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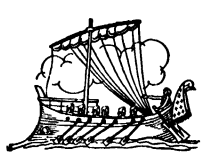
UNDERSTANDING AND USING ENGLISH

UNDERSTANDING *AND* USING ENGLISH

NEWMAN B. BIRK
and
GENEVIEVE B. BIRK
Tufts College



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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES

THIRD PRINTING

TO THE TEACHER

COLLEGE FRESHMEN often feel aggrieved when they learn that they are required to take "another English course," particularly a course in composition. They have "had" English, they say, for the past twelve years, and during those years they have gone over the same material (punctuation, grammar, spelling) again and again. Perhaps they haven't mastered that material, but at any rate it is familiar and stale, and why shouldn't they study something more advanced, something practical, or at least something new and interesting?

Teachers of freshman composition have different ways of dealing with the attitudes of boredom, complacency, resignation, and even indignation which they find in many of their students. Some instructors clench themselves and push their students once more along the dusty road. Other instructors prefer to appeal to the student's reason and to his intellectual curiosity. They concentrate on putting him in a receptive frame of mind by demonstrating to him (1) that he does not already know all that he really needs to know about English, and (2) that English can be a stimulating subject, at least as "advanced" and "practical" and "new and interesting" as any of his other college subjects. We hope that *Understanding and Using English* will be helpful to instructors who belong to this second group.

The purposes of this book are to introduce the student to the study of English on a college level; to give him an informed awareness of the nature and power of language; to demonstrate the live relationship between classroom study

and the language that he hears and reads, speaks and writes; and finally to supply him with concrete guidance that will help him to use English appropriately and effectively and to interpret it intelligently. We have tried to present all the material in the book as concretely as possible. We believe that many truths about language and about effective English can be made self-evident.

Understanding and Using English has been carefully planned to lead the student, by means of an orderly series of steps, to an integrated understanding of his language and its uses. Our experience in teaching a trial form of the book for a year at Tufts College, and the experience of colleagues and students whose comments have helped to shape the final book, have convinced us that this integrated knowledge is best achieved by following, at least for the first seven chapters, the present arrangement of material.

Chapters One and Two present a general non-technical study of language, with a discussion of the emotional as well as the plain-sense meanings of words, of the differences between fact and opinion, of the dangers of abstract words, and of the effects of charged language. This discussion seems to us essential for the student's realistic understanding of the working of language and for his critical judgment of the language that he uses.

In Chapter Three we deal with the conventions of correct expression—punctuation, agreement, reference of pronouns, use of modifiers, etc. We have selected for emphasis in this chapter the basic conventions and the actual trouble-spots in college writing. Errors and blunders in expression are, we believe, most readily eliminated when the student understands how violations of accepted conventions may confuse his reader and defeat the purpose of his communication. What he has learned about communication in the first two chapters will enable him to see more easily the necessity of avoiding the blunders explained and illustrated in Chapter Three.

The next two chapters are concerned with levels of usage,

appropriate expression, the value of concrete expression, and the methods by which skillful writers achieve economy and conciseness, originality, variety in sentences, and emphasis. The discussion of these matters of choice and of style is also integrated with the material in the first chapters; we have made every effort to explain and to demonstrate how different styles produce different effects and so alter the total meaning of the communication. Chapter Six is focused on the paragraph, the basic unit of composition.

In Chapter Seven we analyze an essay by Stuart Chase to show how the principles and techniques of good expression actually work in a longer context. Chapter Seven thus pulls together the material in the first six chapters, and is a bridge between theory and practice.

The last five chapters of the book are concerned directly with the student's own practice. It is not necessary to assign these chapters in their present order. Chapter Eight gives the student detailed guidance in writing short informal themes, Chapter Nine in writing longer research papers. In Chapter Ten we have assembled instructions and advice about such practical matters as writing examinations, writing business letters, writing social notes and personal letters, public speaking, and conversation. Chapter Eleven deals with reading—reading for study, reading rapidly, and reading critically. The book ends with a chapter on vocabulary and the importance of the right word in communicating full and exact meaning. With the material in these five chapters every instructor will, we think, wish to work out an order of assignments best suited to his particular course.

Some sections of these last chapters (the section on writing examinations, for example, and the section on increasing reading speed) can be assigned before the student has read the first seven chapters of the book. It is possible, too, to assign at the beginning of the term the chapter on writing the informal theme. In general, though, the student will read the material in the last five chapters with fuller comprehension if

he has the background supplied by the first seven chapters, because we assume a knowledge of the principles and the terms established earlier in the text.

About the use of other parts of the book—the Handbook, the appendices on outlining and on using the dictionary, the exercises at the end of each chapter, and the chapter reviews —we can offer little advice. We have tried with this material to meet the needs of different teachers and different students. In the Handbook we define briefly all grammatical terms and other terms used in the text, give in greater detail than in the text the essentials of punctuation and spelling, and discuss the problems of usage which the student is likely to encounter. For ease in reference we have arranged the entries in the Handbook alphabetically, and have grouped all matters of usage under the heading "Usage," so that this section, like the sections on punctuation and spelling, may be assigned if the instructor thinks such an assignment is desirable. The exercises at the ends of chapters are designed to clarify principles and also to supply stimulating material for class discussion. The number of exercises will make it possible, if the instructor wishes, to spend one or more class hours in review of the material in a particular chapter. The brief "chapter reviews" themselves may be used as a basis for oral or written examination; their primary purpose, however, is to give the student a check on the adequacy of his reading, and to help him form good reading and study habits.

Many authors and publishers have contributed to this book by giving us permission to use copyrighted material for illustration. Our specific indebtedness to them is acknowledged elsewhere.

Equally great, and impossible to acknowledge specifically, is our indebtedness to such students of language and modern usage as I. A. Richards, C. K. Ogden, S. I. Hayakawa, Charles C. Fries, George O. Curme, H. W. Fowler, H. L. Mencken, Albert H. Marckwardt, Porter G. Perrin, and Robert C. Pooley, and to the National Council of Teachers of English

and the American Council on Education. Their work, forming as it does a body of ideas and information about current English, has influenced and guided us in preparing this book. Finally we are indebted and grateful to the members of the freshman English staff and the students of Tufts College whose criticism has aided us in writing the book, and whose comments have encouraged us to believe that teachers and students will like it, and that it will help college students in understanding and using English.

Medford, Massachusetts N. B. B.
March, 1949 G. B. B.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

THE AUTHORS are grateful to the following publishers and writers for permission to use copyrighted materials:

Appleton-Century-Crofts: Bertrand Russell, *Why Men Fight;* and C. Brooks, J. T. Purser, and R. P. Warren, *An Approach to Literature.*

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Carter Davidson, "What I Expect of English Teachers," published in the College English Association *News Letter.*

Encyclopædia Britannica: G. D. H. Cole, "Socialism," *Encyclopædia Britannica,* 14th Edition.

Henry P. Fairchild, *Economics for the Millions.*

Funk & Wagnalls Company: *New College Standard Dictionary,* Emphatype Edition.

Harcourt, Brace and Company: Virginia Woolf, *Orlando;* Lincoln Steffens, *The Autobiography of Lincoln Steffens;* Jean Stafford, *Boston Adventure;* Leo C. Rosten, *Hollywood: The Movie Colony—The Movie Makers;* Paul de Kruif, *Microbe Hunters;* Stuart Chase, *Idle Money, Idle Men;* and S. I. Hayakawa, *Language in Action.*

Harper & Brothers: James Harvey Robinson, *The Mind in the Making;* Howard W. Haggard, *Devils, Drugs and Doctors;* Frederick L. Allen, *Only Yesterday;* Aldous Huxley, *Proper Studies;* and *The American College Dictionary.*

Granville Hicks, *I like America.*

Henry Holt and Company: Bertrand Russell, *Proposed Roads to Freedom;* and William James, *Psychology.*

Houghton Mifflin Company: Stanley Vestal, *Kit Carson;* Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward;* Ruth Benedict, *Patterns of Culture;* Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (trans, by Ralph Manheim) ; and Henry Adams, *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres.*

Alfred A. Knopf: James M. Cain, *Serenade;* Thomas Mann, *Buddenbrooks;* and D. H. Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley's Lover.*

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James Thurber, *Let Your Mind Alone!*

The Viking Press: John Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath* and *Cannery Row;* and Irwin Edman, *Candle in the Dark.*

Yale University Press: Carl Becker, *New Liberties for Old;* and James B. Conant, *On Understanding Science.*

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TO THE STUDENT

UNDERSTANDING AND USING ENGLISH is based on two convictions: (1) that the ability to use language well is of very great importance, and (2) that college students learn to use English more skillfully when they know how language works; when they understand how and why different expressions, different sentence structures, and different methods of presenting ideas produce different results. It is based, too, on our observation that college students find the study of English more interesting and more satisfying if they are helped, by means of reasonable discussion and concrete examples, to see how and why, instead of being told dogmatically what to do and what not to do. The aim of this book is to show you the importance of English in your daily life, and to guide you in choosing the most effective ways of communicating your ideas.

We know that you have studied English for a number of years; we know that you have been taught, and that you may have learned, many "rules" of correct English. In this book we are concerned with helping you to learn the things you do not know about good English. Not a great deal of the text, therefore, is devoted to grammar and basic mechanics. However, in Chapter Three we discuss the essentials of correct expression—those conventions of punctuation, reference, agreement, parallelism, etc., which an educated reader expects a writer to know and to observe. We have tried to explain fully and to illustrate clearly in this chapter the errors and blunders in expression which really cause trouble in college writing. It is essential for you to understand this material

thoroughly. We realize that there are more stimulating subjects than capitalization, the use of modifiers, the reference of pronouns, and the agreement of subject and verb. But even mechanics become interesting when they are seen as parts of successful communication. And, certainly, these are things which you must know. Only when you have learned to use English correctly can you proceed to the more interesting problems of using English well.

In many sections of this book we have quoted paragraphs, chiefly from modern writing, to illustrate differences in style, methods of presenting material, and ways of achieving particular effects. It is important for you to read these illustrative passages with care. Developing an ear for different kinds of prose, and seeing the techniques used by other writers is an excellent way of improving your own power of expression.

We have tried to make this book as usable as possible. It may be helpful to you, as you begin the study of it, to know the location and the purpose of the following sections of material:

1. A list of symbols and abbreviations which your instructor will use in marking your papers. This list is printed on the end pages, with a brief explanation of each symbol, and accompanying page numbers which will enable you to find in the text the discussion of this error or weakness in your writing.

2. "Chapter Reviews" at the end of most chapters of the book. If you have read the material well, you should be able to answer the questions and explain the terms in these short review sections. Their purpose is to give you a check on your reading and to re-emphasize the important points in the chapter.

3. Brief definitions, in the Handbook of Usage, Definitions, and Conventions at the end of the text, of all the grammatical terms and other terms used in the book. These definitions may be of value to you in review. Entries in the Handbook are arranged alphabetically.

4. A full discussion of the marks of punctuation, under the heading "Punctuation" in the Handbook. In Chapter Three of the text we have selected and emphasized the major problems in punctuation. This section of the Handbook gives additional information about the conventional uses of all marks of punctuation.

5. Rules of spelling and a list of the 250 words most commonly misspelled in freshman themes, under the heading "Spelling" in the Handbook. There is no quick cure for poor spelling; but there are cures. If you spell badly, you should study these rules, and even more important, you should systematically learn the words in the spelling list.

6. A discussion of matters of usage, under the heading "Usage" in the Handbook. If you are uncertain, for example, about the difference between *imply* and *infer* or the use of *shall* and *will;* or if your instructor has circled the word *contact* or the phrase *enthused about* or *can't help but,* you will find comments on these words and expressions in the section on usage. Entries within this section are arranged alphabetically.

The study of English can be most rewarding. We hope that this book will help you to understand and to use the rich resources of your own language.

N. B. B.
G. B. B.

CHAPTER ONE

LANGUAGE AND MEANING

MODERN MAN LIVES in a world of words, and the kind of world he lives in depends to a surprisingly large extent on the words that he uses and hears. Words can make or prevent wars, solemnize marriages or invalidate them, form constitutions or destroy them, sell shoddy or superior products or ideas, justify man's worst actions or express his highest ideals. Because of the immense power of language, of even a few words, advertisers pay large sums for the best phrase or slogan or jingle, and no responsible statesman feels free to depart from the letter of his carefully prepared speech. Lawyers may spend hours in court trying to fix the meaning of a single word, and one of the chief functions of our Supreme Court is interpreting the words of the law of the land.

Since language is so important, it is strange that in our society more people have a reasonably accurate idea of how an automobile works and how to handle it than of how their native language works and how to handle it. Even poor drivers know what the accelerator and the steering wheel and even the brake are for, and have some knowledge of the relationship between the cylinders and the gasoline and the spark. They can use road maps to drive a car from New York to San Francisco and can arrive at San Francisco without difficulty.

But despite twelve years of required English before college, most college freshmen have little or no knowledge of how their language actually works. Language for them is often a baffling vehicle to operate; the road maps that they have been given during twelve years sometimes confuse and frustrate them instead of providing guidance. For one thing, they have often been led to accept and to follow uncritically a large number of rules for the writing of "correct" English. Suppose we look, for example, at some of these "rules."

1. "Never end a sentence with a preposition." Must we *always* say, "On which chair do you wish me to sit?" and never, "Which chair do you want me to sit on?" Of course not.
2. "Don't use contractions." Many English teachers have written this as a comment on themes. Are the teachers using incorrect English?
3. "Avoid slang." Does this mean that a sports writer or a person writing on jazz must avoid all use of slang?
4. "Never begin a sentence with *but* or *and*." Never? But we are doing it at this very moment.
5. "Always use a comma between two independent clauses joined by *and, but, for, or, nor*." In "I was there and he wasn't," what good would a comma after "there" do? Probably none at all.
6. "Every sentence must have a subject and a predicate." If this is *always* true, why do so many able writers—Steinbeck, Dos Passos, Thomas Wolfe, to name just a few—frequently write sentences that are incomplete, and why do such sentences get into English texts as models of style?

The truth is that dogmatic rules for writing are valuable in training young people to write acceptably, but are not, by themselves, adequate guides for mature students. In order to use language freely and effectively the college student needs to start with a general consideration of the nature of language and of the principles which underlie the rules. He will then

be in a position to exercise judgment in following conventional rules or in departing from them.

The preceding paragraph states the central thesis of this book: the best use of English involves sound general **understanding of language,** adequate **knowledge of the accepted conventions** (of punctuation, grammar, capitalization, spelling), sometimes stated as "rules," and **informed judgment** in using this knowledge of language and language conventions to achieve appropriate and effective expression. Uncritical and slavish following of rules may produce what some teachers of English call "correct" English, but such English often is not appropriate to the occasion and to the intention of the writer.

Language has been called "the dress of thought"; like dress it needs to be *appropriate.* Formality and a certain type of correctness are sometimes necessary and desirable, but for everyday expression (written and spoken) a less formal language is usually appropriate, and a different and less formal standard of correctness applies.

If Charles Meade, a student, receives a formal invitation, conventions of etiquette and language demand that he write his reply in very formal language, as follows: "Mr. Charles Meade accepts with pleasure [or regrets that he is unable to accept] the kind invitation of President Lawrence Carmason to a dinner for the Senior Class at the Statler Hotel on Tuesday, April the tenth, at eight o'clock." In replying to the formal invitation Charles must use the prescribed formal language; any variation from it would be inappropriate and would not achieve his intention of making the proper polite response. Another college student, James Mangle, who receives the same invitation and writes in reply, "Dear Prexy, Thanks for your invitation. I'm sorry that I can't make it. I have a dinner date with my roommate's beautiful sister. . . ." is obviously using language inappropriately and is violating his intention: instead of making a fitting response he is making himself absurd. On the other hand, if James Mangle had

received, not the formal invitation, but a hastily written card from a close friend who was inviting him to a victrola party on Friday night, James could *appropriately* have sent to his friend the same informal note that he blunderingly sent to the college president. Furthermore, a formal reply of the sort properly used in answering the formal invitation would here be inappropriate and ludicrous.

If we say that "good English" is "correct" English, we are likely to confuse ourselves and others. It is better to define good English as English which is **appropriate** (1) to the **occasion** (i.e., the **audience,** the **subject,** the **time** and **place**), and (2) to the **intention** of the writer or speaker.

More will be said in a later chapter on the subject of appropriateness. At present we need to consider other generalizations that are necessary for a sound understanding of language.

I. COMMUNICATING MEANING: THE PARTS OF MEANING

The most important function of language is to communicate meaning. However, language does have certain secondary uses. When one writes lists or notes for himself, or very personal diaries, when he sings to himself, talks to himself, or swears at a chair that he has run into in the dark, he uses words not for communication but simply for his own convenience and satisfaction. About such use of language little helpful or enlightening comment can be made—except perhaps that of the moralist on the language addressed to the chair.

We are concerned, however, with the major function of language—the *communicative* function; for our purposes, therefore, we can define language as a verbal means of **communicating something** to **someone** for some **purpose.** An analysis of this definition makes it evident that each time language is used for communication there are three things

involved: (1) the "something" to be communicated, (2) the speaker or writer and his purpose or "intention," and (3) the hearer or reader. Strangely enough, there is no one word in the English language which refers to speaker-or-writer and no one word which refers to hearer-or-reader. In these circumstances it becomes necessary to fix on suitable terminology. When occasion arises we shall use the term "communicator" to refer to the speaker-or-writer and the term "receiver" to refer to the hearer-or-reader.

Now that our terms, "language," "communicator," "receiver," are established, we are ready to look at the process of verbal communication and to see how language works. First, something takes place in the brain of Communicator *C*. Perhaps he has a toothache and wants sympathy from Receiver *R*, or perhaps he sees a car coming and wants to get *R* out of the way. In any case there are at the moment two things of importance in *C*'s brain—something he wants to say and some reason he has for saying it, some purpose. The function of language is to convey this something from the brain of *C* to the brain of *R*, and words are the medium by which it is conveyed. (It is perhaps worth saying here that the communication is never complete, is always approximate.) *C*'s brain directs his vocal cords to produce certain sounds. The sound waves thus produced strike the ear of *R*, and *R*'s brain responds in such a way that something goes on in *R*'s brain very like what is going on in *C*'s. If *C* writes to *R*, the process is similar except that visual symbols take the place of sound symbols.

