
wordworks

a student publication
weber state university writing center

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From the Editor . . .

***Lib Thatcher**

Writing Assistant, Editor

My daughter is four years old, and recently I have been interested in teaching her to love reading and writing. From my work in the Writing Center, I have learned that developing good writing skills is essential to developing good thinking skills. Donald H. Graves, in his book Writing: Teachers and Children at Work, discusses how children learn to write. He reminds us that most elementary school teachers believe "children aren't supposed to be able to write unless they can read." But Graves believes that children should learn to write as they learn to read.

I think if we understand how children learn to write, we will better understand the problems of the college student. Perhaps we need to "re-teach" our college students how to write to enable them to write better. (I think the WAC program is one way to accomplish this.)

This month's column will be devoted to excerpts from Grave's book. And as I teach my daughter to "write from the start," I'll report on her progress. (I'll let you know how it all turns out in about sixteen years.)

Excerpts from Writing:

Teachers and Children at Work

***Donald Graves**

Children want to write. They want to write the first day they attend school. This is no accident. Before they go to school they mark up the walls, pavements, newspapers with crayons, chalk, pens or pencils—anything that makes a mark. The child's marks say "I am."

"No, you aren't," say most school approaches to the teaching of writing. We ignore the child's urge to show what he knows. Instead, we take the control away from children and place unnecessary road blocks in the way

of their intentions. Then we say, "They don't want to write. How can we motivate them?"

We lose out on the surprises children have for us because we don't let them write. Surprises come when children begin to control writing as a craft. . . Many eight- and nine-year-old children can do the extensive revisions of a single selection, rewriting well over six to eight drafts to get information the way they want it. Children write this many drafts because they have taken control of the writing process . . .

We have all heard the groan in the classrooms, "Do I have to copy it over?" This is the popular understanding of revision. Put a good manicure on the corpse. Change the spelling, make the penmanship more presentable, take out any heinous punctuation mistakes. But don't change the information . . . Children (who control their own writing) revise because they want the information to be accurate, and they want to make good choices about what would stay and what should be discarded . . . Every teacher has heard the words "Do I have to do it over? Why do I have to write?" (Children who control their own writing) are saying: "I don't have a voice. I don't see the sense in what I'm doing. I was writing something down just to get started."

Revision, or reseeing, is not necessarily a natural act. It draws on a different source of energy, the energy of anticipation. The carpenter planes, sands, varnishes, and sands again, all in anticipation of running the hand over the smooth surface, the pleasure to the eye of gently curving lines, the approval of friends. The carpenter has been there before, knows what will be coming, and trusts his ability to solve the problems along the way.

Children (and adults) need to write every day and receive a response to their voices, to know what comes through so that they might anticipate self-satisfaction and the vision of the imprint of their information on classmates or the vision of their work in published form. It is the forward vision, as well as the backward vision, that ultimately lead to major breakthroughs in a child's [or an adult's] writing.

Writing Good Examinations

Writing assistants: Use this page to help students prepare for essay exams. An understanding of certain stock terms will help students better prepare for and successfully complete essay exams.

Discuss means "treat fully," sketching backgrounds, clarifying at least major and perhaps secondary points with specific illustration or detail, showing pertinent interrelations, and indicating your understanding of the implications of the question. Never dash off a brief and superficial answer when you have been told to discuss.

Explain means "make plain," as fully as is necessary for clarity. The extent of the answer expected depends on the extent of the concept concerned.

Sketch, or trace, means "survey the high spots." Trace often calls for an indication of cause and effect relationships.

Analyze means "break down into its component parts."

Classify means "group and arrange to emphasize relationships."

Summarize means "present briefly, but don't leave out anything important."

Define, or identify, or characterize, means "distinguish this term, or this person, from all others that are similar." All three are clear injunctions to be as specific as possible.

Enumerate, or list, means "set down briefly, one after another, without undue elaboration."

Illustrate, or exemplify, means "give examples," showing thereby, rather than by definition, that you understand the concept.

Compare, means "show how these things are similar." Many instructors, however, use it to mean "show both similarities and differences."

Contrast means "show how things differ."

Evaluate means "weigh and judge." If it

is used with a series of items, it means "indicate relative importance." If it is used with a single item, it means "show the importance of the item."

Moore, Robert A. Effective Writing. 4th ed. New York: 1971. 401-11.

A NOT TOO CLEVER DITTY

(concerning our times, to be sung only in a moment of mirth)

It seems the computer by which we're all driven.
One day blew a fuse and false answers were given.

