unless the professor is kept the key to the program. These conclusions were reached by the approximately sixty-five delegates (department chairman, directors of freshman English, test specialists, college and university administrators) who represented over thirty Texas colleges and universities (state schools, church and private schools, community colleges).

The delegates reported that at approximately 40-60% of the schools represented at the Conference, the English professor, the specialist in composition and communication, language and literature, is not looked upon as the key to the program. At these schools the professor feels a lack of confidence in the tests that are actually in use at his school.

Sectional meetings explored the professor's role in choosing a test, using a test, and setting policy concerning tests. In choosing a test, the delegates felt, the professor should be sure the test meets our course objectives; examine the content carefully to assure ourselves that it does in fact test the course as we define it; be sure that the test has been validated by "exit-tests" in our own courses; and be sure that all possible care is taken to preserve the security of that test. In using the test, the delegates felt, the professor should consider the value of tests in motivating high school students, providing entering freshmen with a sense of accomplishment at the beginning of their college career, and challenging superior students in college with new material - students who otherwise would be bored in courses that provide knowledge they already have. He should determine the cut-off scores by examining the tests carefully (as one delegate said, "We do not know our tests well enough to trust them"); and by making use of statistical information on future achievement probability. He should understand that the same test can be used for placement, exemption, and credit only if supplemented by writing samples and offer credit in advanced courses in only very exceptional cases. Above all, in using tests, the English professor should stress the fact that placement, exemption and credit is for the truly gifted and talented student who has mastered content and skills far beyond that of the average college student. In determining policy, the delegates felt, the professor should have the authority for deciding which tests to use, whether national tests should be used, and what criteria should be used and should stress the importance of never depending solely upon objective tests for placement, exemption, and credit - some writing sample and other local supplementation should be used.

The English-professor delegates had the general feeling that a freshman rhetoric course which aims to teach writing may for the great bulk of the students have value that we would have difficulty proving, measuring, testing - but it is, nonetheless, significant. Students who are not among the truly gifted - far above the average student in composition and communication skills - can clearly benefit from such a course.

Today, society seems to be saying to higher education, according to the luncheon speaker, Mr. John O'Hearn, Southwestern CEBB Director, "We value what you are doing. We question the way in which you are doing it... Teach as much as you are able to teach as soon and as rapidly as you are able... And do not teach anything with the same content-mix more than once. Rede the basic concept to knock off rust, if you must, but do not repeat the course." "Our task," he said, "is not to be constrained by time, but to be excited by talent. To recognize it, nurture it, encourage it whenever and wherever it is found, and to reward it in the coin of the academic realm." Hopefully the Texas Conference, other conferences on this subject, publications of the proceedings of various meetings on the subject, and a growing concern among specialists in English - the discipline in which the greatest number of credits are granted - all will lead to an understanding of the crucial importance of the "professor becoming the key to the entire program of placement, exemption, and credit in English."

SUBSCRIPTION BLANK ON PAGE 12

GIVE ONE TO A FRIEND
FRESHMAN WRITING PROGRAMS AT LEHMAN COLLEGE
Deborah Tannen Patrascu
Elizabeth Stone

Lehman College, CUNY

It used to be that every Freshman English grammar book devoted several pages at least to the issue of "fine writing." In their best plain-dealing prose, the rhetoricians warned against the dangers of the overworded, the excessive-ly mauve. At Herbert H. Lehman College (CUNY), the advent of Open Admissions has made such warnings gratuitous. Open Admission students cannot write correctly or clearly; overwriting is a sin they have not yet imagined, and they will not imagine it until they have mastered the fundamentals of grammar, and the concept of the essay, the paragraph and the sentence.

Faced with students suffering such severe writing deficiencies, the English faculty has had to redefine its methods, its goals, and its orientation. There is no use in filling the trough with water if the horse is down the road. Changes in curriculum and course design, some so new as to be, at this writing, unimplemented, chart the responses of a faculty interested in fulfilling the needs of a changing student body.