This process of conveying something from the brain of *C* to the brain of *R* we call **verbal communication**, and the something that is communicated we call **meaning**. Since primitive man made his first blundering efforts to speak, language has come to be an extraordinarily complex, subtle, and effective instrument for conveying meaning. It enables us to know a great deal about what was going on in the mind of Plato twenty-three hundred years ago, and it would enable an

American scientist, if he wished, to communicate by words alone to a Russian scientist five thousand miles away the whole complex process of producing an atomic bomb.

As these two examples indicate, the something conveyed, the meaning, which language communicates can be infinitely various. Although *meaning* is a very useful word, it may stand in the way of our thinking intelligently about language because it appears to give to language a simplicity that language really does not have. We need to go beneath the word *meaning,* to break it up into its components. For convenience we can say that there are three parts or aspects of meaning, and we can label these parts of meaning **plain sense, intention,** and **attitude.** It is important to fix in mind the definitions of these three terms.

The **plain sense** part of meaning may be briefly defined as the **fact or idea** to be communicated, the statement or statements that are made.

Intention means the same thing as *purpose* as we have been using that word. It may be defined as the effect which the communicator wishes to produce on his hearer or reader. For example, the intention of *C* is to get *R* to move out of the path of the car, or to sympathize with him because of his toothache; the intention of a politician may be to persuade the citizens to vote for him; the intention behind the weather report or behind a mathematics text is to inform the reader about coming weather or about mathematics. Although in some communication intention may be complex and changing, we can say that in general a communicator will have one of three primary intentions: (1) he wants simply to communicate plain sense as clearly as he can (i.e., *to inform*); (2) he wants to communicate plain sense *and* to influence the feelings of the receiver (i.e., *to persuade or convince*); or (3) he wants to communicate to others how he *feels* about something or to make others feel in a certain way about something. At times—in very casual conversation, for example—a communicator may hardly know what his intention is and

may have trouble stating it if he is asked to do so. Thus he may communicate without conscious awareness of his intention. At other times, however, one may be very conscious of his intention and may select his language very carefully to realize that intention—for example in a letter applying for a position that the applicant is eager to get.

The **attitude** part of meaning also needs to be examined in some detail. It may be defined as the **feeling** of the communicator (1) toward **himself,** (2) toward his **receiver,** and (3) toward his **subject.** If an acquaintance were to say to the present readers, "My paper was easily the best in the class. I just dashed it off, of course. It's too bad you are so slow and stupid that you can't write as well as I do," the readers might well object to the speaker's "attitude." And in objecting they might say that the speaker was conceited (attitude toward himself), was too proud of his paper (attitude toward subject), and was condescending toward his hearers (attitude toward receiver). If the speaker had said, "When the professor told me that my paper was the best in the class, I was ashamed because I had just dashed it off and I knew you had worked hard and long on yours," he would be expressing a different attitude toward himself, his hearers, and his subject. The two examples that we have just used are supposedly bits of conversation, and here attitude is usually an important part of meaning. In certain other types of communication, attitude may be much less important. In an encyclopedia article, for example, the writer concentrates on the plain sense and appropriately keeps in the background his feelings about himself, his subject, and his reader. In communication of this sort the style is **impersonal;** in communication which conveys and emphasizes the personality and feelings of the author the style is said to be **personal.** Both personal and impersonal style are aspects of attitude.

In informative writing, plain sense is the most important part of meaning, though intention and attitude are still present. In a chemistry text, for example, plain sense is clearly

horse to the animal. How and why that happened is beyond our present inquiry; we are concerned with the question: how did the English word *horse* come to have its meaning *for us?* We will find our answer in our past experiences with the word and with the animal it refers to. Since *horse* is a common word and horses are common things, we probably had our first experience with the word early. Perhaps we saw the animal, and our parents told us it was called a horse; perhaps we saw or heard the word, and some one used other words to explain its meaning. Later on we read or heard the word frequently, and perhaps we saw animals, horses, and applied the word to them. At any rate we established a relationship between the word *horse* and the actual animal, so that the word came to call to mind the animal, and the animal came to call to mind the word: the word *horse* had come to have meaning for us.

To use technical language, we can say that we learned the meaning of the word from hearing it in various **contexts.** Since **context** is a very important word in the discussion of language, it requires careful definition. **Context** may be generally defined as **the setting in which the locution** [1] **is used.** When we came across the word *horse* in our primer, the context was the other words with which the word *horse* was used. If there was a picture of a horse in the primer, that too was a part of the context, for it helped us to understand what *horse* means. When we saw an actual animal horse by the roadside and someone told us that the animal was called horse, the whole experience of seeing the horse and hearing the word was the context for us. The **context,** then, is **anything, surrounding words** or **surrounding circumstances,** which helps to make clear to us just what a word (locution) refers to. After we have met the word in a number of contexts we get a *general* idea of what the word "means." It was because of this

[1] *Locution* is a convenient term used to refer to a word or to a group of related words. A locution therefore may be a single word, a phrase, a clause, or an entire sentence.

primary, and the wise reader spends his time attending to the facts and formulas presented. Here the general intention is obvious; the writer wishes to inform. The attitude may be described as impersonal and unemotional; the writer takes his subject seriously, or he wouldn't be writing a book about it, but he is not primarily concerned with using language to convey his feelings about himself, or his subject, or his reader. He has used language successfully if he has presented the facts clearly to the particular type of reader that he is writing for.

But in many kinds of communication, intention and attitude are more important than plain sense. One of the most common fallacies about language is the idea that communicating plain sense is *always* its main function. Actually there are many uses of language, literary, social, and political, in which plain sense is secondary, and in which intention and attitude are of primary importance. If the reader will examine his own use of language for one day he will see that a good part of the time he is not concerned primarily with communicating facts and ideas. He gets up on a cold rainy day and says "good morning" to everyone he meets; he says "good-by" (originally a kind of blessing meaning "God be with you") to people whom he has no desire to bless. When he is introduced to someone, he may say, "How do you do," even though he does not care how the person does; or he may say, less properly, "Pleased to meet you," though he would have chosen to avoid the introduction. When he writes an angry letter to a laundry that has lost three of his shirts, he begins it "Dear Sir" and ends with "Very truly yours." A good deal of his light conversation deals with the weather, in which perhaps neither he nor his companion is interested. All these polite or conventional uses of language are primarily intention or attitude, and people unconsciously accept them as such. To a casual "How are you?" a man with a toothache may well say, "Fine, thanks."

Language is also used to establish or to maintain friendly relations. When we joke, or tell stories, or chat in a friendly

way about trivial matters, we are frequently more interested in letting people know that we like them and in causing them to like us than we are in exchanging information. People sometimes talk merely because they find silence embarrassing or because they feel that they will be considered unfriendly if they are silent.

Another common use of language in which plain sense is not of primary importance is the expressing and sharing of our feelings and beliefs, our response to experience. Bacon wrote that communicating with friends doubles joys and cuts griefs in half; language is the main medium through which this communication and sharing occur. We may enjoy talking to people who have the same political or social or philosophical ideas as ours, not because we are gaining new facts or ideas but because we enjoy agreeing with someone—or, better, having someone agree with us.

That language is frequently, perhaps most commonly, used for purposes other than communicating plain sense seems hard to deny, yet many "practical" people take a severe view when they read literature, and insist that plain sense should be most important there. Such people think that when they have a synopsis of a story they have the "meaning of the story" and believe that a sentence summary of a poem is the essence of the poem. Actually, of course, the short-story writer, novelist, essayist, dramatist, or poet, although he is dealing with facts and ideas, is not primarily concerned with them; they are frequently only a small part of the whole meaning he wishes to convey, just as they are likely to be a small part of a love letter or an intimate conversation. Men don't live by facts and ideas (plain sense) alone. They think and know, and much of their language deals with thought and knowledge, but they also feel and respond. Even mathematicians and engineers fall in love and have friends and quarrel among themselves, and they use language to express their emotions and attitudes. "Practical" people would be more practical if they recognized these facts about language.

Practical politicians and advertisers and propagandists already know them and profit from them; they may even use the word *practical* to move the emotions and so influence the actions of unsuspecting practical people.

What has been said thus far about the importance of intention and attitude should not, however, lead us to underestimate the very great significance of plain sense in language. Men have to inform one another, to educate one another, to convince one another by facts and by logic; and when language is used for these purposes, plain sense is the most important part of the meaning. The point to bear in mind is not that plain sense is unimportant, but that intention and attitude are much more important than most people realize when they use the word *meaning.*

II. THE MEANING OF WORDS AND THE IMPORTANCE OF CONTEXT

In the previous section we analyzed the term *meaning* in its relationship to language; now we need to look closely at **words,** the particles which are fitted together to produce meaning. A consideration of how words come to have meaning for us will throw some light on their nature and will help us to use them more wisely. Here, as often, it is best to start with an example and to work through it toward a generalization.

In the sentence, "The horse won the race," the word *horse* has a reasonably definite meaning for all of us. We all know that it refers to a quadruped about five feet high at the shoulder and that the animal has a mane and a tail, and hooves instead of feet. The question of interest here is: how does the word *horse* come to have this meaning? One answer, of course, is that we have been brought up among English-speaking people. If we were German we should call the animal *das Pferd;* if we were French we should call it *le cheval.* It just happens that people in our society have applied the word

general idea we had developed of the meaning of the word *horse* that we were able on seeing the word in the sentence, "The horse won the race," to assume that in that context it referred to a quadruped about five feet high at the shoulder and that such an animal has a mane and a tail, and hooves instead of feet.

Before going further with the discussion of context and meaning, we need to introduce another technical term, the word **referent.** The **referent** may be defined as **the thing or idea to which the word refers.** In the sentence "The horse won the race," the referent of *horse* is the actual living, breathing horse that won the race. The person who wrote the sentence was using the word as a symbol to refer to a particular horse, and the meaning of the word, the referent, was that particular horse. The communicator, then, was using the word *horse* to refer to a particular horse at a particular moment. To receive the full and exact meaning of the word as he used it we would need to perceive the actual horse as he perceived it; we would then know its color and height and the like, and we would see it running. Actually, of course, language seldom if ever communicates this full and exact meaning; it simply approximates it, and this approximation is usually enough for everyday purposes.

It is worth noting here that the referent, the thing to which the word refers, is different every time the word is used; hence the word, although it has certain conventional general meanings, never means *exactly* the same thing twice. After the general conventional meaning of a word has become established, the function of the context is to make clearer to us the meaning of the word on the particular occasion on which it is used. In our illustrative sentence, for example, the words *won the race* give us a more particular idea of what *horse* means here. We assume that the horse is a race horse, and we have a more definite mental picture of race horses than we have of horses in general. If we read on and find out what kind of race it was and perhaps what color the horse was, the

context will then give us a still more definite idea of the animal itself, the *referent.*

The meaning of the word *horse* seems complicated enough already, but we have in fact simplified it by assuming that *horse* always refers to animal horse. When we stop to think, we realize that this is not true. What, for example, does the word *horse* refer to in the following sentences?

On the merry-go-round the children preferred to ride on the *horses* and the lions. [Here *horse* means imitation horse.]
The carpenter sawed the board on the *horse.* [Here *horse* means a wooden frame.]
That woman is a *horse.* [Here the word probably means large-boned and awkward.]

These examples show that the word *horse* is used to refer not only to various particular animal horses but also to non-animate things and even to ideas ("awkward," "large-boned"). They show also what complicated symbols words are and how context helps us in identifying their meanings, their referents, in a particular situation.

Let us take a still more complicated example of the way meaning is determined by context: the sentence "Put out the light, and then put out the light." Although grammatically this is a well-constructed sentence, standing by itself it does not "make sense," does not convey any clear and definite meaning. The reader knows the generally accepted, "dictionary" meanings of each word in the sentence, but he does not have enough of the context to understand the significance of the sentence. Since the individual words have a good many different dictionary meanings, he cannot tell which one is appropriate here. *Put out* and *light* are particularly puzzling just because each expression does have so many different general meanings. Notice some of the meanings that these words have in different contexts:

To *put out* the cat [place him outside]
To *put out* effort [expend effort]
To *put out* a baseball player [cause an "out" in baseball]

To be *put out* by what someone does to you [inconvenienced or exasperated]
To *put out* the light [extinguish it]

A *light* burden [not heavy]
A *light* shade [not dark]
To see the *light* [the truth]
To see the *light* [the illumination]
To be in a *light* mood [gay, carefree]
To *light* a fire [cause the fuel to blaze]
The speed of *light* [light rays]
*Light*headed [dizzy, unstable, fickle]

These are only a few of the many meanings that *put out* and *light* may have in different contexts.

It seems evident that the sentence, "Put out the light, and then put out the light," like the single word *horse,* cannot be clear and exact in its meaning until we place it in a larger context. The larger context for this particular sentence is Shakespeare's play, *Othello.* To get the *full* meaning of the quoted sentence, it would be necessary to read the whole play. A brief summary of the immediately relevant material, however, will suffice here; that is, it will provide sufficient context to transform what at first seems a kind of nonsense sentence into a poignantly meaningful expression. Othello, a just and admirable man, is played upon by his subórdinate, Iago, with the result that he believes his innocent wife guilty of infidelity. Although Othello loves his wife Desdemona so deeply that she is the "light" of his life, of his happiness, he convinces himself that the "cause" of justice, virtue, honor, demands that "she must die, else she'll betray more men." The following lines from the play, which contain the sentence we have been considering, are spoken by Othello as he is about to extinguish the light, a candle or lamp, and then to smother the woman he loves. He extinguishes the candle because he fears that his resolution will fail if the light enables him to see Desdemona:

It is the cause, it is the cause, my soul.
Let me not name it to you, you chaste stars!

It is the cause. Yet I'll not shed her blood,
Nor scar that whiter skin of hers than snow,
And smooth as monumental alabaster.
Yet she must die, else she'll betray more men.
Put out the light, and then put out the light.
If I quench thee, thou flaming minister,
I can again thy former light restore,
Should I repent me; but once put out thy light,
Thou cunning'st pattern of excelling nature,
I know not where is that Promethean heat
That can thy light relume. When I have pluck'd the rose,
I cannot give it vital growth again;
It needs must wither . . . .

After this soliloquy Othello accuses Desdemona, refuses to believe her protestations of innocence, and smothers her, only to find out soon afterward that he has been tricked by Iago and that Desdemona was entirely innocent. Othello kills himself because he has in truth "put out the light, and then put out the light."

On page 11 we defined context as the setting (surrounding words or surrounding circumstances) which helps us to interpret the meaning of a locution. Our consideration of the line spoken by Othello illustrates the force and significance of context (here surrounding words) in making clear the meaning of words and even of sentences. In fact, not only words and sentences, but also paragraphs and even larger units of expression often depend upon context for their full meaning.

Quite evidently the context supplied by surrounding words is important. Equally important is the context supplied by surrounding circumstances. George Washington's "Farewell Address" will serve as an illustration. Because this address is a kind of sacred national document, any quotation from it or reference to it is sure to engage respectful attention and to have considerable persuasive force. For this reason writers and speakers frequently quote from it to emphasize and support some point which they wish to establish. Such quotation is often perfectly appropriate and justifiable. Sometimes,

however, communicators distort the original meaning because they disregard the surrounding circumstances, the context, of the famous address. After World War I, for example, some people opposed our joining the League of Nations because Washington said to "avoid entangling alliances"; again, after World War II, there have been those who have argued in the same way against our participation in the United Nations. Although Washington did not use the phrase "avoid entangling alliances" in his "Farewell Address," we can assume for the purposes of our illustration that that is a fair statement of what his language meant. We need to remember, however, that the date of the "Farewell Address" was 1796; when it was written the United States was different, and the alternatives to "entangling alliances" were also different. The United States was then a weak nation obliged to deal with stronger powers; advances in transportation had not produced the closely related "One World" that we live in today; oceans were still effective barriers, and the airplane and the atomic bomb had not been invented. In its context—here the whole period of history in which Washington lived and thought—the policy of avoiding entangling alliances was a sound one. But to apply Washington's words to a situation in a strikingly different period of history is to take them out of context, to give them a meaning different from that which they had in their own time.

If we choose an example from everyday life the point is still clearer: the mother of Charles, a child of eight, might say with perfect truth, "A size-one play sandal is large enough for my son," but anyone who insisted that Charles at the age of forty should follow his mother's wishes and wear a size-one play sandal would be taking the statement out of context in much the same way that the "entangling alliances" phrase is sometimes taken out of context.

One of the first rules of language is: see what the expression means *in its context,* because when context changes, meaning changes.

III. REFERENTIAL MEANING AND ATTITUDINAL MEANING

In the last section, we were placing most emphasis on the **referential** meaning of words. The function of the **referential** meaning of words is **to refer to** (in the sense of pointing to or calling to mind) **certain things or ideas.** If we are driving along in a car and our companion says, "Look at that old tire there under the tree," he is *verbally pointing* to the object by naming it and by telling us where to look. If he says that his brother is studying, he *calls to mind* our idea of study. In brief we can say that referential meaning is the plain sense part of meaning.

Attitudinal meaning, on the other hand, is that part of meaning which conveys **attitudes;** i.e., emotions, states of mind, feelings toward subject, self, and receiver. In the sentence, "Put out the light, and then put out the light," the *referential* meaning might be approximated by "I'll extinguish the light and then smother Desdemona," for this paraphrase contains the facts and ideas that Othello is expressing. In the same sentence the *attitudinal* meaning is much more complex and elusive. It tells us not what Othello is going to do but how he *feels* about it, and a large part of this attitudinal meaning is concentrated in the metaphorical and richly suggestive second use of the word *light.* A comparison of the original line with our effort at referential paraphrase will give some idea of how significant the attitudinal meaning here is.

