

THROBBING MINDS

The Weber state College Writing center Newsletter November 1989

Editor's Column

Faster than a laser printer, smarter than a PhD, able to leap tall fragments in a single bound--it's a dictionary, it's a Harbrace--it's SUPERTUTOR!

As a writing assistant, I think, "Just because I am getting paid four dollars an hour it is my beholden duty to seek out and destroy hyperbole wherever I find it, to chain up the dangling participle, and to promote truth, error-free writing, and the Weber way!" I don't think I am alone. Perhaps some of you are not as egotistical as I am, but don't we all have the desire to see students leave our tutorials with a perfect comprehension of splices, fragments, and "FANBOYS?" And it can be somewhat demoralizing when a student leaves just as bewildered as when he came in.

I find it helpful to remember that I can take neither all the credit nor all the blame. Learning is an incremental process and, while we may not always feel successful, we must remember that our small contribution will be integrated into the student's general education.

Learning any subject is like a number line, with complete obtuseness at 1 and full comprehension at 10. We tutor students at all points on the line. While occasionally we get students at 1 or 2, usually we help students who are somewhere between 5 and 8. Only rarely do we see someone when the epiphany comes at number 10, and when we do, it's exciting, but often it is only then that we feel successful. Remember, you are successful if you help anyone take a step forward, no matter where on the number line it occurs.

Go forward, Supertutor, with new resolve, confident in your ability to earn \$4.00 an hour, eager to enrich the lives and aid in the education of others.

I am the autumnal sun,
With autumn gales my race is run;
When will the hazel put forth its flowers,
Or the grape ripen under my bowers?
When will the harvest or the hunter's moon
Turn my midnight into mid-noon?
I am all sere and yellow,
And to my core mellow.
The mast is dropping within my woods,
The winter is lurking within my moods,
And the rustling of the withered leaf
Is the constant music of my grief...

--Henry David Thoreau

Welcome to our new writing assistants for the
1989-1990 year!

Luana Au	Sheri Jensen
Monica Blume	Marion Pust
Neil Hollands	Kim Visser

Successful Business Writing "Get to the Point and Shut Up"

by Ken Barlow

Alan Hanline, Management Trainer at Thiokol Corporation, spoke to Weber State College students and faculty Thursday addressing the importance of crisp clean, and concise writing in the marketplace.

Why do so many new college graduates fail on the job? How come nobody, including potential employers, reads your resume, memos or letters? It all begins with the basics--your ability to write. A misspelled word can be "a kiss of death," and so can a college graduate vocabulary.

Too often people write to impress others with their scholarly word-stock, rather than to express ideas that can be easily understood. Did you know that the **Wall Street Journal** is written only on the 10th grade level? The **Ogden Standard Examiner** on the 8th? The **Holy Bible** on the 7th? So, why do so many people insist on writing on the college graduate level? Throw away your thesaurus, stop searching for those "fancy-pants" words that cause your readers to get "lost in the fog" of what you are trying to say. Hanline advised that "It's not the big words that successful businesses are looking for."

Hanline presented Robert Gunning's "Fog Index Formula" for calculating the reading level for writing. Using the formula to self-edit your own writing will ensure that your paper gets read, or that a potential boss doesn't toss your resume into the garbage with the other 85 percent.

While serving as the Director of Curriculum at Clearfield Job Corp in the 1960's, Hanline used Gunning's techniques to standardize the center's vocational training program. It was soon adopted by every Job Corp Center in the United States.

"Ten Guidelines for Clear Business Writing" best summarizes the point of Hanline's eye-opening message:

1. Get your key ideas up front.
2. Use lists as often as possible.
3. Keep your sentences short (15-20 words).
4. Keep your paragraphs short (3-6 sentences).
5. Cut down on 3-syllable words.
6. Write like you talk.
7. Prefer the simple to the complex.
 - a. Use words with precise meaning.
9. Get to the point and shut up.
10. Write to express ... not to impress.