Originally, the Lehman English Department offered two semesters of required English: one to be taken in the freshman, and a second in the sophomore year. Unfortunately, just as Open Admissions was beginning, the English Department was forced to abandon the second term. At the same time, the SEBK Program — a special admission program for educationally disadvantaged students — established two noncredit remedial writing courses as well as an intensive equivalent of the freshman English course for its own students. However, since one term of English did not adequately prepare most Open Admissions students for the kind of writing they would have to do in college, they, too, were soon enrolling in the remedial courses. This meant that from the inception of Open Admissions through the present, an incoming student, unless he were among the 20% exempted, could be placed in one of several courses. The determining factor was his performance on the American College Test (ACT):

1) English 101 (3 credits, 3 hours). The standard course, with a maximum enrollment of 25, stresses conventional rhetorical forms and generally includes an introduction to literary terms. 40% are placed here.

2) English 100 (3 credits, 4 hours). In this concentrated course, taught by the SEEK-Academic Skills (ACS) Department, enrollment is limited to 20. The course stresses no single discipline in its selection of readings; in writing, conventional rhetorical forms are emphasized. 25% are placed here.

3) English 098 (no credits, 4 hours). The course, taught by ACS, stresses grammar and "voice." Students in this course are keenly resistant to writing. Early assignments focus on the journal and "free writing"; the belief is that students can learn to feel comfortable with writing if they can first use it as a tool for self-exploration and self-expression. By the term's end, students are expected to write a 300-word essay focused on some object outside of themselves. 15% are placed here.

4) A small number of students enroll in English As-Second-Language (ESL) courses.

Approximately 40% of those who complete English 098 proceed directly to English 100; the remaining 60% are assigned to English 099, a course which reinforces English 098, and concentrates heavily on grammar.

This program has met with some success. In fact, many students have gone on to passing work or better in their upper-division courses. Generally, however, faculty and students agreed that the program was not yet sufficient. The teachers of English 101 found that they were no longer able to assume their students had a minimum competence in writing. They, too, felt the need to foster the discovery of "voice" before teaching rhetorical forms, exposition, and critical thinking. All agreed that their students needed more than one semester of Freshman English. Furthermore, students who had been exempted from Freshman English seem unable to cope, at least initially, with writing assignments in upper-division courses. Teachers in the Academic Skills Department felt that students in English 100 also needed another term, and that students in English 098/099 might be motivated to move at a quicker pace if the courses were awarded credit. Finally, the ACS faculty was convinced that student writing problems were so diverse that a modular course would be preferable to what existed, and that classroom activity could well be augmented by intensive work in a Writing Laboratory. All of these considerations have led to the design of the sequence we expect to inaugurate next September. When the new program goes into effect, no student will be exempted altogether, and placement will be determined by a writing sample to be read by the English and ACS faculty.

1) English 102 (3 credits, 3 hours). With a maximum enrollment of 25, this will be a fairly conventional rhetoric course stressing the student's response to written material; term paper techniques will be taught. In order to pass the course, students will be required to pass an English Department proficiency exam. Only a small percentage of students will initially be placed in this course.

2) English 101 (3 credits, 3 hours). With a "voice" course. Its ultimate intention is to teach students to write correctly and to develop an idea fully. Upon successful completion of English 101, students will enroll in English 102.

3) ACS 020 (3 credits, 4 hours). This course, with a maximum enrollment of 15, will be for those students who need more intensive work to achieve the goals of English 101.

Frequent teacher-student conferences will be an integral part of the course. Upon successful completion of ACS 020, students will enroll in English 102.

4) ACS 015 (2 credits, 6 hours). This course, with a maximum enrollment of 15, will have 4 classroom hours and 2 Writing Lab hours per week. Work will be divided into three modules: the narrative paragraph, the expository paragraph, and the expository essay. No student will receive credit until he has successfully completed all three modules. Students repeating any individual module will do so in the Writing Lab alone rather than returning to the classroom. Upon successful completion of ACS 015, students will enroll in ACS 020.

We are confident that the new sequence of courses, combined with our greater control in placing students, will give us the flexibility necessary to fulfill the needs of students who enter Lehman with varying levels of writing skill. Perhaps in time "fine writing" will again become one of our concerns.