Attitudinal meaning is determined by context in much the same way that referential meaning is. In the discussion of the referential meaning of words we saw that our whole past experience with a word (*horse,* for instance) in different contexts tends to fix for us a certain set of general referential meanings for the word (animal horse, carpenter's horse, merry-go-round horse). If someone uses the word *horse* and we want to determine its referential meaning, the immediate

context enables us to tell which of its general meanings is intended. In the context, "The *horse* won a race," we can tell that animal horse is referred to. Since words usually have *attitudinal* as well as *referential* meanings, when the referential meaning of a word varies in different contexts, the attitudinal meaning varies with it. Because we respond differently to a word as it is used to *refer* to different things, our feeling varies to fit the thing referred to (referent). In the phrases, *race horse, horse meat, horse sense, horse play,* for example, the actual *referent* of the word *horse* changes, and as the referent (the thing-referred-to) changes, our response (attitude) also changes: we may feel admiration for the beauty and speed of a race horse, feel a distaste for horse meat, feel respectful toward horse sense, feel distaste for horse play. Other words work the same way; *machine* and *grafter* for example, produce different feelings in us as they refer in different contexts to sewing machine or political machine, to grafter of trees or dishonest receiver of money:

She sewed the shirt on the *machine.*
Votes were bought by the political *machine.*
He is a skillful *grafter* of trees.
He is a politician and a *grafter.*

As we think over the examples given, it becomes evident that the attitudinal meaning of a word, like the referential meaning, is usually dependent upon (1) the general conventional meanings of the word and (2) the context in which the word is used. As we listen or read, our minds usually respond first to the general meaning of the word and then fix upon the right particular meaning by observing how the word fits with the other words, the context. In this process we find what things or ideas words refer to, and we also feel a series of emotional charges (attractions or repulsions), as we think of the referents of the words. These charges are the **attitudinal meaning** of the passage. Language which gives us a number of strong charges can be called **charged language,** and words that give strong charges can be called **charged words.**

IV. CHARGED WORDS

Words differ in the amount of charge and in the way they get the charge that they carry. Some words, because of the way we have generally used them and because of our emotions about the things they generally refer to, seem to carry an unusual amount of emotional meaning *independent* of context and of referent. The word *as word* is already charged, "precharged" by our previous associations with it. Consequently the strong emotional meaning in the word often blocks any discriminating thought about what the word refers to in a particular context and makes us respond only to the charge that the word itself carries for us. Precharged words cause us to prejudge referents. During the First World War some people objected to the playing of Beethoven's symphonies because Beethoven was a "German." These people supply us with an example of a precharged word in action. They were reacting to the word *German,* and it blocked their thinking about the referent, the actual music of a great composer who deserves the respect of all civilized men.

Other charged words are much more lightly charged by the way they have generally been used. They carry with them a cluster of suggestions or *connotations,* favorable or unfavorable, which are not strong enough to block all consideration of the referent, but which are likely to color our feeling about the referent. In the statements "She is a thin girl," and "She is a slender girl," *thin* and *slender* differ in their connotations. Most people will respond less favorably to the idea of a "thin" girl; the response will be still less favorable if she is described as "skinny." These lightly charged words are, of course, common in everyday speech and writing. To refer to an automobile as a *jalopy,* or to a very industrious student as a *grind,* or to one's college as one's *alma mater* is to use lightly charged, connotative words.

Still other charged words get their charge, light or heavy, not simply from our store of past associations and our feeling

about the word, but from the feeling aroused in us by the word's referent as we think of it in a particular context. The same word may have strong emotional meaning in one context and little emotional meaning in another; or it may carry a positive charge in one context and a negative charge when another context calls to mind a different referent. In the sentences "A fire crackled cheerfully on the hearth" and "A fire is raging through the South End," the word *fire* is very differently charged by the image (the referent) which the surrounding words bring to mind. The charge carried by the second *light* in the line from *Othello* comes from the feeling aroused by a referent which has been established by context; *light* is, therefore, a "context-charged" word.

With the understanding that charged words vary a great deal in the origin and the intensity of the emotional meaning they carry, we can proceed to consider some of the common types of charged words. Most of the words we shall discuss are precharged rather than context-charged; and, though people differ in their responses to these words, most of them are heavily charged for many people.

Home, mother, God, father, love, bride, sea, and *sky* are some of the **charged words of everyday living.** For nearly everyone, the words themselves seem to be loaded with a power to produce an immediate emotional response of some sort; the word *God* produces an emotional response even in atheists, and the word *father* produces a response in orphans. These charged words of everyday living get their particular power from the fact that we hear and see them frequently in contexts that involve our feelings; consequently we build up strong emotional associations for them. Such words are of course powerful conductors of attitudinal meaning and are important in all communication which has even the secondary aim of expressing or evoking emotion. (Why for example do undertakers call their establishments funeral *homes?*)

Another type of charged words is **taboo words**—for example profanity and all of the "four-letter" words which refer

to bodily functions and which small boys write on walls and sidewalks. Most people have built up inhibitions about these taboo words even though they may use them occasionally; and, as everyone knows, such words have great shocking power.

A good many **proper names** also belong in the category of charged words. A few pages back we considered the persuasive power of statements made by George Washington. Much of this persuasive power can be attributed to the name, George Washington, and to the favorable emotional associations that Americans have for that name. Proper names that are charged with meaning, like charged words dealing with everyday living, may be charged positively or negatively. For Americans, for example, the names Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln, have a strong positive charge, and the names Hitler, Mussolini, Tojo, Quisling, since they are the names of recent national foes, have a strong negative charge. We are likely to feel a favorable response to anything associated with the first group and an unfavorable response to anything associated with the second group. Such responses are perfectly natural, and they often serve good ends, as they did when they helped to unite the people of this country in the immense task of winning the war. Sometimes, however, they may be harmful, for our emotions may be so moved as to prevent our analyzing and absorbing the referential meaning that is overshadowed by the emotive meaning.

Most of the charged words that we have dealt with thus far are relatively *concrete* words (i.e., words with specific, easily grasped referents). Such words, used even in short contexts, usually have a comparatively clear and definite referential meaning for different receivers. In conversation, for example, it is seldom if ever necessary for us to stop and explain what particular meaning we are giving to such concrete words and names as *father, mother, bride, Abraham Lincoln, Thomas Jefferson,* because the context of the situation helps to establish a definite referent. We usually know what mother

is being talked about and whether the Washington referred to is George Washington-a-boy-of-ten, or George Washington-President-of-his-country.

Abstract words may also be charged. They differ from the concrete words we have been discussing in that they very frequently do not have the same clear and definite referential meaning for different receivers. Since the term *abstract word* is itself abstract, we need to establish its meaning by use of examples before we consider abstract words that are charged. We have seen that *concrete* words when used even in brief contexts generally communicate a definite enough referential meaning to enable us to understand one another. When a farmer tells his son to "water the horses," the meaning of these concrete words is certainly clear enough for everyday purposes; if the son is obedient, the horses get watered and the farmer's plain-sense communication has been successful.

But *abstract words* sometimes cause trouble. If the same farmer tells his son that "the American way of life is being threatened by fascism," or that "socialism would destroy liberty," the referential meaning (plain sense) is much less clear and definite. If the son is intelligent and also inconsiderate—if, for example, he is a college student—he may ask his father what he means by such abstract words as *American way of life* and *fascism* or by *socialism* and *liberty*. It would have been easy for the farmer to make completely clear what horses were to receive what water (i.e., to define his words *horses* and *water*), but when he tries to define the abstract words his son has asked about, he has a different and difficult problem. Quite possibly the son will challenge his definition, "But what you call socialism isn't socialism; socialism means. . . ." Then he will give his own definition of the term. An hour or so later each may still be insisting that socialism "means" this or that, and still later the father and son may go to bed, each sure that his definition was "the correct" definition, and each puzzled and depressed by the "wrongheadedness" of the other.

This unhappy farmer and his unhappy son have been dealing with abstract words, and, what makes it worse, with abstract words which are emotionally charged. **Abstract** words may be defined as words which name **qualities** (*intelligence, honor*), **concepts** (*evolution, scientific method, value*) and **conditions** (*poverty, insanity*). The very words in our definition—*qualities, concepts, conditions*—are themselves abstract words.

Assuming that the term *abstract word* now has a clear enough meaning for our purposes, we are in a position to explore the significance of **charged abstract words.** Such words, like precharged concrete words, appear to have the power to evoke a strong emotional response, positive or negative, whenever they are used. The following list of abstract words that are emotionally precharged for many people will supply examples and will also give the reflective reader a chance to consider which are most charged for him and why:

> Communist, fascist, socialistic, progressive, liberal, totalitarian, undemocratic, republican, democratic, capitalist, labor, reactionary, un-American, radical, freedom, liberty, free enterprise, regimentation, collectivism, foreigners, religion, science, virtue, decency, Protestant, Catholic, moral, sin, immorality, faith, atheist, morality, truth, beauty, success, happiness, Christian, sex, justice, peace, war, loyalty, sportsmanship

It is hard to overestimate the almost magical influence that these words and others like them have on the private and public concerns of men. A glance at the haphazard and incomplete list above will demonstrate that such words are woven into the fabric of human living: when men want to talk or write or read or think about such subjects as government, economics, sociology, history, philosophy, religion, ethics, law, literature, art, current events—even language itself—they cannot escape abstract words, for abstract words must be used in dealing with such subjects; and it is, or at least seems to be, inevitable that some of these words will (1) have different referential meaning for different people,

and (2) become charged positively or negatively with emotion—will, in short, be *charged abstract words.*

Because such words have great emotional power it is a delicate matter to write about them. The present readers, for example, probably feel that *some* of the words in the list above do have a clear and definite meaning. People who feel very strongly against "fascists" are often quite sure that they know, and that every intelligent person ought to know, just what a fascist is, just what the term properly means. On the other hand the people to whom the "anti-fascists" apply the label "fascist" very often indignantly deny the label; they may say they are not fascists, they are "patriots." In such circumstances we must conclude either that the term *fascist* means different things to the two parties concerned or that one of them is deliberately making a false statement. Before we jump to conclusions we need to examine other words from our list. Suppose now we try the word *communist.* Those who dislike communists are quite sure that they know, and that every intelligent person should know, just what a communist is. But again some of those who are labeled "communists" indignantly deny the label. They may say they are not communists, they are "progressives" or "liberals."

Other words on the list produce similar results. Some people say that the success of America is founded on "free enterprise"; others reply that what is called free enterprise is not really free enterprise, it is "special privilege" and "monopoly." Some opponents of Plan E (a city-manager plan of government) say the plan is "communistic"; proponents say it is not, it is most "democratic." Some Republicans charge the Democratic Party with being dominated by "labor unions"; Democrats deny this and assert that the Republican Party is run by "big business." Liberal Protestants may say that Catholics are not truly "religious"; Catholics may reply that these liberal Protestants are not truly "religious." John Dewey advocates the application of "science" to social matters; Monsignor Sheen says that John Dewey is really advocating "sci-

entism" and not science. Some people who did not like Franklin D. Roosevelt called him a "dictator"; those who did like him were angered, and disagreed with some feeling. To one user of the words, a "capitalist" is a "bloated exploiter"; to another he is instead a man of energy, foresight, and intelligence who provides employment for less able people. Because Einstein does not believe in a "personal God" and defines "religion" as devotion to some supra-personal cause, many people would say that he is an "atheist" and has no "religion." Russians say that they have "freedom" (meaning freedom from want, assured employment) and that we don't; Americans reply that Russians don't have freedom (meaning free choice of occupation, civil liberties, etc.) and that we do.

In all the illustrations given, one person or group is asserting something about an abstract term which is denied by another group. Each party feels that the other is not telling the "truth." In each case we can say either that the term means different things to different people (i.e., that the referential meaning is different), or that one-half of the people mentioned are actually engaging in deliberate falsehood. Since many differences of this sort occur every day between people who seem honest, intelligent, and well intentioned, it seems that it often is the unfixed referential meaning of the abstractions used, and not deliberate falsehood, that produces the contradiction. In fact it often happens that each party in a disagreement feels so sure he is telling the "truth" that he accuses the other party of "distorting the truth"; and the accused party is frequently stung by the "injustice" of the accusation and the "dishonesty" of his accuser.

It is perhaps clear by now that these charged abstract words really do have different referential meanings for different people. Further examples will show that they also have different emotional associations (charges), positive and negative, for different people. Those who choose to call themselves "progressives" do so because the word stands to them for their set of beliefs; and since the word serves as a symbol

or label for what they believe, it naturally has a positive charge for them. People who call themselves "conservatives" have a similar favorable feeling toward the word *conservative* for similar reasons. But since "progressives" and "conservatives" are in frequent conflict, it is equally natural that for the progressive, *conservative* is a negatively charged term and that for the conservative, *progressive* is a negatively charged term.

Since charged abstract words deal with matters that are of utmost importance to men, and since, as we have seen, they may mean different things, both referentially and emotively, when different men use them or hear them, it naturally follows that they produce confusion and exasperation, and cause misunderstanding and ill-feeling. It is clear too that they can produce such results even when they are used by intelligent and well-intentioned people.

We have by no means exhausted the types of charged words, but enough has been said to give some meaning to the word *charged* and to label certain common and influential types of charged words: *charged words of everyday living, charged taboo words, charged proper names,* and *charged abstract words.* We need to consider now two special types of charged abstract words: *charged words of personal attitude,* and *charged words of race or nationality.*

Charged words of personal attitude serve to express our tastes or distastes, our approval or disapproval; they convey not facts but attitudes and opinions. Examples are: *interesting, dull, pretty, ugly, disgusting, attractive, sound, absurd.* Such words deserve attention because they usually seem to have much more referential meaning than they actually have. When two students read the same book and one calls it interesting and the other calls it dull, each is likely to think that he has made a referential statement, that he has communicated a fact about the book. Actually neither has given any information about the book itself. The "fact" communicated is a fact about what is going on in the student's mind, a fact

about how he feels toward the book, what his attitude is. Similarly, if we say that the Republican Party or the Democratic Party is the "best" party, we have expressed an opinion and revealed something about ourselves, but we have not stated a fact. Unless we distinguish clearly between fact and opinion, it is easy to deceive ourselves or to be deceived by others.

Charged words of race and nationality work in the same deceptive way, but more subtly, and with more serious consequences.[2] Sometimes they give a certain amount of accurate, referential information; sometimes they give little or none. When we are told that a man is an Italian, for example, we have little or no sure information about him, for the only statement that we can make with certainty about all Italians is that they live in Italy or that some of their ancestors lived in Italy. There are no physical traits which all Italians have in common—some are blond and others are dark, some are short and others are tall; and there are no traits of personality or intellect which all Italians share—some are educated and some are not, some are quick to anger and others are slow, some speak Italian and others do not. The word *Italian* is applied to people (Dante, Marconi, Al Capone, Mussolini, Garibaldi, Michelangelo) who have nothing in common except the fact that they or their ancestors were born in Italy.

What has been said of the word *Italian* is also true of *German, Irishman, American, Frenchman,* and numerous other words of nationality. In every case the word tells us nothing certain about the man except that he or his ancestors were or are natives of a particular country. The word *Jew* actually tells us less than any of the words mentioned above, for there is nothing that is common to all people called Jews, neither

[2] A full explanation of why such words affect us as they do would require an excursion into the special fields of biology, psychology, anthropology, and perhaps sociology. Students who are particularly interested in race will find much information in *Heredity, Race, and Society,* written by L. C. Dunn and Theodosius Dobzhansky, biologists, and published by The New American Library of World Literature, Inc.

nationality nor, as was originally the case, a common religion.

Some words of race and nationality do convey a certain amount of referential meaning. *Negro, Japanese, Chinese, American Indian* are likely to give some information about the physical appearance of the human being to whom they are applied. To say, for example, that Paul Robeson is a Negro is to make a statement with some referential meaning; from that statement we gain a general idea of his skin color, head shape, and hair. But even when words of race or nationality do have some referential meaning, they often focus interest on what is least significant about a human being. Certainly skin color, head shape, and hair are not the most important considerations if one is trying to evaluate Mr. Robeson as a person. To do that it is necessary to consider such things as the fact that he is a Phi Beta Kappa, a one-time all-American football player, a distinguished actor, and one of the greatest living singers.

Charged words of race and nationality are deceptive because to many people they seem to have more referential meaning, to give more information, than they actually do. Often they are precharged words which cause us to prejudge the referent. Words like *Negro* and *Japanese* which give a limited amount of referential meaning about physical characteristics frequently mislead because they cause people to jump from physical characteristics to judgments of character and personality. To argue from physical traits to character traits is to use the kind of poor logic found in such generalizations as "All blondes are unreliable," or "All red-haired people are hot tempered." A particular fair-haired person may be a model of reliability and a particular red-haired person may be a model of calm.

Because labels of race and nationality are misleading, we use language well if whenever possible we tear off the precharged label and look directly at the referent, the individual to whom the label refers. If we fail to look behind the label we are likely to become victims of words and to respond un-

discriminatingly to the emotional charges of words that have little or no referential meaning. Jews, Negroes, Italians, Germans, Russians, Americans, English, Japanese—all races and all nationalities are made up of individuals, each with a multitude of individual traits, good and bad. We know what extraordinarily complicated creatures we and our friends and the members of our group are; we should realize that all human beings, as biologists and psychologists tell us, are strikingly like us. Like us they should be judged as individuals on the basis of what they are and what they do, not prejudged on the basis of the precharged words of race and nationality.

CHAPTER REVIEW

If your reading of this chapter has been adequate you should

1. be able to define accurately and explain clearly the meaning of the following terms:

good English	locution
plain sense	referential meaning
intention	attitudinal meaning
attitude	charged words
context	precharged words
referent	connotative words

2. be able to distinguish between and give examples of the following terms:

   plain sense, intention, attitude
   personal and impersonal style
   word and referent
   referential and attitudinal meaning
   concrete and abstract words

3. be able to state the important things that one should be aware of concerning:

   context and meaning
   charged abstract words
   charged words of personal attitude
   charged words of race and nationality

EXERCISES

I. Make a list of the first ten words that come into your mind. How many of them have more than one general meaning? How many are often used figuratively (i.e., in metaphors and similes)? Can you think of any word which always has exactly the same meaning?