"There's no need to show off, busting your gut to find great big words," Hanline said. It's not "ten pound pages and fancy words" that make writing successful. It's simple and clear language that businesses are using to thrive in today's competitive world. They want to make money as well as save money. If you can show them that you know how to write, then "You're waving a red flag" that says to your prospective employer, "I know how to save you money."

Gunning's formula:

1. Select a sample of writing (report, memo, or letter) that contains at least 100 words. The larger the sample, the more reliable the results.
2. Calculate the average sentence length.
 - First count the words and sentences,
 - Then divide the total number or words by the total number of sentences.

3. Calculate the % of three or more syllable words.
 -DO NOT count words that are capitalized or combinations of short easy words (e.g. paperwork, overtime) or words that use short suffixes (e.g. ed, ly, es, ing) to form the third syllable.
 -Divide the total number of multi-syllable words by the total number of words.
4. Add the two factors calculated above.
 -Multiply by 0.4
5. The product is the minimum grade level that a person must have to accurately read your writing sample.

The

Eighties America the Beautiful
 Sat back into a flabby rocking chair
 In the autumn afternoon of our achievement.
 Sometime in our somnolence
 A decade flipped past
 Like the pages of a reeking epic,
 Big but bland,
 Too easily chewed and swallowed-
 It sits sourly on our stomachs indigesting.

Air-conditioned and reclined
 We eased down into our theater
 To hear the old vaudevillian tell his jokes.
 And when he grinned infectiously
 At all the rancid punchlines
 We succumbed like a laugh track to the mania,
 Stupid as hot air.

Two-hundred-fiftymillion social climbers
 Knocking each other off a mountainside;
 Kicking with knee-jerkpride;
 Pushing with arms-length morality;
 Throwing rocks at those below
 Clawing claustrophobically upward;
 Sucking the thin air of this cliff face
 We would never wish to have a top.

In devolutionary haze
 We've worshipped at an altar
 Made of impudent cliches
 And climbed onto a carousel
 Advertised in a thousand points of neon.
 We ride endlessly on our false steeds,
 Deafened by a callopie of our own creating,
 Ignoring the brass rings that would
 Slow and stop
 The circling of this unmarry-go-round-
 Waiting for the glitz
 Of gold rings that aren't coming.

--Neil Hollands

Congratulations!

Weight: about 1/2 oz.
 Length: 11 1/2 inches
 Parents: Mr. and Mrs Write N. Center
 Name: UNKNOWN

Our newsletter is a fresh new arrival, but we need a new name. Each writing assistant is requested (must I say required?) to submit two suggestions for a name to Diane. The best name will be chosen, and the winner treated to dinner at Berconi's Italian Restaurant (paid for BY the winner, of course). Please hand in your submissions by Nov. 30th.

METAPHOR

by Karen Cobb

Met'-a-phor:n A figure of speech in which a word denoting one subject or idea is used in place of another to suggest a likeness between them.

Met'-a-phor: n. The WSC student literary journal containing fiction, non-fiction, and poetry selections that are produced and written by the students at Weber State College.

This year the Metaphor staff is once again anxious to receive many pieces of poetry, fiction, and non-fiction works that WSC students contribute.

The unique characteristic of the Metaphor is that it contains the writings of students who either love to write or have the desire to publish their work.

The journal is free of charge and it is distributed to any student who is interested in escaping into a journal full of imaginative adventures or emotional thought-provoking personal experiences. Not only do interested students on campus receive a copy, but the Metaphor is also distributed to all colleges and universities in Utah, junior and senior high schools, public and city libraries, hospitals, and rest homes.

The creation and distribution of the Metaphor is funded by the Utah Arts Council, the National Endowment for the Humanities, Washington, D.C., and the Associated Students of Weber State College.

The deadline for submissions will be upon us before we know it. All entries must be submitted on or before Friday, January 26, 1990 in the English Department, Room 314.

FYI

--National Undergraduate Literature Conference
 Submission deadline: February 5, 1990
 Submit to Dr. Vause

--2nd North American Interdisciplinary Wilderness Conference
 Submission deadline: December 15, 1989
 Submit to Dr. Vause

--Creative Writing Contest
 Submission deadline: February 16, 1990

--Metaphor Week November 13-17