ON TWO WRITING TEXTS, ENGLISH PEAS, AND A FENCE FOR MY GARDEN
Jim W. Corder
Texas Christian University

Today is Tuesday, January 16. It is the second day of registration for the spring term. In two days, classes will commence. By this weekend, if I'm to follow the advice of my father, the suggestions of the county agricultural agent, and the wisdom of the squirrels, I must have ground broken in the garden; it's time to plant English peas. And I haven't finished the garden fence. I haven't started the fence.

I can explain this, though not to the salvation of my soul. I haven't yet decided about the propriety of fences, and may never. In my mind I see two gardens. One is fenced and clean and entire, self-contained, aspiring to and sometimes attaining a microcosmic analog of order; it has good, usable pathways and straight furrows and probably a septet of flowers near one path; seed-time and bloom-time are noted in my journal. Together with common and proper names for each plant, the origin of each plant, soil conditions, and treatments rendered to soil and plant. The other garden is a helter-skelter sort of thing, you guess what each furrow will bring, and you trust the soil to produce without treatment. At one side you can skitter through the hedge and visit with the dog next door, and at the back along the alley where the remnant of the old paling fence is you can snake through the holes where the palings have fallen. You've the whole garden, that's nearer the second than the first, but I admire both mightily.

Lou Kelly's From Dialogue to Discourse: An
Open Approach (paper, Scott, Foresman and Company, 1972, 571 pp.) and Jacqueline Berk's Twenty Questions for the Writer, A Rhetoric with Readings (paper, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1972, 528 pp.) are about as far apart as two texts for composition courses can get. Oh, well, that's probably not true: who knows how far apart composition teachers can get? Kelly's text describes itself as open; Burke's is a structured system. Both are admirable and insufficient.

Intended to be complete and self-contained, Berk's Twenty Questions for the Writer is committed to "the basic requirements of completeness, simplicity of procedure, and flexibility." It includes readings, writing guidance and suggested assignments, practice exercises, instructions on research procedure and the term paper, two chapters on language, and a "review of rhetorical principles involving the word, the sentence, and the paragraph." The core of the book is a series of twenty relatively-short chapters arranged "roughly in an order of increasing complexity." Each chapter is presented in the form of a question: "The writer invariably begins with a question," Berk observes in the Preface; "the book is rooted in this observation and the chapters are titled accordingly." Chapter 4, "How is X Made or Done?" may illustrate the nature of these core chapters. The question, "How is X made or done?" Berk says, invites process analysis. The opening pages of the chapter discuss the problems of organization and flow, using two short essays as examples. There follow sections on historical-social process, technical-natural process, and intellectual process, each with some guidance and one or more short selections for illustration. The chapter closes with suggested writing assignments. If not typical, the chapter may indicate the quality and direction of the twenty core chapters. Combining some rhetorical analysis, composition guidance, and readings, the twenty chapters discuss, illustrate, and elicit various forms of narrative, exploratory, descriptive, analytical, and argumentative discourse. Enveloping the central twenty chapters are an introduction that includes discussion of the qualities of good writing and of the problems of finding a subject, and seven final chapters, two on research writing, one on organization, one on the limits of language, and one each of words, sentences, and paragraphs. (I expect I should report, along the way, that through an error in binding pages 405-436 have been repeated and pages 437-469 have been omitted from my copy.) Berk, it seems fair to say, wishes to aid the student in the acquisition of skills and see the possibility of freedom as best realized in the accumulation of a repertory of capacities. It is a good book, well designed, thoughtful, the tools all there, and any student who worked his way through the system would be well fitted, enlarged. A teacher who uses the text seriously will not be left in doubt whether or not there is a subject matter for freshman English.

Kelly's From Dialogue to Discourse starts at the other end of the world. Described on the cover as "an open approach," the book is modern in its orientation (most of its illustrative readings are student selections; of those that are not, 90 per cent are from twentithcentury writers), and quite unlike other textbooks in appearance. In one respect, at least, it may fail the conservation-minded: of its first 194 pages, 95 pages have print on half or less of the page. The rest is blank white space. Wishing to be free of systems, From Dialogue to Discourse does not instruct; it exhibits, urges, suggests, confides, and elicits confidence. Kelly's primary assumption: "To begin with you is to affirm your existence. You are. Now. A thinking, feeling human being who brings to every experience, including college, a valuable background of previous experience." The book, presumably, takes its shape from that premise:

Here the content of the course develops from the diverse and unique concerns of all the diverse and unique human beings in the group. And the class finds its structure in the dialogues that occur as each person responds to what other persons say.