II. The analogy between dress and language has been mentioned on page 3. What further analogy can you see between the two?

III. *A*, making an important long distance call, is interrupted by *B*. *A* thinks of three ways of conveying to *B* that he does not want to be disturbed: (1) "Excuse me, please; this is a very important long distance call"; (2) "Hello, be with you in a minute"; (3) "Shut the door and be quiet." Consider the difference in plain sense, attitude, and intention of these three communications. If you were the speaker, which expression would you use, and why? Is one of the expressions "better English" than the other two?

IV. "The board is on the fence." What different meanings can this sentence have, and what determines its meaning?

V. In the following passage find examples of precharged words, lightly charged words, and context-charged words:

The Mayor spoke forthrightly. He stated the facts without attempting to conceal his honest indignation: "These political obstructionists who are willing to sacrifice the health and safety of children to achieve selfish ends and to discredit my administration have endeavored to stop my program of reconstruction. The blame for the delay in opening the schools must be placed squarely on the shoulders of a group of hungry political office-seekers who practiced false economy in the past and are making a serious attempt to discredit good government."

VI. In the sentences below, substitute for each italicized locution an expression with a similar referential meaning but a less favorable connotation.

Examples:

She *placed a moist cloth* on his forehead. [slapped a wet rag]
He *talked steadily* for half an hour. [droned on]

1. He *strode* onto the platform and *smiled* at the audience.
2. The woman *reproved* her *carefree* daughter for the *untidiness* of the girl's room.
3. The *policeman* had a *large, strong* neck.
4. He *left college* because he *had difficulty with* English, mathematics, and biology.
5. The army *withdrew to a strategic position.*
6. He read the *description on the jacket* of the book.
7. He is a *high-ranking officer* in the Navy and a *strict disciplinarian.*
8. He *closed* the door, *tossed* the book on the table, and *called to* his wife.
9. He is *an affectionate* parent who *treats his children with indulgence.*
10. She is an *unmarried woman* of fifty who is always ready *to give information about her neighbors* and who *takes an interest in everything that they do.*
11. He *frankly admitted* that he had *misrepresented the facts,* and he *asked* for *considerate treatment.*
12. The Mayor spoke *forthrightly.* He *stated the facts* without *attempting to conceal* his *honest indignation.*

VII. In the light of what you have learned about language, comment on the use of language in the following statements.

1. I'm telling you the truth. He's the meanest man in the world.
2. I don't care if he was born in this country and has a good reputation in town. You can't trust a Jap.
3. Tests show that clothes wash 60% whiter with Bubblo, the Magic Soap.
4. He must be a communist. He has a lot of radical literature around his house.
5. How do I know his parents are ignorant Polacks? Why, I've met them, and they can't even speak good English.
6. I don't believe in socialized medicine because it's undemocratic.
7. The book was so dull, I went to sleep before I was half through it.

8. Promote Alderman

JOHN E. JONES
to
REPRESENTATIVE

Lifelong resident of Greentown
Educated in Greentown schools
Father of six children
Alderman 1946–1947–1948
Familiar with problems of the veteran,
taxpayer, and workingman

ELECT JOHN E. JONES REPRESENTATIVE

CHAPTER TWO

CHARGED MEANING

IN CHAPTER ONE we have examined the parts of meaning, the importance of context in determining the meanings of words, the difference between referential and attitudinal meaning, and certain influential types of charged words. Chapter Two continues this discussion of language and meaning. Here we shall consider in more detail the effects of charged words, and analyze the characteristics, techniques, and uses of charged language. This chapter, like Chapter One, is designed to give the student a sounder general understanding of how his language works, and how language affects thinking and action.

I. CHARGED WORDS IN ACTION

As we watch the effect of charged words, we see that in addition to causing arguments and misunderstandings, they influence the thoughts, opinions, and actions of men. Many people who hear the word *communist* associated with the city-manager form of government known as "Plan E" will feel unfavorably inclined toward the plan, and perhaps will vote against it without stopping to consider just what the word *communist* means in this context, and in just what ways, if any, this term applies to the complex many-sided *actuality:*

Plan E *functioning* in particular communities. People who hear that cooperatives are "socialistic" may be similarly influenced, may associate the word *socialism* with the word *cooperative,* and so feel favorably or unfavorably disposed (depending on what emotion the word *socialistic* arouses in them) toward the actual cooperatives. If, on the other hand, people hear or read that Plan E is a "truly democratic" form of city government and that cooperatives fit well into the "American way of life," they are likely to carry over the favorable associations, charges, that these phrases have, and to be favorably disposed toward Plan E and toward cooperatives. People feel differently toward the same referent ("thing" or "idea") as different words are used to refer to it. This kind of transferred emotional meaning is so common that we are all victims of it. It may be worth noting here, by the way, that those who are intimately informed about the thing itself, Plan-E-in-operation or cooperatives-in-operation, are much less likely to have their opinion changed by the charged words which others apply to that thing, even though they are pleased or annoyed by the use of the words, than would be those who are less well informed.

Charged words, abstract or concrete, may be used for different purposes and with different intentions. Much of the time the user is innocent of any concealed intention; he thinks he is giving information, is stating a "fact." For him the words have, or seem to have, clear referential meaning, and he is simply trying to convey that meaning. The farmer and his college-student son, for example, belong in this category, and their whole frustrating discussion grew out of their honest intentions and their ignorance of the characteristics of charged abstract words. A good many misunderstandings in daily life are produced in the same way. The college student who in good faith describes a girl as a "beauty" and even more concretely as a "good dancer" and arranges for an acquaintance to take the girl dancing may be trusting too much in the referential meaning that these charged words have *for*

him.[1] The acquaintance may have a disappointing evening because the girl is "too thin to be beautiful" and "too tall to be a good dancer." *Beauty* and *good dancer* mean different things to different people.

Between people who know each other and each other's opinions and attitudes well, however, expressions that are usually charged and abstract often convey a kind of referential meaning that is adequate for some purposes of communication. One reason we find it easy to talk to our friends is that over a period of time the whole context of our association has enabled us to fix on a somewhat similar referential meaning for some of the abstract words we use frequently. We can say to these friends that such and such a bill before Congress will "hurt business" or is "anti-labor," and the friends will have a fairly clear idea of the referential meaning of the expressions as we use them. On the other hand, a stranger present at the same conversation would be likely to carry away from it little meaning or at least little of *our* meaning.

Charged words may also be used intentionally for emotive effect. Some newspapers and periodicals frequently use such words in their editorial columns and cartoons, in captions under photographs, and even in their headlines and titles. (Words in cartoons, by the way, have a particularly forceful charge, for along with the word—*labor* or *management,* for example—the cartoonist gives the pictorial representation that he would like us to associate with the word or to accept as the meaning of the word. Illustrated advertisements work in a similar way.) Many syndicated columnists, editorial writers, and radio commentators are artists in using charged abstract words and other techniques of "charged language." Largely by the use of charged expressions, they exert tremendous persuasive power over their audiences, and cause

[1] These two expressions illustrate the fact that it is hard to place words in definite categories. Here, for example, *beauty* can be called a charged abstract word and also a charged word of personal attitude. In the phrase "good dancer," *dancer* is a fairly concrete word, but *good,* like *beauty,* is a charged abstract word which conveys personal attitude.

many uninformed people to approve, almost mechanically, what such communicators approve, and to condemn what they condemn. Thus their audiences may come to believe on the basis of a few facts and much charged language that "labor leaders are all racketeers" or that "labor is the only bulwark against fascism." When one tries to think of the names of those who are skilled in using charged words to influence, subtly or obviously, for "good causes" or "bad," the emotions of their audience, a strangely assorted list comes to mind—William Randolph Hearst, George Seldes, Walter Winchell, Dorothy Thompson, Westbrook Pegler, Fulton Lewis. Students are invited to examine objectively the use of charged words by their own favorite columnist, editorial writer, or news commentator. Most students will not need to be invited to "tear to pieces" the speeches and writings of those writers and radio commentators with whom they strongly disagree.

It is worth noting here that we need to be slow in judging the intentions and character of people who use heavily charged words. (This applies, of course, to those whose names have just been mentioned.) If Thomas Paine had not so powerfully used charged language in *The Crisis* we might not now be citizens of the United States of America; and however we may feel toward Winston Churchill, it seems clear that his heavily charged speeches did much to hearten the English people during the darkest moments of the war. *Some* of the most unrestrained users of heavily charged words are not the "subversive" or "mercenary" or "hypocritical" villains that we take them to be. They may be people who are well intentioned and who are simply trying to give forceful expression to their own deep convictions, to "truth" as they see it. Charity is a virtue we practice too seldom in judging the character and intentions of those who attack our cherished beliefs. We are too ready to call those with whom we agree "impassioned defenders of the truth" and those with whom we disagree "dishonest propagandists" who have "ulterior motives." Socrates thought that all men seek the good, and most men fail,

through ignorance, to find it. A knowledge of how language works should promote judicious tolerance at the same time that it decreases our gullibility.

In this charitable frame of mind we can approach the political use of language, one of the richest fields for the student of charged words. Those who phrase party platforms, *all* party platforms, are not using words just to state what the party stands for and what it will do if it is in power. They are using words also to get votes, and they can't help knowing that charged words often supply the current necessary to carry voters to the polls. People seeking political office naturally use words for the same purpose. Why is it that candidates for political office deal with the issues only in very general language, paint such lurid pictures of one another during campaigns, and then after the election reconcile themselves so easily to that public calamity, the election of their opponent? It is because of accepted political folkways, and also because of certain facts about language. For one thing, the use of charged language arouses people and makes them want to vote; many citizens take the charged language of politicians much more seriously than do the politicians themselves. For another thing, abstract and charged language is much safer politically than definite, referential statement. It is generally safer for a candidate to say that he will "eliminate abuses and give honest and economical government" than to name the abuses he will eliminate (thereby losing the votes of those closely associated with the abuses), and the particular economies he will practice (thereby losing the votes of those whom the economies will affect adversely).

Still another reason for the use of charged political language is that the candidate has to gain the attention of the voters, to interest them, or they won't listen to him. Modern government is not an easy subject to make interesting or clear to a general audience; this is true even of local government, and national government is much more complicated and abstract. If a candidate really resolved that he would try, by

means of referential language and reason, to convince his audiences that they should vote for him, he would then be obliged to give his stand on various issues and his reasons for his stand. Since most of the public is unaware of the facts on complex issues—for example, foreign policy—our candidate would find it necessary, in explaining his reasons, to present complex subjects in reasonably concrete referential language, in short to educate the voters, instead of following the usual procedure of appealing primarily to their emotions and fixed ideas. But it is notorious that many people, even some college students, regard being educated as a strenuous, and frequently a "dull" and "uninteresting" experience. It looks, then, as though our "really informative" candidate might lose his audience to his more stimulating, dramatic, name-calling opponent. When one examines the problems that even a well-intentioned, widely informed candidate is obliged to face, it is not surprising that most office-seekers use the charged words and vague generalities of "political language." Such language interests voters and attracts votes; at the same time, it conceals the candidate's ignorance on some issues (candidates can't know all the facts about all the issues) and allows him to avoid making particular statements which might cause some voters not to vote for him. As long as political language produces enough votes, politicians are likely to continue to employ it.

This discussion of the political use of language is not intended to encourage cynicism. When we say that the intention of the politician is to get votes, we refer only to immediate intention. Certainly there are many admirable candidates for political office who have the long-run intention of contributing their part to good government. The fact is that the *kind of language* one uses is to a considerable degree dictated by the *kind of activity* that one engages in. Scientists *as* scientists must use referential language; because they are dealing with the facts of the physical world, they must use words that refer to such facts. Politicians and others who

address the general public must speak in language that is meaningful emotionally as well as referentially. It is noticeable that when scientists want to convince the public of the dangers or the possibilities that lie in atomic power, they too use language that is colored with emotion.

It is true that many politicians carry the use of political language to extremes that are hard to justify, but before we condemn all politicians for the way they use language, we need to consider what, in the very nature of language, may make them speak as they do; and also just what we should do and say if we were candidates. As voters we can do our part in making candidates more informative by not being so gullible as to vote the "straight party ticket," and by insisting that those for whom we cast our votes must, at least part of the time, talk informatively about the issues. When presumably informed or educated people are unaware of the character of political language, they are likely to be deceived by it or to be disgusted with politics in general. Either gullibility or disgusted indifference contributes to the election of self-seeking and verbally-clever candidates instead of the informed, competent leaders that we need. Good citizens are not those who parrot the slogans of political language, nor are they ostriches who bury their heads in the sand to stop up their ears. This last comparison is unfair to ostriches: *they* do not really bury their heads, and they have no obligations as citizens.

II. CHARGED WORDS AND SLANTING: CHARGED LANGUAGE

Thus far our examples of charged words have been given with just enough context to make our point clear. Now we can consider the effect produced by charged words and other emotive devices in a longer context where they **work together** to produce **charged language.** From this point on we shall use the term *charged language* to describe language which

uses to a marked degree any or all of the devices for conveying a favorable or unfavorable impression. Language may be intentionally or unintentionally charged, and it may, of course, be charged favorably or unfavorably, positively or negatively. Much of the language we use in daily life is unintentionally charged; we frequently are communicating feelings, "attitudes," even when we stoutly believe that we are conveying nothing but "plain sense." For the present we can stop with this very general description of charged language. As we go on, examples and further discussion will make the meaning of the term clearer.

Below are passages which show how charged words work together in a context of some length to produce charged language, and to influence our judgments and attitudes as we read or listen. These passages, not intended to be models of style, were written by a clever student who was told to choose as his subject a person in action, and to write two descriptions, each using the "same facts." The instructions required that one description be charged positively and the other negatively, so that the first would make the reader favorably inclined toward the person and the action, and the second would make the reader unfavorably inclined.

Here is the favorably charged description. Read it carefully and form your opinion of the person before you go on to read the second description.

CORLYN

Corlyn paused at the entrance to the room and glanced about. A well-cut black dress draped subtly about her slender form. Her long blonde hair gave her chiseled features the simple frame they required. She smiled an engaging smile as she accepted a cigarette from her escort. As he lit it for her she looked over the flame and into his eyes. Corlyn had that rare talent of making every male feel that he was the one man in the world.

She took his arm and they descended the steps into the room. She walked with an effortless grace and spoke with equal ease. They each took a cocktail and joined a group of friends near the fire. The flickering light danced across her face and lent an

ethereal quality to her beauty. The good conversation, the crackling logs, and the excellent drink gave her a feeling of internal warmth. Her eyes danced with each leap of the flames.

Taken by itself this passage might seem just a description of an attractive girl. The favorable charging has been done so skillfully that it is inconspicuous. Now we can turn to the unfavorably charged description of the "same" girl engaged in the "same" actions.

CORLYN

Corlyn halted at the entrance to the room and looked around. A plain black dress hung on her thin frame. Her stringy bleached hair accentuated her harsh features. She smiled an inane smile as she took a cigarette from her escort. As he lit it for her she stared over the lighter and into his eyes. Corlyn had a habit of making every male feel that he was the last man on the earth.

She grasped his arm and they walked down the steps and into the room. Her pace was fast and ungainly as was her speech. They each reached for a cocktail and broke into a group of acquaintances near the fire. The flickering light played across her face and revealed every flaw. The loud talk, the fire, and the strong drink made her feel hot. Her eyes grew more red with each leap of the flames.

When the reader compares these two charged descriptions, he can see how charged words work in the context of charged language. One needs to read the two versions several times to appreciate all the subtle differences between them. Charged language, it is clear, is something more than a group of obviously charged words strung together. In the descriptions of Corlyn, innocent-looking words work together to carry to the reader a judgment of a person and a situation. If the reader had seen only the first description of Corlyn, he might well have thought that he had formed his "own judgment on the basis of the facts." And the examples just given only begin to suggest the techniques that may be used in charged language. For one thing, the two descriptions contain no really

good example of the use of charged abstractions; for another, because of the instructions given, the writer could not make use of *slanting.*

Since *slanting* plays an important part in producing the impression that we get from what we read or hear, we need a definition of the term and some illustrations. We can define **slanting** as the **selecting** of material (facts, figures—all the details that combine to produce the substance of the communication) and the **emphasizing** of that material to produce in the receiver a favorable or unfavorable impression.

Perhaps the best way to illustrate slanting is to show the different impressions that one may get of a subject, in this case a dog, as a result of different ways of selecting and emphasizing facts.

A. Balanced presentation

Our dog, Toddy, sold to us as a cocker, produces various reactions in various people. Those who come to the back door she usually growls and barks at (a milkman has said that he is afraid of her); those who come to the front door, she whines at and paws, and she tries to lick their faces unless we have forestalled her by putting a newspaper in her mouth. (Some of our friends encourage these displays of affection; Mrs. Firmly, another friend, calmly slaps the dog with a newspaper and says, "I know how hard dogs are to train.") Toddy knows and responds to a number of words and phrases, and polite guests sometimes remark that she is a "very intelligent dog." She has fleas in the spring, and she sheds, at times copiously, the year round. Her blond hairs are conspicuous when they are on people's clothing or on rugs or furniture. Her color and her large brown eyes frequently produce favorable comment. An expert on cockers would say that her ears are too short and set too high and that she is at least six pounds too heavy.

The passage above is made up of facts, verifiable facts,[2] deliberately selected and emphasized to produce a *balanced*

[2] Verifiable facts are facts that can be checked and agreed upon and proved to be true by people who wish to verify them. That a particular theme received a failing grade is a verifiable fact; one needs merely to see the theme with the grade on it. That the instructor should have failed the theme is not,

impression. Both favorable and unfavorable facts are used, and an effort has been made to alternate favorable and unfavorable details so that neither will receive greater emphasis by position, proportion, or subordination. We shall use the term *balanced presentation* to refer to this impartial selection and emphasis, and reserve the word *slanting* for selecting and emphasizing to produce a favorable or unfavorable impression.