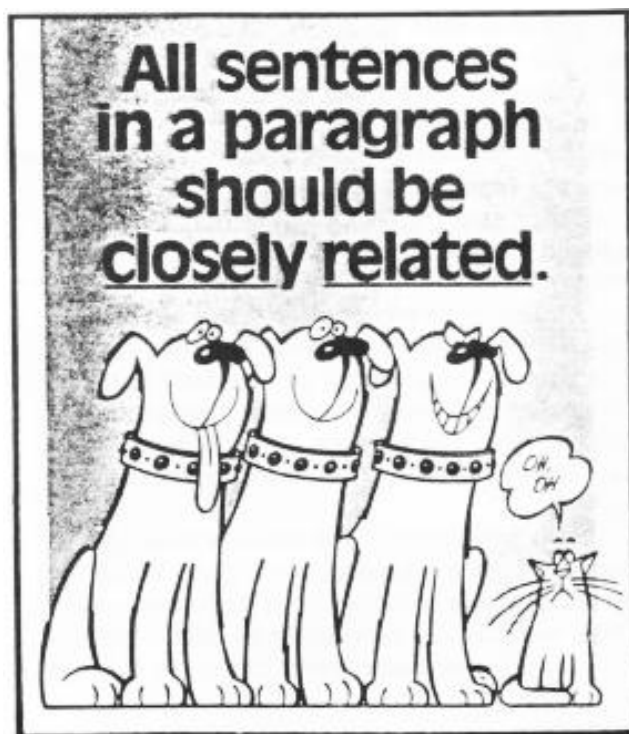
It no longer did what it was supposed to do,
But as you might guess--nobody knew.

CAT became DOG, and DOG became CAT;
Of course, nobody ever questioned that.

Folks kept up this accidental charade,
Since little difference it really all made.

Funny how this electronical goof
Truly retains the true essence of truth.

*Brad Roghaar
Professor, W. S. U.



Want to Publish?

-wordworks

Submissions: Lib Thatcher's box (in Writing Center)

Deadlines: None. **wordworks** is printed twice quarterly.

Categories: Articles, poems, stories, quotes, news items, etc.

-Metaphor

Submissions: English Department Office

Deadline: February 1, 1991

Categories: English and non-English papers, Fiction, non-fiction, and poetry

-W. S. U. Writing Contest

Submissions: English Department Office

Deadlines: 4:00p.m. February 1, 1991

-Freshman Writing Contest

Submissions: English Department Office

Deadlines: March 20, 1991

Categories: Essay/narrative & research

Requirements: Open to students with 60 or fewer credit hours at time of submission.

-National Undergraduate

Literature Conference

Submissions: Dr. Mike Vause or Brad Roghaar

Deadline: February 10, 1991

Categories: Undergraduate papers concerned with American, British, and World Literature and creative works.

-Writing Lab Newsletter

Submissions: Muriel Harris, editor
Department of English
Purdue University
West Lafayette, IN 47907

Categories: Articles-8 to 12 double-spaced pages
Reviews-3 to 4 double-spaced pages
Tutor's column-1 to 2 double-spaced pages

-The Utah Writer

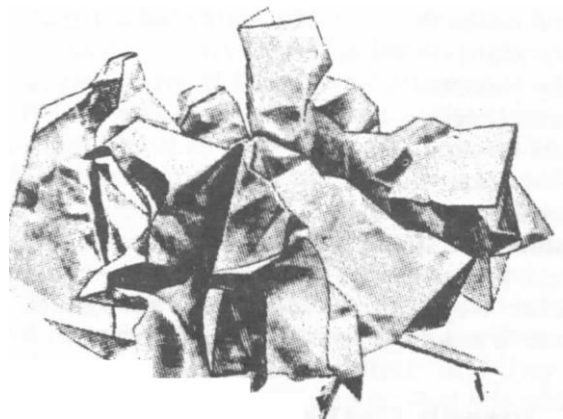
Categories: Adult fiction and non-fiction, children's corner, poetry, prose

-Rocky Mountain Writing Centers Association

Submissions: M. Clare Sweeney, Ph.D.
2625 College Avenue South
Tempe, AZ 85282-2344

Deadlines: 300 word proposal due by March 1, 1991

More information on all of these opportunities is available in the Writing Center. Entry forms for Metaphor and the writing contests are available in the English Department Office.



**Learning to write well
is not a pretty thing.**

**But it's worth it.
WRITE ON.**

**"An intellectual is a man
who takes more words
than necessary to
tell more than
he knows."**

***President Eisenhower**

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Statement of Purpose: The Writing Center
•**Dr. John Schwlebert**
Writing Center Director

Staffed by undergraduate students (writing assistants), the Writing Center is a unique place where W. S. C. students can receive feedback on their writing in a comfortable, non-threatening environment. The Center seeks to help all students, of all levels of writing ability, at any stage of the writing process. Trained writing assistants ask questions, listen, demonstrate techniques of invention, drafting, and revising, and provide an attentive and challenging audience for the student writer. Rather than "fixing" or proofreading papers, we model strategies so that students can help themselves to become better writers. In this way the Center fosters independent thinking, promotes a collaborative spirit, and improves intellectual growth and writing ability.

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writing center

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