For that is the primary purpose of language, the human purpose for which human speech evolved, sharing experience and responding to others.

When that purpose motivates a class, developing competence will not be drudgery. Instead, putting words together to say what you think and feel will be a joy, even as it was when first you learned to talk.

The first 194 pages of the book are an amplification of these pages; the pages often appear to be sequences of observations, notions, urgings, the kind of thing one might often say in class or in conference but seldom commit to print. Three longish sections follow, one a collection of student writing, one a section on style, the last a section on copyreading. A short section at the first of the book (pp. 2-7) is an exhortation to openness, an effort to acquaint the student with the open classroom. A longer section at the end (pp. 347-62) amplifies the discussion for the teacher. From Dialogue to Discourse is a thoughtful book, obviously the product of much energy and compassion, an urgent attempt to get students to trust and value themselves as speakers.

I admire both the gardens that I see in my mind. There is great ease and assurance and efficiency in the complete, well-sworn garden; there is inordinate delight in the helterskelter garden that lets one enjoy the dirt and stop and look and examine rocks. I admire both of these books. Both, after their fashion, are thorough and complete. It seems perfectly clear that each was produced by a master teacher who works well from good premises. I stay a little puzzled about the gardens in my mind, sometimes wishing I could choose and put an end to it. But I'm not puzzled about the books.

I take it as almost an article of faith that the better an educational idea is and the more enthusiastic its concealer is, the more likely the idea is to be corrupted by followers. Both of these are good and interesting books, produced by good and interesting teachers. Sooner or later, however, teachers who take Berk's book in utter seriousness and set out to emulate its whole spirit and perform all its tasks must recognize the possibility that they will turn into pinch-mouthed English teachers, system-and probably bowelled. Sooner or later, teachers who take Kelly's book in utter seriousness must descend to free-flight bull sessions, however earnest. I don't believe that the authors' enthusiasms will last for users.

And I'm distrustful of single visions. Both books are right, and both books are wrong. Neither is sufficient. Berk's book, a closed system aspiring to the openness of freedom through the acquisition of tools and capacities, is overloaded, staggeringly thorough, and will almost inevitably draw teacher and student alike to its system rather than to the freedom that is its goal. A student who tried to work his way through all of the suggested assignments in Twenty Questions would have done by the weary end some 60 exercises and some 110 essays. That's one trouble with systems: one gets to wanting them to be complete, and can't leave anything out. Over on the other hand, Kelly invites a student to spend an unholy sum of time upon himself and leave all earth's other marvels waiting. Kelly's urgency and the need to be close to the students, moreover, sometimes evinctuates in a style that leaves me inclined to puke. She sometimes sinks to platitudes ("don't let a temporary failure crease despair"), often thinks writing is easy if one simply learns to be sincere, seems frequently more interested in social work than in composition ("Bringing the realities of your own life into the classroom may be for you a new concept of teaching and learning."); is often quintly biblical ("putting words together ... will be a joy even as it was when first you learned to talk"), and sometimes so cute I bog up ("sit together in friendly little groups," "Please allow me one demand: mix a little joy with whatever you share").

Meanwhile, my garden waits, the fence undone. In time I hope it has a good fence, painted, clean walks, bordered, straight furrows, and well-mixed fertilizer. I'm pretty sure that the corn and okra and all will grow more safely and more reliably in a well-guarded, well-tended garden. But for now, I've got to plant the damn English peas. The seeds must be in the ground. It's growing time.
In the next issue...

William Irmscher writes about his years as editor of the CCC Journal

Walker Gibson reviews Peter Elbow's Writing without Teachers

Announcement of a new CLEP test for Freshman English

What Freshman English is like in seven southern states

Robert Bain reviews Donald Hall's Writing Well

William Carpenter describes how TA's are trained at Stony Brook

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