B. Slanted *against*

That dog! She put her paws on my white dress as soon as I came in the door, and she made so much noise that it was two minutes before she had quieted down and we could talk. Then the gas man came and she did a great deal of barking. And her hairs! They are on the rug and on the furniture. If you wear a dark dress they stick to it like lint. When Mrs. Firmly came in she actually hit the dog with a newspaper to make it stay down, and she made some remark about training dogs. I wish the Birks would take the hint or get rid of that noisy, short-eared, overweight "cocker" of theirs.

This unfavorably slanted version is based on the same facts, but now these facts have been selected and given a new emphasis. The speaker, using her selected facts to give her impression of the dog, is quite possibly unaware of her negative "slanting."

Now for a favorably slanted version:

C. Slanted *for*

What a friendly dog! When I walked in the door, there she was with a newspaper in her mouth, whining and standing on her hind legs and wagging her tail all at the same time. And what an intelligent dog. If you suggest going for a walk, she will get her collar from the kitchen and hand it to you, and she

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strictly speaking, a verifiable fact but a matter of judgment. Possibly student and teacher will not agree on this matter of judgment. That women on the average live longer than men is a verifiable fact; that they live better is a matter of opinion, a "value judgment."

brings Mrs. Birk's slippers whenever Mrs. Birk says she is "tired" or mentions slippers. At a command she catches balls, rolls over, "speaks," or stands on her hind feet and twirls around. She sits up and balances a piece of bread on her nose until she is told to take it; then she tosses it up and catches it. If you are eating something, she sits up in front of you and "begs" with those big dark brown eyes set in that light, buff-colored face of hers. When I got up to go and told her I was leaving, she rolled her eyes at me and looked sad. She certainly is an affectionate and an intelligent dog.

Speaker C, like Speaker B, is selecting from the "facts" of balanced version A, and is emphasizing his facts to communicate his impression. Both version C and version B, however, contain expressions which are not facts but which instead serve to convey personal judgments. Examples of such attitudinal expressions in C are: "What a friendly dog!" . . . "an intelligent dog" . . . "looked sad" . . . "She certainly is an affectionate dog"; similar attitudinal expressions in B are: "That dog!" . . . "and her hairs!" . . . "hint," and perhaps "noisy." All these expressions, even "that dog" and "and her hairs," are used in their context to convey subjective judgments, interpretations of fact, about which different people—Speaker B and Speaker C, for example—will not agree. They illustrate a kind of slanting that we shall consider later. Except for these attitudinal expressions, versions B and C, like balanced version A, are examples of "pure reporting" (i.e., consist only of verifiable facts).

If one now reads versions A, B, and C, discounting the attitudinal expressions, he will be reading three examples of pure "reporting," and yet he will see that *selection* and *emphasis* (slanting) of facts, can give three very different impressions of the same dog, and that the different meanings of the three passages are a result of the different ways the speakers slanted the facts. Some people say that figures don't lie, and many people believe that if they have "facts" they have the "truth." When we carefully examine language in action, we see that unless *all relevant* figures and facts are

presented, figures and facts may be so selected and so emphasized that one version will make us take a very unfavorable attitude and another a very favorable attitude. Since it is usually impossible to give all the relevant figures and facts, fair-minded people generally at least try to give a representative sampling of favorable and unfavorable details.

The vast importance of slanting in our daily lives becomes evident when we realize that nearly all our knowledge has been sifted out for us by the deliberate or unintentional slanting (selection and emphasis) of those who gave us our information. All that we know, all that anyone knows, about many important subjects has passed through the minds (often biased) of others and has been subjected to the process of selection and emphasis. Russians who have not been to America, Americans who have not been to Russia, must rely entirely on what others tell them; and such information is, it seems, inevitably, though very often unintentionally, slanted for or against. Anyone who reads the five or ten most recent books on Russia will see deliberate or unintentional, favorable or unfavorable, slanting, and will find that the books give very different impressions of that country. It doesn't solve the problem either, though it may help, to "know someone who has been to Russia." This someone cannot know all the facts, and probably he, like the rest of us, has certain preconceived opinions which cause him to see clearly what he wants to see and to see dimly or not at all what he does not want to see. The Russians, since their sources are more controlled than ours, would seem to have an even more difficult problem in knowing about this country. Perhaps enough has been said to make it apparent that awareness of slanting is important and that the "truth" about Russia or the "truth" about this country is not simple and is not easy to arrive at.

What applies to our knowledge of other countries also applies in varying degrees to our knowledge of such subjects as labor laws, tax legislation, poll-tax laws, and to our judgments of such nationally known figures as Harold Stassen,

Dwight D. Eisenhower, Thomas E. Dewey, Congressman Joseph Martin, Henry Wallace, John Foster Dulles, Senator Pepper, Senator Taft, Walter Reuther, John L. Lewis, etc. (This is so true that it is hard even to list such subjects without unintentionally slanting by the very selection of examples and the order in which they appear.) We can't help having opinions on issues and on important individuals—indeed we are in all conscience obliged to have them—but we need to realize that many of our most cherished opinions are at best based on facts and interpretations of facts supplied by others and slanted by their conscious or unconscious selection and emphasis; at worst our opinions may be based mainly on the feelings that interested people have excited in us by deliberate slanting and by use of the other devices of charged language. If we want to be fair-minded and intelligent, we must be willing to subject our opinions to continual testing, and must realize that after all they *are opinions,* personal judgments more or less trustworthy, and are *not* the "truth." The truth includes all the facts. In complex matters we can't know *all* the facts, and we could not state them if we did. Opinions are simply our approximations of truth.

Looking back for the moment to the three descriptions of the dog, Toddy, we can see that merely by the slanting of verifiable facts, three different attitudes can be produced toward such a relatively concrete and uncomplex subject as a single dog. (This confining of information to verifiable facts is the same limitation, by the way, that our newspaper reporters, radio news reporters, and foreign correspondents are supposed to observe.) Often, though, people who use charged language—and all of us do—may slant by introducing not only relevant, verifiable facts but also irrelevant facts, and relevant or irrelevant impression, opinion, inference, innuendo, irony and the like. All of these additions to verifiable fact may also be used in the process of slanting, because they are all products of selection or techniques of emphasis. In heavily charged language the effect is usually produced by a

combination of slanting (in this broad sense of the term) and charged words; and these two aspects of charged language work so closely together that it is often difficult to say whether a particular effect is produced by slanting or by the charged words that clothe the slanted fact or idea.

In the following examples, passages B and C will illustrate how slanting and charged words work together in context to produce heavily charged language. Passage B is charged and slanted in favor of Senator Patwell and the poll tax; passage C is charged and slanted against them. Passage A is intended to be a specimen of balanced reporting, and to supply the verifiable facts on which B and C are based. A is as near as we can come to a brief objective account, and, therefore, is *not* a specimen of charged language.

A. Verifiable facts: balanced version

The poll tax is again being discussed in the Senate. Senator Borgam Patwell (Democrat, Mississippi), who opposes the anti-poll-tax measure now under consideration, held the Senate floor for eight hours today. In the course of his speech Senator Patwell read from letters of Washington and Robert E. Lee and quoted passages from the Bible. Senator Angelo Patriarca (Democrat, New York), after he had charged that Senator Patwell was "filibustering," frequently raised points of order and called for the floor. Senatorial discussion of the bill will continue again tomorrow.

B. Charged language: charged and slanted for a certain type of Southern reader

The poll tax is again being attacked by a group of Northern politicians who stay in office by following the line of left-wing pressure groups and by weeping crocodile tears over the "rights" of Negroes. People with common sense, whether or not they have much book learning, know that there are good reasons for the poll-tax laws or they wouldn't have been put on the statute books by our forefathers and left there by our fathers. The laws that were good enough for our fathers are still good enough for us. We believe in equal rights for equals, and we can't help it if God made the Negro inferior to the white man. If the Negro isn't different, why did the Lord make his skin black? George

Washington, who had slaves, knew that the way to deal with Negroes is to keep them in their place. Robert E. Lee, who led our forefathers in their fight against Yankee oppression and Yankee dictatorship, knew it. The fact is that our good Negroes know it too, and old Uncle Charlie and old Aunt Mandy don't want to vote; they leave that to the "white folks." Mississippi's distinguished Senator, Borgam Patwell, descendant of General "Light Horse" Patwell, takes our common-sense point of view. Yesterday in the hushed Senate chamber our Senator delivered an eloquent and moving address in which he defended our Southern way of life against meddling Northerners and denounced the meddlers in the words of the Scripture itself. Angelo Patriarca, who got into office through the votes of Communists and other Negro-lovers and foreign riff-raff, was a typical example of the opposition and of the tactics they used in trying to impose this dangerous legislation on the South. Angelo (Italian for Angel!) Patriarca used shyster parliamentary tricks to interrupt Mississippi's Senator. On one occasion he broke in when Senator Patwell was repeating a passage from the Bible. Tomorrow Senator Patwell will again spearhead the fight to preserve States' rights and white men's rights.

C. Charged language: charged and slanted for a "liberal" or "progressive" New York audience

Senator Borgam "Molasses" Patwell is at it again. This Old Deal Southern Democrat from the black belt today spewed super-race and fascist propaganda on disgusted or half-awake Senators for eight long hours. In the course of his windy tirade he libeled George Washington by associating with that respected name his own anti-democratic and anti-American prejudices. He exalted the kind of sectionalism that should have died with the Civil War, and he expressed race attitudes that would have pleased Hitler. He even distorted the words of the Bible to preach the un-Christian hate-mongering of Gerald L. K. Smith and the Ku Klux Klan, that group of "one hundred per cent Americans" who hide Nazi swastika beliefs under their KKK nightshirts. Angelo Patriarca, New York's crusading liberal Senator, tried by skillful use of parliamentary rules to dam the muddy flow of "Molasses" Patwell. (Patwell got his nickname from his cynical remark to his close—very close—friend, the president of the reactionary NAM, that "It takes molasses to catch votes.") We know what we would like Patwell to catch—

and it isn't votes. Today democracy suffered another setback at the hands of the gentlemanly Senator from the very old South. Tomorrow is another day. May the dead past bury its dead.

Passages B and C are written in heavily charged language, in which words in context gain additional force from surrounding words, and themselves add force to those words. Thus a kind of counter-action takes place in which words act on, and react to, one another to produce the strong current of charged language. A full analysis of these intricate interactions is not desirable here, but perhaps a list of some of the common devices of charged language that appear in these passages will give a clearer idea of how charged language works. (In actual use, of course, these devices frequently overlap. Hence one should not feel surprised at seeing the same expression listed more than once.) In the charged passages B and C we find:

1. *Irrelevant facts.* These are an aspect of slanting frequently seen in B and C.

In B	In C
Patwell's ancestry	Patwell's *reactionary* NAM friend.

2. *Charged words of personal attitude.* These frequently blend in with charged abstract words, but there are some here that do not.

In B	In C
our *good* Negroes	eight *long* hours
Mississippi's *distinguished* Senator	*windy tirade*
dangerous legislation	

3. *Charged proper names.*

In B	In C
God	libeled *George Washington*
Washington	*Hitler*
Robert E. Lee	*Ku Klux Klan*
Mississippi's Senator	*New York's* Senator
the *Bible*	reactionary *NAM*

4. *Charged words of race and nationality.*

In B	In C
Negroes	*race* attitude
Negro-lovers	*"one hundred per cent Americans"*
foreign riff-raff	*Nazi*

5. *Other charged words and expressions.* Various types of charged words are numerous here. We call attention to just a few.

In B	In C
Northern politicians	*Molasses*
stay in office	*black belt*
following the line	*propaganda*
left-wing pressure groups	*anti-democratic*
common sense	
our forefathers	

6. *Name-calling.* This category of course is included under charged words, but the device is so frequently used that it deserves particular mention. Only a few of the more striking examples are listed here.

In B	In C
Yankee	*Molasses*
Communists	*Old Deal Southern Democrat*
Negro-lovers	*Nazi swastika* beliefs
riff-raff	

7. *Inferences* (the communicator's interpretation of what goes on in the minds of others), and *personal judgments* and *impressions stated as fact.* These three devices are put together because they so often shade into one another.

In B	In C
people with common sense know	*disgusted* . . . Senators
God made the Negro inferior	

8. *Innuendo* (indirect aspersion, unfavorable implication). There is a good deal of innuendo in these passages, some of it impossible to make clear without fuller discussion.

In B	In C
stay in office	*attitudes that would have pleased Hitler*
weeping crocodile tears	*nightshirts*
Italian for angel!	*close—very close*—friend
	May the *dead past* bury its *dead.*

9. *Irony and ridicule.*

In B	In C
Angelo (*Italian for angel!*)	*gentlemanly*
	their *KKK nightshirts*

10. *The false appearance of logical reasoning.* In B the passage beginning with *"People with common sense . . ."* and ending with *"make his skin black?"*

11. *Charged questions.* In B: *"If the Negro isn't different, why did the Lord make his skin black?"*

12. *The use of quotation marks in writing* (or of "so-called" in speech) to imply false meaning of words and therefore a dishonest use of the quoted expression.

In B	In C
the *"rights"* of Negroes	*"one hundred per cent Americans"*

13. *Charged metaphors and personification.* Such figures of speech can be very powerful. When they work in charged language, they are always worth particular attention. We have listed some inconspicuous, mild expressions and also some heavily charged ones.

In B	In C
attacked	*spewed propaganda*
pressure groups	*windy*
spearhead the fight	*hide Nazi swastika beliefs under their KKK nightshirts*
crocodile tears	*to dam the muddy flow*
	Democracy suffered another setback
	dead past bury its dead

Charged language used to persuade or convince gains some of its most telling effects not so much from particular words and phrases as from the whole positive or negative drift or slant of the passage. Such drift is often produced by the "right-on-our-side" technique. The communicator is trying to lead receivers to share, and to identify themselves with, the attitude he takes or appears to take. He does this by presenting two opposing sides. On one side (the communicator's, which he slants favorably as "our side") are admirable people motivated by high principles and striving to do good; on the other side are undesirable and even hateful people bent on doing harm. The receiver is intended to be sympathetic with "our side" and to identify himself emotionally with "our" cause. In version B, for example, the people on "our side" or associated with it are "Mississippi's distinguished Senator," "George Washington," "Robert E. Lee," and even God; those on the other side are the self-seeking officeholder, Patriarca, and his supporters—"Negroes," "foreign riff-raff," "communists," and other "Negro-lovers." Those on our side seek to preserve all that is best in the "Southern way of life," and those on the other side are determined to "impose" "Yankee" laws and to destroy the wise and traditional Southern civilization. Passage C uses the same techniques, but now those who are intended to engage the reader's admiration are "liberal" Senator Patriarca and other believers in "democracy" who are opposing "Molasses" Patwell and the "anti-democratic and un-American prejudices" held by "reactionaries and fascists." The "right-on-our-side" technique is a common method of slanting and is to be found very often in persuasive writing or speaking.

III. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Let us now take a general view of the ground that we have covered in the first two chapters. Such a view can best be given in a series of summary statements:

1. Mere formal rules are not adequate guides for the mature student of English. *Good English* is not just "correct" English; it is expression that is *appropriate* to the *occasion* and to the *intention* of the communicator.

2. Since the main function of language is communication, we may define *language* as a verbal means of *communicating something* to *someone* for some *purpose.* Hence it involves (a) the *meaning,* (b) the *communicator,* and (c) the *receiver.*

3. For the purpose of analysis we can break up meaning into three parts: *plain sense, intention,* and *attitude.*

4. Depending on the intention of the communicator, language may be used (a) *to inform,* (b) *to persuade or convince,* or (c) *to convey feelings* (attitude).

5. Though isolated words may have certain *general* meanings, the *particular meaning* (*referential* or *attitudinal*) of a word is determined by its context.

6. Words may have two kinds of meaning: (a) they may refer to *things or ideas* (*referential meaning*) or (b) they may convey *feeling* (*attitudinal meaning*).

7. The ideas, attitudes, and actions of men may be profoundly influenced by the use of *charged words* and by the *slanting* of material. Language which uses to a marked degree *charged words* or the techniques of *slanting,* or both, is called *charged language.*

8. The most common devices and techniques of charged language are: (a) the false appearance of logical reasoning; (b) slanting by including irrelevant material for purposes of persuasion; (c) use of charged words of personal attitude; charged words of race and nationality; name-calling; charged proper names; charged questions; inference, innuendo, irony, ridicule; charged metaphors, similes, personifications; and other charged words and expressions; (d) the "right-on-our-side" technique.

As the reader looks over this brief summary and considers the facts about language given in these two chapters, he needs

to be reminded that any general treatment of a large subject is likely to misrepresent by oversimplifying, or by emphasizing some points and omitting or touching very lightly on others.

It has been difficult in this short view—perhaps we should call it a glimpse—to draw fine distinctions and to make the qualifying statements that prevent oversimplification. For example, we have dealt with the parts of meaning as if these parts could be separated and examined individually. Actually, of course, meaning is not just a mixture of plain sense, intention, and attitude; it is a fused unit more like a chemical compound. In it the parts unite to produce a new and different unity much as the elements hydrogen and oxygen and sulphur unite to produce sulphuric acid. The inserting of the word *not* into a verbal compound may be like changing an acid into a salt, and any slight change in phrasing produces a change in meaning. Because it is similar to a variable compound and because a different compound is produced each time the elements are united in different proportions, language is extremely complex and difficult to describe. Our simplified picture is intended to give a general understanding, not a precise description.

The emphasis that we have given to parts of the material is also likely to be misleading unless the reader realizes that our chief aim has been to deal with the trouble-spots in language, those aspects or uses of language about which one cannot afford to be ignorant. The emphasis that we have placed on highly charged words, for example, could cause a reader to overlook the fact that some very slightly charged, "connotative" words may be equally important; they communicate subtle overtones and shades of feeling. When we want to let others know exactly what our attitudes are or when we want to know exactly what the attitudes of others are, connotative words carry an important part of meaning.

Our emphasis on the language of persuasion (often heavily charged) also is likely to mislead the reader. It may seem to

make the persuasive use of language much more important than the other uses. The fact is, of course, that language is very frequently used for purposes other than persuasion. But an examination of the primarily informative use of language would lead into the realm of science and exact knowledge, and an examination of the artistic or creative use of language would lead into the realm of literature. There are good reasons why we should not, in the present chapter, trespass on either realm: the literary use of language is best understood by reading literature and cannot be given adequate treatment without the accompaniment of such reading; the informative or scientific use of language, though very important, does not offer the same problems in communication that the other two, persuasive and literary, do, for it is little complicated by the use of attitudinal language. When men use language primarily to inform—as they do in instructions, directions, reports, and in dealing with the facts of the physical sciences—they communicate with some difficulty, it is true, but with amazing accuracy and with comparatively little misunderstanding. It is when *feeling* is an important part of meaning that men have really serious and crucial misunderstandings.

Charged language deserves further comment here, for we have said much about the harm it may do and little about its equally great power for good. It is true that charged language may be used to spread prejudice and hate and discord, but it can also promote fairness and tolerance and understanding. Through it human beings can communicate their most subtle feelings and experiences and can give vital, compelling expression to the highest, most civilized ideals of human conduct. Wise and kindly men—Socrates, Jesus, Shakespeare, Franklin, Lincoln—have used language in this way and have left for all mankind a heritage at least as rich as the vast store of factual information which language also preserves for us and enables us to add to and to pass on. Men have to know facts, but they cannot live by facts and logic alone.

John Stuart Mill, although he had been trained from infancy to be one of the most factual and logical of men, came to recognize what he called the motive power of emotion and turned to Wordsworth's poetry for the *attitude* of peace and joy and serenity that he found there. Like Mill, we must have beliefs and values, and only by attitudinal language, the language of feeling, can beliefs and values be given meaningful expression.

More than we realize, our lives are shaped by the language that we use and that others use. If we do not gain some understanding, some mastery, of language, other people's language will gain mastery over us. If we respond automatically to positively and negatively charged words as steel filings do to an electro-magnet, we are not free, intelligent human beings but puppets moved by the strings of language in the hands of a skillful manipulator. Having a mastery of language does not, however, mean that we should never use charged language and never respond to it.[3] It means that we should not respond thoughtlessly to charged language used for subhuman ends, and that we should try not to use ignorantly or carelessly the sometimes irresistible force of emotional language.

For mastery over language one needs skill in communication and skill in interpretation. These skills can be gained most rapidly by first taking a broad general view of language; then by studying the necessary particulars about the conventions and use of English; and finally by putting this general and particular knowledge into actual practice in one's own reading, listening, speaking, writing, and thinking.

CHAPTER REVIEW

If your reading of this chapter has been adequate you should

[3] The student who is alert to the devices of charged language should have realized as he read this chapter that there are in it passages in which charged language is aimed at the reader (see Exercise III, p. 59).

1. be able to define accurately and explain clearly the meaning of the following terms:

   slanting
   charged language
   the "right-on-our-side" technique

2. be able to distinguish between and give examples of the following terms:

   verifiable fact and judgment
   charged words and slanting

3. be able to state the important things that one should be aware of concerning:

   political language
   the use and abuse of charged language

If your reading of the first two chapters has been adequate, you should understand all statements and be able to define all terms in the summary, pages 52–53.

EXERCISES

I. The following passage is a collection of verifiable facts about a college professor. Read the passage, and then see the questions below.

Professor Bestworst, a man of sixty, teaches a course in English. The twenty-five students in the course average two and a half hours of study a day, and three of the students who received a grade of C spent an average of four hours a day. The two A students spent respectively an hour and a half and three hours. Professor Bestworst starts the class exactly at the beginning of the hour. Usually he also stops exactly on the hour, but four times he talked over, once for ten minutes. He announced at the beginning of the term that students could expect ten-minute unannounced quizzes at the beginning of the hour on the assignment for that day, and he gave eight such quizzes, one on the day before Christmas vacation. He graded all the quizzes, wrote detailed comments on a number of them, and returned them. Students never complain that they cannot hear Professor Bestworst, and the secretary whose office is next to his classroom says

that she overhears him quite clearly. She says also that she hears frequent laughter from the students. Miss Languish, a C student in the class, says that the course is dull and is unreasonably hard, and Miss Beaver, a B student, says that it is the best course in the college and that she would like to take it again. One student in the class estimated that Professor Bestworst said "I think" or "I believe" or "it seems to me" an average of about thirty times each class hour; another student said that the professor was undogmatic and did not require students to agree with him. Girls in the class who scrutinize Professor Bestworst's dress comment favorably on his ties but notice that he often wears the same suit for two weeks and that on winter days he sometimes lectures with his galoshes on.

1. What general conclusions about the professor and his course do you think it would be fair to draw?

2. What might be said by a student who liked the professor very much? By one who was hostile toward the professor?

3. With the facts as a basis, write two passages of charged language, one favorable and the other unfavorable, about Professor Bestworst.

II. Write three descriptions (each about 150 words) of a person or place that you know. Selecting from the same basic facts, but using any devices of charging and slanting you wish to use, try in the first account to create a favorable impression of the subject and in the second an unfavorable impression. In the third account, write an impartial or balanced report of the same person or place. This third account should consist entirely of verifiable facts. Make it at least as long as the other two, and try, by means of verifiable detail, to make it as interesting to the reader as the charged and slanted versions.

III. On pages 49–52 two passages have been analyzed to illustrate the techniques of charging and slanting. Jot down notes for a similar analysis of the five passages quoted below. In your analysis consider the use of the following:

the "right-on-our-side" technique
irrelevant facts

charged words of personal attitude
charged words of race and nationality
name-calling and charged proper names
other charged words and expressions
inferences
innuendo
irony and ridicule
the false appearance of logical reasoning
charged metaphors, similes, and personifications
any other devices for influencing the emotions of the reader

1. The following paragraph was taken from page 39 of this book. It represents the honest opinion of the writer, but it was deliberately written in charged language. (Students who read it and did not notice the charging evidently are not sufficiently alert to the techniques of charging and slanting. Other passages in Chapters One and Two also have been deliberately written in language that is somewhat charged; discovering these passages might be an interesting exercise for curious readers.)

It is true that many politicians carry the use of political language to extremes that are hard to justify, but before we condemn all politicians for the way they use language, we need to consider what, in the very nature of language, may make them speak as they do; and also just what we should do and say if we were candidates. As voters we can do our part in making candidates more informative by not being so gullible as to vote the "straight party ticket," and by insisting that those for whom we cast our votes must, at least part of the time, talk informatively about the issues. When presumably informed or educated people are unaware of the character of political language, they are likely to be deceived by it or to be disgusted with politics in general. Either gullibility or disgusted indifference contributes to the election of self-seeking and verbally-clever candidates instead of the informed, competent leaders that we need. Good citizens are not those who parrot the slogans of political language, nor are they ostriches who bury their heads in the sand to stop up their ears. This last comparison is unfair to ostriches: *they* do not really bury their heads, and they have no obligations as citizens.

2. This paragraph was taken from *Color Blind* by Margaret Halsey, a very popular non-fiction book published in 1946.

"There will always be prejudice, and there is nothing anyone can do about it, so why try?" This pronouncement, made with an air of hearty and complacent cynicism, is usually regarded by its owners as an example of fine Olympian detachment. And so it is, although fine Olympian detachment about things which are not personally inconvenient is a state easily attained by babies on leading strings and puppies in a basket. The assertion that nothing can be done about prejudice is suspicious in character, but it is certainly true that prejudice will always exist. So will sickness and disease, but that scarcely seems sufficient reason for telling our medical scientists to put on their hats, close up their laboratories, and give the spirochetes, bacilli and viruses a free hand.[4]

3. This passage is the first paragraph in *The Crisis,* a history-making book written by Thomas Paine in 1776.

These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will in this crisis shrink from the service of his country; but he that stands it NOW deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph. What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly: 'tis dearness only that gives everything its value. Heaven knows how to put a proper price upon its goods; and it would be strange indeed if so celestial an article as FREEDOM should not be highly rated. Britain, with an army to enforce her tyranny, has declared that she has a right (not only to) TAX but "to BIND us in ALL CASES WHATSOEVER," and if being *bound in that manner* is not slavery, then is there not such a thing as slavery upon earth. Even the expression is impious, for so unlimited a power can belong only to GOD.

4. The following paragraphs are taken from pages 101 and 104 of *Heredity, Race and Society* (1946) written by L. C. Dunn and Theodosius Dobzhansky. (The material omitted between paragraph 1 and paragraph 2 is an analysis of the

[4] Reprinted from *Color Blind* by permission of Simon and Schuster, Inc. Copyright, 1946, by Margaret Halsey.

relationship between blood type and race.) Although these passages are primarily informative, the writers are also interested in persuading and convincing. Contrast paragraph 1 with paragraph 3.

People differ in the color of skin, eyes, hair, in stature, bodily proportions, and in many other traits. Each trait is determined by several, often by many genes. How many variable genes there are in man is unknown; certainly hundreds, possibly thousands. Because of this, some of us have blue and others brown eyes, some have prominent and others flat noses, some are tall and others short. Such differences are, of course, common among people of the same country, state, town, members of a family, and even brothers and sisters. We do not suppose that every person with blue eyes belongs to a different race from everybody with brown eyes. It would be absurd to do so because blue and brown-eyed children are frequently born to the same parents. It happens, however, that certain genes are more frequent among the inhabitants of some countries than of others. Thus, blue eyes are very common in most parts of the United States but rather rare in most parts of Mexico. It is this and similar differences which make it possible to say that the inhabitants of the United States are in general racially distinct from the inhabitants of Mexico. Races can be defined as populations which differ in the frequencies of some gene or genes.

. . . . . .

The most important lesson we can learn from this is that the races differ in blood group type only in a relative way. There are no absolute differences in which one race is all of one blood type and another all of another type. Consider what this means. Suppose your blood is group O, that you are wounded and need a blood transfusion and that many persons have offered to donate their blood, whom should you choose as a blood donor? The old and obsolete theory of heredity, and the ideas about race based upon it, would counsel you that a blood most similar to yours would be found in a person of the same race, and particularly in your close relatives, brothers or sisters. You may also hear that you should choose as blood donor a person of upright character and good disposition, otherwise you may be contaminated by bad blood.

But you had better disregard such advice. If your brother has

A, B or AB blood the transfusion would probably be fatal to you because his corpuscles would clump in your blood and clog the small blood vessels. On the other hand, a native of any land who possesses blood of group O will be a better donor regardless of his race or moral qualities. It is wiser to choose your donor according to his blood type which is determined by his individual heredity than according to the race from which he sprang. It is this property of his blood that matters, not his skin color, intelligence, or morals. By analogy, if you wish to hear good music it is wise to choose an artist who is a good musician; his blood group does not matter, nor is his skin color relevant. When you vote in a political election, the intelligence and honesty of the candidate, not his blood group or musical abilities, are relevant.

5. The following paragraph is taken from Volume II, Chapter 2, of Hitler's *Mein Kampf,* published in 1926.

Since nationality or rather race does not happen to lie in language but in the blood, we would only be justified in speaking of a Germanization if by such a process we succeeded in transforming the blood of the subjected people. But this is impossible. Unless a blood mixture brings about a change, which, however, means the lowering of the level of the higher race. The final result of such a process would consequently be the destruction of precisely those qualities which had formerly made the conquering people capable of victory. Especially the cultural force would vanish through a mating with the lesser race, even if the resulting mongrels spoke the language of the earlier, higher race a thousand times over. For a time, a certain struggle will take place between the different mentalities, and it may be that the steadily sinking people, in a last quiver of life, so to speak, will bring to light surprising cultural values. But these are only individual elements belonging to the higher race, or perhaps bastards in whom, after the first crossing, the better blood still predominates and tries to struggle through; but never final products of a mixture. In them a culturally backward movement will always manifest itself.

IV. Bring to class three examples of charged language which you have read in newspapers or magazines or have heard on the radio. Be prepared to discuss the intention of the writer or speaker in each case, and to analyze the particular techniques he has used to accomplish his intention.

CHAPTER THREE

CONVENTIONS AND MEANING

IN ORDER TO USE LANGUAGE appropriately and effectively, the college student needs not only a general sense of how language works, but a more particular knowledge of how he can produce particular effects with his own use of language. The way he uses English will determine, in many important situations in his life, the way he impresses people, and the extent, therefore, to which he can communicate his ideas and put those ideas into effect in the limited sphere in which he moves or in the world. Writing college papers and examinations, writing letters, communicating with clients or patients or employers or employees, addressing clubs and church groups and community organizations, talking with friends and acquaintances and with business or professional associates, writing for experts in a particular field—these are only a few of the activities for which the college student needs or will probably need skill in the use of English. People may fail, in personal and professional life, because they express themselves and their potentialities poorly. Their ideas may be ignored or undervalued because they do not communicate them clearly and impressively.

The skillful use of language comes partially from understanding certain facts about language which we have discussed briefly in the first two chapters; it comes also from a knowl-

edge of methods—of special techniques by which intended results are obtained. The purpose of most of the rest of this book is to give advice about the techniques which the skillful and intelligent user of English should know. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss certain basic techniques which are established by convention.

In all of our activities we are guided, or at least strongly influenced, by the practices which are considered right, or correct, or polite by the society into which we happen to be born. We dress, eat, dance, furnish our houses, conduct ourselves at weddings and funerals, in churches and in classrooms, in at least rough conformity to a set of unwritten laws, knowing that if we deviate too far from standard practice we shall be condemned as queer, or ill-mannered, or ignorant. The conventions of language are simply part of this whole body of convention which is woven into our lives.

Some of the conventions of language, like many social conventions, are relatively unimportant matters of form, the observance of which depends on circumstances: a conventional rule for the use of the comma, for example, may be comparable to the conventional rule of speaking to strangers only after a formal introduction; neither the comma nor the introduction may in all circumstances be necessary. Other conventions, both of manners and of language, have a greater practical usefulness because they establish procedures which it is convenient to have established. For example, good manners require a man to allow a woman to precede him through the door he has opened; having this practice established by convention is useful: it saves confusion and indecision at doors. Similarly, in language, certain uniform practices in capitalization, punctuation, and spelling are convenient for writers and readers: the writer is saved the trouble of working out his own system, and the reader is spared the greater trouble of adjusting to the personal eccentricities of each author. A writer may have good reason to take liberties with some of these conventional practices, just as a man may with good reason precede

a woman through a door; but unless the reason is clear, he may appear to be discourteous and uninformed.

Still other conventions of manners and of language are so deeply rooted in custom or principle that one who violates them is certain to be judged ignorant or stupid or boorish or inexcusably careless by people trained in the conventions. The host who invites a guest to dinner and fails to provide a chair for him at the table violates a basic principle of hospitality; the writer who, through a comparable confusion of numbers, uses singular verbs with plural subjects violates a similarly basic principle of grammar. The person invited to eat the dinner or to read the book is justifiably annoyed; his impression of the host or of the writer must necessarily be an unfavorable one.

Consideration of this unfavorable impression brings one to the heart of the relationship between conventions and meaning. Ordinarily, the failure to observe the conventions of language does not interfere seriously with the *plain sense* part of meaning. The person who talks with his mouth full of food usually can be understood; but his listeners are unlikely to be favorably impressed by what he is saying or to hope that he will continue his communication. In much the same way, though a reader may be temporarily confused by a lack of punctuation, by misplaced modifiers, or by faulty parallelism, he can usually grasp the *plain sense* of the passage in spite of these obstacles. He will, however, feel an irritated disrespect for the writer who makes his communication needlessly difficult, and will be offended by the writer's apparent *attitude* of discourtesy and disregard for his reader. Under these circumstances, the writer's *intention* will almost certainly be defeated: a reader is not easily persuaded or convinced by one with whom he is irritated, nor is he likely to trust the information of a writer who seems imprecise or incompetent.

In this chapter we shall consider the conventions of usage most important for college students to know. Many of these

conventions embody basic principles of grammar and construction; they must not be violated by a writer who expects the attention of educated readers. Other conventions discussed here are largely matters of accepted form; the writer who has a good sense of style and is working for a particular effect has some freedom in following or departing from them. The average college student, however, is unwise to take liberties with standard practice. He should remember that the conventional usage is safe, and that departures from it may produce an unfavorable response and a consequent loss of the full meaning he intended.

I. CAPITALIZATION

Our system of capitalization is an example of a practically useful convention; it saves trouble by establishing a uniform method of marking sentence beginnings and titles, and of distinguishing between common nouns and proper nouns and the adjectives derived from them. Capitalization is not completely standardized; capitals are sometimes used for emphasis or as a token of respect. Most capitalization is, however, conveniently prescribed by convention.

A capital is used as the initial letter of:

1. A sentence, and each line of poetry.

2. All proper nouns—proper nouns name particular persons, places, races, and things—and adjectives derived from proper nouns. (Mary, Germany, Wilson Avenue, Bunker Hill Monument, Indian, Negro, Wednesday, Good Friday, the Bell Telephone Company, Spanish, Dickensian, Parisian, Roman candle.)

3. Names of deity and pronouns referring to deity. (God, His will, the Holy Spirit.)

4. Names of sacred books or the equivalents of the names. (Bible, Koran, Old Testament, the Scripture.)

5. Important words in the titles of books and articles. (*Under the Greenwood Tree.*)

6. Titles of honor preceding a particular name. (Major Jackson, President Brown, Professor Smith, Senator Jones, Chairman Humphrey.)

7. Academic degrees and their abbreviations. (Doctor of Laws, Master of Arts, B.A., Ph.D.)

College students ordinarily have little trouble with capitalization. Their only common difficulty comes from failing to distinguish between words used to name a *particular* person, place, or thing (used, that is, as proper nouns), and the same words used in a general way, and therefore not conventionally capitalized. Some illustrations will clarify this distinction.

I told the whole story to Mother. [*Mother* here takes the place of a proper name, and so is capitalized.]

I told the whole story to my mother.

He had an audience with the King. [*King* refers to a particular person.]

He had seen enough of kings and queens. [The words *kings* and *queens* are used generally.]

He went to Elliot High School and then to Oberlin College. [Names of particular institutions.]

Since he barely got through high school, he is sure to fail in college.

I used to live on Quincy Street, but now I live on Ashland Boulevard. [Proper names.]

They are planning to make this street into a boulevard.

He intends to vote for Mayor Dawson.

Dawson hopes to be elected mayor.

I am taking Mathematics 2 and History 2. [Names of particular courses.]

I am taking mathematics and history.

[*But*]

I am taking French and English. [Names derived from proper nouns.]

II. CONVENTIONAL USES OF COMMAS

Students whose punctuation is uncertain should make a careful study of the section in the Handbook which describes (under the heading **Punctuation**) the common marks of punctuation and lists their conventional uses. We are concerned here only with the comma, the mark of punctuation most frequently used, and the one, therefore, responsible for most errors in punctuation marked in student themes. Nearly all of these errors come, first, from an unsure, haphazard use of superfluous commas; and, second, from inattention to certain principles of clear communication embodied in three basic "rules" for the use of the comma:

1. Use a comma between independent clauses joined by *and, but, for, or,* or *nor.*

2. Use a comma after an adverbial clause or a long phrase preceding the main part of the sentence.

3. Use commas to set off non-restrictive modifiers.

Before we examine these rules, the reasons underlying them, and the liberties one may take with them, it is wise to consider the function of the comma as a mark of punctuation. The conventional rules are valuable as safe guides in determining its use; but good sense, based on an understanding of how punctuation works, may be even more valuable. The comma is a light mark of punctuation, lighter than the semicolon, much lighter than the period. It separates words within a sentence which, though very closely related, need, for clarity or emphasis, to be divided by a slight pause. The purpose of the comma is to indicate the slight pause. For this reason, commas should *not* be used to separate words which form an organic unit in the sentence; they should *not* separate a subject from its verb in a simple sentence, a verb from its object, an adjective from its noun, or a conjunction from the clause it introduces. The following examples illustrate a haphazard misuse of commas: the commas clutter the sen-

tences, creating pauses where no pauses should occur; they interrupt the reading of the sentences.

Gay streamers and floating balloons decorated the gymnasium.
The way to success is often a long and difficult road.
Mother said she disapproved of the plan.
I refuse to go unless you go with me.
The angry members of the committee protested loudly, but the chairman was firm.

The organic and therefore proper use of commas can often, as in these sentences, be determined by reading the sentence aloud. Unless a comma is demanded by some well-established convention, it should be used only when a slight pause is natural, or is needed for clarity or emphasis.

Let us consider now the three rules for the use of the comma listed above. What are the reasons for them? Can they be violated?

1. *Use a comma between independent clauses joined by "and," "but," "for," "or," or "nor":*

He promised to be here at six, but I don't expect him until seven.

Many handbooks on writing state this rule without qualification. Actually, the comma between independent clauses is often omitted in informal writing, particularly if the clauses are not long. The comma after *six* is unnecessary in the sentence just cited; the sentence is perfectly clear without it. There is, however, a reason for this convention of using the comma between independent clauses joined by a conjunction: [1] frequently the subject of the second clause can momentarily be misread as the object of the first clause or the object of the preposition *for*. The following sentences will illustrate; commas are needed between clauses to prevent temporary misreading:

[1] Note the fact that the comma *precedes* the conjunction.

I did not have time to buy the gift for Father hurried me away. [One naturally reads *gift for Father.*]
I went to the railroad station to meet Mary and Frances went to the bus depot. [One reads *to meet Mary and Frances.*]
I must call for the doctor said to let him know. [One reads *call for the doctor.*]

Because such temporary confusion can easily occur, many teachers insist that their students follow the rule and always use a comma between independent clauses joined by *and, but, for, or,* or *nor.* Certainly that conventional usage is safe. The student who takes liberties with it should be sure that he is not causing his reader the annoyance of stumbling over an unclearly punctuated sentence.

2. *Use a comma to set off an adverbial clause or a long phrase preceding the main part of the sentence:*

Since I gave you my promise, I will be there.

Here, and in many other sentences of similar construction, the comma after the introductory clause or phrase is not really necessary. But it is generally advisable to follow this rule of punctuation, or at least to be aware of it, for two reasons: first, there is a natural pause for emphasis before a main clause which begins in the middle of a sentence, and the comma marks that emphatic pause; second, the omission of the comma, like the omission of the comma between main clauses, frequently produces misreading. Commas are confusingly omitted in the following sentences, even though some of the introductory clauses and phrases are short:

While he was riding his horse lost a shoe.
After all I had done my best to help him.
By testing emotional reactions are determined.
To one who is interested in farming land has beauty and character.

On the whole, it is easier to follow the convention of using the comma to set off the introductory clause or phrase than it is to examine each sentence to be sure that it is immediately

clear. The use of the comma in this situation is never "wrong." The omission of it may be, because it may cause the reader to go back and to supply for himself the pause for clarity which should have been indicated by the writer.

3. *Use commas to set off non-restrictive modifiers; do not use commas to set off restrictive modifiers:*

Charles Smith, who is ten years old, should know better than to throw stones.

People who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones.

This conventional rule of punctuation is deeply rooted in common sense and logic. A restrictive modifier *identifies* or *restricts* the meaning of the word it modifies. It is not set off by commas because it is an essential part of the context and is necessary to fix or limit the meaning of the word:

Students who are failing any course are requested to see the Dean. [*Who are failing any course* is a restrictive clause; it identifies the students requested to see the Dean.]

A non-restrictive modifier merely gives *additional* information about an *identified* subject. It is set off by commas because it is simply an appositive or a conveyor of fact which is supplementary, not essential, to the main point of the sentence:

My oldest sister, who married a British sailor, is visiting us. [*Oldest* clearly identifies the sister; hence *who married a British sailor* is clearly a non-restrictive modifier.]

Confusion or distortion of meaning may result from the illogical punctuation of restrictive and non-restrictive modifiers. Consider the difference in meaning in the following sentences:

All our money, which we had left on the beach, was taken by the thief.

All our money which we had left on the beach was taken by the thief.

[In the first sentence the loss is apparently more serious: all our money was taken. In the second sentence, only the

money which we had left on the beach was taken. The writer who has had three dollars stolen while he was swimming is probably giving misinformation if he records his loss in the form of the first sentence.]

The members of the football team, who ate at the hotel, all have ptomaine poisoning.

The members of the football team who ate at the hotel all have ptomaine poisoning.

[The coach would be more distressed by the situation represented in the first sentence.]

The logical punctuation of restrictive and non-restrictive modifiers can usually be determined by reading the sentence aloud. If the modifier is naturally set off with pauses when one reads, it should be set off by commas in the written sentence.

III. CONVENTIONAL PUNCTUATION OF SENTENCES

For practical purposes a sentence may be defined as a group of words, usually having a subject and a predicate, which makes an independent assertion, or expresses a complete thought. The conventional marks of a sentence in writing are, of course, the capital letter at the beginning and the period (or question mark or exclamation point) at the end. A writer violates conventional practice if he uses these marks of a sentence to enclose a group of words which is not a sentence, or if he joins separate sentences, with only a comma (or with no punctuation) between them. *Fragmentary sentences* and *run-together sentences* are the results of thoughtless violation of sentence conventions. They are generally considered very serious errors in writing.

A. Fragmentary Sentences

A fragmentary sentence is a piece of a sentence confusingly punctuated as if it were an independent statement. It forces

the reader, who has learned to expect the completion of an idea within the conventional signs of the sentence, to stop and mentally correct the writer's careless or ignorant punctuation. Sometimes a fragment needs simply to be attached to the preceding or following sentence, of which it may be a dependent part; sometimes it needs to be rewritten so that it becomes an independent statement.

Unsatisfactory: He arrived late. *Having been detained at the office.*
Revised: Having been detained at the office, he arrived late.

Unsatisfactory: I enjoy realistic writers. *Like Erskine Caldwell and John O'Hara.*
Revised: I enjoy realistic writers like Erskine Caldwell and John O'Hara.

Unsatisfactory: At three o'clock he was ready to leave. *When suddenly he saw her hurrying through the crowd.*
Revised: At three o'clock he was ready to leave. Suddenly he saw her hurrying through the crowd.

Fragmentary sentences like those above are considered serious errors because they indicate incompetence; they suggest that the writer does not know the difference between a complete sentence and a dependent clause or phrase. There are, however, certain types of grammatically incomplete sentences which are common and acceptable, particularly in informal writing. Exclamations, answers to questions, and transitional statements, though they may lack the subject and verb which a sentence normally has, and may not express an independent thought, are often quite properly written as sentences:

What an examination!
Do you think I care? *Not at all.*
So much for that.

Also, in modern narrative writing one frequently finds an impressionistic setting down of detail in incomplete sentences:

It was a beautiful, calm day. *Not a ripple on the water. Not a cloud in the sky.*

Deciding what can properly be punctuated as a sentence involves, then, like many other matters of English usage, the application of good judgment rather than rigid rules about what is and what is not a sentence. Since the careless or illiterate fragmentary sentence is so jarring to an educated reader, many English instructors require students to mark with an asterisk any incomplete sentences that they use, and to indicate in a note at the bottom of the page that the incomplete construction is intentional. Average students, whose sense of style is unsure, will be wise to avoid incomplete sentences except in exclamations and in the writing of dialogue.

B. Run-together Sentences

In order to avoid unsatisfactory run-together sentences, one must know what an independent clause is (if necessary, see the Handbook for a definition), and how a sequence of two or more independent clauses is conventionally written and punctuated. If the clauses are closely related, they may be put into the same sentence, joined by a coordinating conjunction, or separated by a semicolon. If they are less closely related, or if the writer wants an emphatic break between the statements, they are written as separate sentences. The following examples show these three conventional methods of punctuation. The choice will depend on the degree of separation the writer wants between his ideas.

I wanted to go to a movie, but he wanted to stay at home.
I wanted to go to a movie; he wanted to stay at home.
I wanted to go to a movie. He wanted to stay at home.

Run-together sentences occur when statements which could be separate sentences, and which, therefore, are conventionally written with a period or a semicolon or a conjunction between them, are *carelessly run together with only a comma or with no punctuation at all:*

I am taking five courses, three of them are interesting.
He was tired after his winter of work he decided to take a vacation.

Sometimes run-together sentences like these can be made satisfactory simply by putting a semicolon or a period between the independent clauses. Often, though, this change in punctuation is only a superficial technical improvement. For an effective sentence, the essentially weak structure needs to be revised:

Unsatisfactory: I make many mistakes in writing, most of them are in spelling and punctuation.
Technically improved: I make many mistakes in writing; most of them are in spelling and punctuation.
Revised: I make many mistakes in writing, most of them in spelling and punctuation.

Unsatisfactory: Next Tuesday is April 14, this is my sister's birthday.
Technically improved: Next Tuesday is April 14; this is my sister's birthday.
Revised: Next Tuesday, April 14, is my sister's birthday.

Careless run-together sentences are, like fragmentary sentences, considered one of the most serious errors in writing, and for much the same reason: they suggest incompetence, and they are an annoyance to the reader; he is forced to make the separation of ideas which the writer should have made for him. And yet it is by no means correct to say dogmatically that independent clauses should never be joined merely by a comma. In modern narrative writing one not infrequently finds closely related main clauses deliberately run together to give an effect of rapid movement or breathless action. The following informal passages, each written by a careful modern craftsman, will illustrate:

They strictly minded their business. Just the same, there would be a pair of eyes behind a newspaper that weren't on the newspaper, or maybe a waitress would stop by somebody, and say something, and there'd be a laugh just a little louder than a waitress's gag is generally worth. He sat there, with a kind of a foolish look on his face, snapping his fingernail against his glass, and then I felt a prickle go up my spine. He was getting up, he was coming over.

JAMES M. CAIN, *Serenade*

A few frogs lost their heads and floundered among the feet and got through and these were saved. But the majority decided to leave this pool forever, to find a new home in a new country where this kind of thing didn't happen. A wave of frantic, frustrated frogs, big ones, little ones, brown ones, green ones, men frogs and women frogs, a wave of them broke over the bank, crawled, leaped, scrambled. They clambered up the grass, they clutched at each other, little ones rode on big ones. And then—horror on horror—the flashlights found them.

JOHN STEINBECK, *Cannery Row*

The inexperienced writer should remember, however, that run-together sentences have no place in formal writing, and that they are still widely regarded as evidence of illiteracy even in informal writing. If the student wishes to use run-together sentences in informal, fast-moving narrative, he should probably, as with incomplete sentences, star the passage and indicate in a footnote that his punctuation is deliberate. Most students should avoid this experimental punctuation.

IV. AGREEMENT OF SUBJECT AND VERB

The subject and verb of a sentence must agree in person and number. College students are not ignorant of this basic principle, but they sometimes slip into careless mistakes in grammar and logic when intervening words blur the subject-verb relationship. The following sentences are examples of careless non-agreement:

Each sentence of these essays *were* filled with both obvious and subtle meanings.

My *understanding* of many problems *have* been clarified.

The *teacher,* as well as the students, *were* exasperated with the schedule.

Economy of expression and coherence is characteristic of a good theme.

Neither Mary nor John *have* arrived.

My *list* of reasons *are* long.

Correct agreement is simply a matter of attention—of seeing clearly what the subject of the verb is.

Collective nouns (*crowd, audience, jury, congregation,* etc.) may present a choice between a singular and a plural verb. The singular verb is used when the group is considered a unit, the plural verb when members of the group are thought of separately:

A majority is needed before a vote can be taken.
The majority were on their feet before the vote was called for.

The committee is appointed by the president.
The committee were loud in their expressions of disapproval.

The number of errors accounts for the grade.
A number of students are leaving early.

V. REFERENCE OF PRONOUNS

Another basic principle of grammar is the principle that a pronoun should refer clearly to its antecedent, and should agree with that antecedent in number, person, and gender. Writing becomes inexact and confusing when a pronoun has no antecedent, when it may refer to more than one antecedent, when it is too far from its antecedent for clarity, or when it seems, because of its position, to refer to the wrong antecedent. Students who frequently make errors in reference of pronouns can eliminate such errors by asking themselves two questions: (1) Does the pronoun refer clearly and indisputably to its antecedent? (2) Does the pronoun agree with the antecedent in number, person, and gender?

The following sentences illustrate common types of faulty reference:

My father is a doctor, and I want to study *it* too. [Inexact; no antecedent for *it* in the sentence.]

Each student must bring *their* dictionaries to class. [Ungrammatical reference; change in number.]

She refused to return the ring, *which* was what he wanted. [Ambiguous; does *which* refer to the ring or to her refusal to return it?]

John gave him five dollars when *he* was a freshman in college. [Unclear; is *he* John or the recipient of the five dollars?]

The furniture van had not arrived, the telephone was still disconnected, and there was no food in the house. The dog was sick, too. *This* was very depressing. [Vague; the whole situation, or the sickness of the dog?]

His book gives a detailed account of what went on in Germany before the war, and of the mobilization of the home front by Hitler. *He* was impressed with the passiveness of the German people. [Misleading; *he* seems to refer to Hitler rather than to the author of the book.]

Inexact thinking as well as inexact expression is often responsible for obscure or ambiguous reference. Frequently the only way to correct an error or weakness in reference is to rewrite the sentence or even the entire passage.

VI. SPELLING

Spelling is important because it is so often the first basis on which a writer is judged. Of all the conventions we are discussing in this chapter, conventional spelling is probably the clearest example of an established procedure to which one must conform not because the procedure is logical, and not because non-conformity destroys the plain sense of the communication (a word is seldom so badly misspelled as to be unrecognizable), but simply because many readers respond unfavorably, with irritation, disrespect, and mistrust, to the writer who cannot spell.

An occasional misspelling, particularly of an uncommon word, is not a serious error. Conspicuously poor spelling is serious, however, because it suggests that the writer is unfamiliar with printed material, or unable to learn what most educated people learn without great difficulty, or both. Such errors as confusing *there* and *their, too* and *to, its* and *it's, quite* and *quiet,* and misspelling words like *receive, believe, tries, beginning,* which are spelled according to established rules, create an impression of illiteracy. To many people,

spelling is an index to the writer's education and intelligence. Actually it is not a reliable index; but the fact remains that one is judged by the way he spells.

The student who is genuinely a "bad speller" can improve enormously as soon as he realizes the importance of reasonably correct spelling, and as soon as he is willing to work to achieve it. He should, first, keep a list of words which he misspells, and practice writing and rewriting them until the correct spelling is fixed. Second, he should learn basic rules for spelling, and memorize at least one good list of words commonly misspelled. (See **Spelling,** in the Handbook, for spelling rules and a list of the words most commonly misspelled by college freshmen.) Third, in revising his papers he should look up in the dictionary any words about which he is at all uncertain; if he has misspelled a word in the first draft of his theme, he should write it correctly several times, absorbing its new appearance, erasing the old impression. And fourth, particularly if he omits syllables or letters in his misspellings, he should check his pronunciation. Faulty pronunciation is often the reason for misspelling: one who says "idear" for idea, "goverment" for government, "draw" for drawer, "quanity" for quantity, "athaletic" for athletic, "accidently" for accidentally, "wether" for whether, "libary" for library, "labratory" for laboratory, "Febuary" for February, "morden" for modern, will almost inevitably spell these words incorrectly.

Above all, the student whose spelling is weak should not take the attitude that poor spelling is an incurable affliction to which he should be stoically—or, even worse, cheerfully—resigned.

VII. MODIFIERS

The nature of English grammar, the fact that we have a relatively uninflected language, requires that modifiers, for clarity, be close to the locution which they modify. A modifier is called *misplaced* when its position is such that it appears to

modify the wrong word, and *dangling* when the word it should modify has been left out of the sentence.

At the age of ten, my grandfather gave me a gold watch. [Misplaced; seems to modify *my grandfather.*]
To work efficiently, the room must be warm enough. [Dangling; appears to say the room may work efficiently; the actual worker has been left out of the sentence.]
Running down the street, the house came into view.
She wore a chain around her neck *of hammered gold.*
I *almost* read all of my history assignment last night.
I heard his sad story *before dying.*

Sentences containing misplaced modifiers can usually be made satisfactory simply by changing the word order so that the modifier stands as close as possible to the word it modifies:

She wore a chain *of hammered gold* around her neck.

Sentences with dangling modifiers need to be recast so that the dangling modifier is changed to a subordinate clause containing the subject of the action:

As we ran down the street, the house came into view.

Or, the modifier may be kept and the rest of the sentence changed to include the word properly modified, in a position as close as possible to the modifier:

Running down the street, we saw the house.

Dangling and misplaced modifiers are usually merely absurd, as the above sentences demonstrate; they seldom distort the plain-sense meaning intended, but they do cast doubt on the good sense as well as the grammatical competence of the writer. Very occasionally they are misleading:

Being an only child, my mother gave me everything I wanted. [The sentence says the mother was an only child; probably another meaning is intended.]
Patrolling fifty miles to the north, the enemy has a secret air base. [If the writer means that he, not the enemy, was patrolling, he has given misinformation.]

Hopeless about her condition, the doctor cheered her by describing the new drug. [Is the doctor hopeless, as the sentence says?]

VIII. CONSISTENCY IN STRUCTURE AND STYLE

Consistency is harmony or congruity within a sentence, or between closely related sentences. More specifically, consistency means avoiding sudden, unnecessary shifts in subject; in voice, mood, or tense of verbs; in style; or in levels of usage.[2] Such undesirable shifts force the reader to adjust, often in mid-sentence, to an unnecessary change from past to present tense, from indicative to imperative mood, from impersonal to personal style, from formal to vulgate English. The shifts are rarely confusing, as far as plain sense is concerned, but they are distracting and awkward, and, like dangling modifiers, they cause the reader to question the writer's competence.

The following sentences show inconsistencies of the sort which may easily occur in hasty writing. They should be removed in revision.

Inconsistent: You fill the tube with air; next the tube is put in the casing. [Active to passive; shift in subject.]
Revised: You fill the tube with air; next you put the tube in the casing.

Inconsistent: He left for the office as soon as his breakfast had been eaten. [Active to conspicuously weak passive.]
Revised: He left for the office as soon as he had eaten his breakfast.

Inconsistent: When the mother died, the men in Roaring Camp decide to care for the baby. [Shift in tense.]
Revised: When the mother died, the men in Roaring Camp decided to care for the baby.

[2] Levels of usage are discussed fully in Chapter Four. Briefly, they are: formal English (the English used by educated people on formal occasions), informal English (the English used by educated people in familiar or informal speech and writing), and vulgate English (the English used by people of little or no education).

Inconsistent: If you are diligent you will do well. One must remember that college is primarily for study. [Personal to impersonal.]
Revised: If you are diligent you will do well. You must remember that college is primarily for study.

Inconsistent: Mrs. Grantham sought revenge by fouling up her rival's debut. [Shift in level.]
Revised: Mrs. Grantham sought revenge by ruining her rival's debut.

Inconsistent: First sandpaper the surface carefully; then the varnish should be put on. [Imperative to indicative; active to passive.]
Revised: First sandpaper the surface carefully; then put the varnish on.

Since many inconsistencies are unnecessary shifts from active to passive voice, it is appropriate here to say a word about the weakness, in general, of passive verbs. It is sometimes necessary to use passive verbs, but, as their name suggests, they are less emphatic than active verbs. They are likely, too, to produce involved, wordily indirect, or vague sentences:

Poor: A good movie was seen last night by Jack and me. [Involved and indirect.]
Improved: Jack and I saw a good movie last night.

Poor: The grating of wheels on the driveway was heard. [Vague; uninformative. Heard by whom?]
Improved: I heard the grating of wheels on the driveway.
[*Or*]
The wheels grated on the driveway.

One should avoid the passive voice, then, not only when using it would cause inconsistency, but also when a passive statement would be more involved and less effective than an active statement.

IX. SUBORDINATION

Subordination may be defined as expressing in dependent clauses, or phrases, or single words, ideas which are not sig-

nificant enough to be expressed in a main clause or an independent sentence. Children, as everyone knows, express themselves in a sentence structure which gives equal weight to all ideas, and does not establish an exact relationship between those ideas: "We went into town on the streetcar, and there were a lot of people, and Daddy asked me if I wanted a balloon, and I said yes, and so he bought me one." Or, perhaps: "I have a cat. The cat is yellow. Jimmie has a dog. His dog is big. It is brown. I like cats better." Adults, the educated reader assumes, will see more clearly the connections between their ideas, and will not need to communicate them in sprawling "and-and" sentences, or in choppy "primer" sentences. When adults write like children, their communications naturally do not hold the interest of the mature reader.

By means of subordination mature writers achieve emphasis, economy, and clarity in writing: emphasis because the important idea is expressed in a main clause, and less important ideas are subordinated to it; economy, because whole sentences can often be reduced to single words; and clarity, because subordination and subordinating conjunctions work together to show exact relationships between unequal parts of the sentence. Subordination is, then, an element of style, not simply a matter of convention. In later chapters we shall discuss subordination as a tool of effective, emphatic expression. At present we are concerned chiefly with the basic principles of subordination, and with the failures in communication produced by failures to subordinate intelligently.

The following passages illustrate the process of subordination and some of the principles of skillful subordination:

Lack of subordination: The house was white. It stood on a hill. The hill was north of town. [Choppy "primer" sentences. Three ideas are given equal weight in separate short sentences.]

Subordination: The white house stood on the hill north of town. [The two less important sentences are reduced to a word and a phrase.]

Lack of subordination: He came at eight o'clock, and Helen was sitting by the fireplace, and she was gazing moodily at the burning coals. [Sprawling "and-and" sentence; again three ideas are given equal emphasis.]

Methods of subordination (the method chosen will depend on the idea the writer wishes to emphasize; the most important idea will, of course, be in the main clause): When he came at eight o'clock, *Helen was sitting by the fireplace,* gazing moodily at the burning coals. At eight o'clock *he found Helen* gazing moodily at the burning coals as she sat by the fireplace. Sitting by the fireplace, *Helen was moodily gazing* at the burning coals when he came at eight o'clock. At eight o'clock, when Helen was sitting by the fireplace, moodily gazing at the burning coals, *he came.*

Lack of subordination: He went away. I have been unhappy.

Subordination for closer and clearer relationship: I have been unhappy since he went away.

Lack of subordination: I was afraid to see him and I didn't go to the party.

Subordination: Because I was afraid to see him, I didn't go to the party.

Lack of subordination: I received the notice and I went to the Dean's office.

Subordination: As soon as I received the notice I went to the Dean's office.

Lack of subordination: My parents wanted me to study but I wasn't interested in studying. I enjoyed going around with the crowd too much. My high-school marks were not very good. Now I have come to college and I intend to work harder. I want to get better grades. [Here the writer appears incapable of thinking through the relationship between ideas which are obviously related and are not of the equal importance he gives them in his immature sentences.]

Subordination and condensation: Although my parents wanted me to study, I was more interested in going around with the crowd; as a result, my marks in high school were not very good. In college I intend to work harder and to get better grades.

The elementary failure in subordination, as these passages demonstrate, is a complete lack of subordination—the writ-

ing of "primer" sentences, or loose "and-and" sentences, in which the sentence structure gives equal weight to unequal ideas, fails to establish the exact relationship between those ideas, and creates the impression that the writer is not able to think through a complex idea.

A second, more subtle, failure in subordination occurs when the major idea, which should be given emphasis by being put in a main clause, is ineffectively expressed in a subordinate clause. The following sentences illustrate this "upside-down subordination":

Poor: I read in today's New York *Times* about a position with your company for which I am applying.
More effective: I am applying for the position with your company which I read about in today's New York *Times*.

Poor (unless the context is very unusual): When the shot rang out, I was eating a cheese sandwich.
More effective: While I was eating a cheese sandwich, the shot rang out.

Failure in subordination is a mark of immature writing and immature thinking. Since it indicates that the writer has not been able to see the relationship between the parts of a complex idea, and to grasp the relative value of those parts, lack of subordination or faulty subordination provokes irritation and skepticism in a thoughtful reader. Skillful subordination, on the other hand, clarifies and emphasizes important ideas, and gives the reader the impression of an able mind at work.

X. PARALLELISM

When elements in a sentence have the same function or the same relationship within the sentence, they are conventionally, and logically, expressed in the same grammatical form. The parallel form serves to bind together these equal or similar parts of the sentence, and to show clearly that they have a similar relationship to the whole:

I like || to swim,
to dance, and
to play cards.

[*Or*]

I like || swimming,
dancing, and
playing cards.

[*Not*]

I like || swimming,
to dance, and
play cards.

When the parallel locutions are similar in length and rhythm as well as in grammatical construction, they are said to be *balanced.* The following passages are examples of parallelism and balance:

To err is *human, to forgive divine.*

ALEXANDER POPE, *Essay on Criticism*

But, in a larger sense, *we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow,* this ground. The brave men, *living and dead,* who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power *to add* or *detract.* The world *will little note nor long remember what we say here;* but it *can never forget what they did here.*

ABRAHAM LINCOLN, Gettysburg Address

Those whose lives are fruitful *to themselves, to their friends* or *to the world* are *inspired by hope* and *sustained by joy:* they see in imagination *the things that might be* and *the way in which they are to be brought into existence.*

BERTRAND RUSSELL, *Proposed Roads to Freedom*

Faulty parallelism occurs when the same grammatical form is not used for logically parallel locutions, or when locutions which are not logically parallel are put into parallel constructions. The following sentences illustrate deviations from the principle of parallelism:

Faulty: The student was told to report to the registrar and that his bill should be paid at once. [He was told two things; they should be expressed in the same construction.]

Revised: The student was told to report to the registrar and to pay his bill at once.

Faulty: He was tall, handsome, and working hard to earn money for his tuition. [The ideas are not logically parallel, and should not be thrown into the same construction.]
Revised: He was a tall, handsome boy who was working hard to earn money for his tuition.

Faulty: His work was writing letters and to answer the telephone.
Revised: His work was writing letters and answering the telephone.

Faulty: From college he hoped to gain a knowledge of physics, valuable connections, and how to get along with people.
Revised: From college he hoped to gain a knowledge of physics, valuable connections, and an ability to get along with people.

In the faulty sentences above, the meaning is clear; the revisions simply improve the form without affecting the sense. Often, though, in more complex passages, faulty parallelism may throw the reader into hopeless confusion. To return to our analogy of language and manners, let us suppose that a man introduces three women to his hostess, by saying, "This is Dorothy, and this is my sister Mildred, and this is Mrs. Watkins." If all three women are his sisters, he has, by his non-parallel expression, failed seriously to clarify their relationship to him and to one another. In much the same way, faulty parallelism in a complicated sentence may seriously confuse the reader about the relationship of ideas, and therefore about the meaning of the sentence.

The following passages show how parallelism, well used, is a means of packing a number of closely related ideas and details into a single sentence, and keeping their relationship perfectly clear by means of the parallel forms. The first, from a modern novel, is a picture of the color and sound and sensation of an autumn day; the second, from a nineteenth-century essay, is an explanation of the aims of education. As you read

the passages, consider how difficult it would be to follow the writers' ideas through their long sentences without the help of the parallel structures; note, too, the rhythm and power, as well as the complex clarity, produced by skillful parallelism.

Around them, above them, below them—from the living and shining air of autumn, from the embrowned autumnal earth, from the great shapes of the hills behind them with their molten mass of color—dull browns, rich bitter reds, dark bronze, and mellow yellow—from the raw crude clay of the piedmont earth and the great brown stubble of the cotton fields—from a thousand impalpable and unutterable things, there came this glorious breath of triumph and delight. It was late October, there was a smell of smoke upon the air, an odor of burning leaves, the barking of a dog, a misty red, a pollenated gold in the rich, fading, sorrowful, and exultant light of the day,—and far off, a sound of great wheels pounding on a rail, the wailing whistle, and the tolling bell of a departing train.

THOMAS WOLFE, *Of Time and the River*

But a University training is the great ordinary means to a great but ordinary end; it aims at raising the intellectual tone of society, at cultivating the public mind, at purifying the national taste, at supplying true principles to popular enthusiasm and fixed aims to popular aspiration, at giving enlargement and sobriety to the ideas of the age, at facilitating the exercise of political power, and refining the intercourse of private life. It is the education which gives a man a clear conscious view of his own opinions and judgments, a truth in developing them, an eloquence in expressing them, and a force in urging them. It teaches him to see things as they are, to go right to the point, to disentangle a skein of thought, to detect what is sophistical, and to discard what is irrelevant. It prepares him to fill any post with credit, and to master any subject with facility. It shows him how to accommodate himself to others, how to throw himself into their state of mind, how to bring before them his own, how to influence them, how to come to an understanding with them, how to bear with them. He is at home in any society, he has common ground with every class; he knows when to speak and when to be silent; he is able to converse, he is able to listen; he

can ask a question pertinently, and gain a lesson seasonably, when he has nothing to impart himself; he is ever ready, yet never in the way; he is a pleasant companion, and a comrade you can depend upon; he knows when to be serious and when to trifle, and he has a sure tact which enables him to trifle with gracefulness and to be serious with effect. He has the repose of mind which lives in itself, while it lives in the world, and which has resources for its happiness at home when it cannot go abroad. He has a gift which serves him in public, and supports him in retirement, without which good fortune is but vulgar, and with which failure and disappointment have a charm. The art which tends to make a man all this, is in the object which it pursues as useful as the art of wealth or the art of health, though it is less susceptible of method, and less tangible, less certain, less complete in its result.

JOHN HENRY NEWMAN, *The Idea of a University*

A thorough understanding of the conventions of usage discussed in this chapter is essential for successful communication. Non-standard capitalization, the confusing use or omission of commas, sentence fragments, careless run-together sentences, non-agreement of subject and verb, unclear reference of pronouns, poor spelling, dangling and misplaced modifiers, inconsistencies, failures in subordination, faulty parallelism —these are, to the educated reader, signs of the writer's deficiency in judgment or in knowledge.

Understanding the conventions and scrutinizing one's writing to be sure that no careless violations have crept in will not, in itself, produce positively successful writing. It will, however, free the writer from awkward and misleading expression, and from the adverse criticism of his readers. When he has mastered the conventions, he is in the position of a person who, attending a social function, need not worry about the way to eat his cake, the proper formula for an introduction, or the appropriateness of his clothes. Free from the danger of making mistakes which would cause people to disrespect him, he is ready to concentrate on really effective communication.

CHAPTER REVIEW

Undesirable violations of the conventions discussed in this chapter are marked in student themes, with the nature of the fault indicated by a marginal word or symbol. These are the symbols which many instructors use:

Cap	Unconventional capitalization
Comma	Misuse or omission of a comma; or,
P	Faulty punctuation
Frag	Fragmentary sentence
Run	Careless run-together sentences
Agr	Non-agreement of subject and verb
Ref	Faulty reference of pronouns
Sp	Error in spelling
Mod	Dangling or misplaced modifier
Shift	Inconsistency in structure or style
Sub	Lack of subordination or poor subordination
Par, or ‖	Faulty parallelism

If your reading of the chapter has been adequate, you should be able to explain and to illustrate each of the faults listed above, and also to answer the following questions:

1. Which of the conventions discussed in this chapter can never be violated?
2. With which ones may a writer take liberties? Under what circumstances?
3. Which of the violations listed above are likely to interfere most seriously with the reader's grasp of the plain sense of the passage?
4. Which ones will obscure the plain sense very little, if at all, but may, nevertheless, cause the reader to feel irritation or contempt for the writer?

EXERCISES

I. Most of the following passages are poorly punctuated, although in some of them the punctuation is a matter of judgment. Revise all sentences in which commas are confusingly

omitted or misused, and all unsatisfactory fragmentary and run-together sentences.

1. The play lasted for three hours, however the audience liked it.
2. I hope to be elected to Phi Beta Kappa. Chiefly to please my parents.
3. Jane is a good friend when she makes a promise she always keeps it.
4. I have swallowed too much salt water and sand is in my hair. A miserable day.
5. Members of the Medical Corps were always busy. Caring for the wounded, driving ambulances, examining flyers, and doing many other important tasks.
6. Our house is small for entertaining therefore we must limit the party. To twelve or fourteen people.
7. I waited forty minutes for Betty is always late.
8. The Dean took no action, indeed there was no action he could take.
9. As I expected the invitation came this morning.
10. Some columnists should be jailed for libel. Charles B. Muddle, for example.
11. I spend most of my time studying. Being the studious type.
12. He was happily married, he enjoyed his work, he had high hopes for the future. Then the sudden disaster.
13. Children, who are public nuisances, should be kept at home.
14. Though reading the material several times, still not comprehending it as well as I should.
15. Some people may consider him competent. I do not agree.

II. Revise the sentences below to eliminate errors in agreement, faulty reference of pronouns, and dangling or misplaced modifiers. (Not all of the sentences need revision.)

1. Never beat a dog with your hand. Use a newspaper. This will make him afraid of you.
2. Walking along the road, the sun came up over my right shoulder.
3. As the woman and her daughter watched the oncoming car, she gave a terrified cry.
4. Using the boy's idiom and characteristic speech give the story its atmosphere.

5. The days are long when doing unpleasant work.
6. To be productive, you should set out tomato plants before the first of June.
7. This collection of essays have been carefully chosen.
8. I received the message just as I was ready to leave, thus ruining my plans.
9. If you think that John needs money, you should do it in a diplomatic way.
10. Driving furiously down the street, he barely missed the group of children playing near the curb.
11. Since puppyhood I had not seen my sister's dog, but she greeted me enthusiastically.
12. At the time of the explosion the girl said she was in the outer office.
13. She was angry when he tried to give her advice, which was very interesting.
14. Falling over the goal line, the touchdown was made.
15. The sun greeted me as I came out of the house with a golden glow.
16. Neither he nor his partner are entirely blameless.
17. The boy asked his father to take his temperature.
18. The housemother found the girls who had disobeyed rules in the vestibule with their dates.
19. My uncle is in dentistry, and I plan to be one too.
20. He carried the kitten in his car that was only three weeks old.

III. Revise any of the passages below which need revision, improving parallelism and subordination, and eliminating inconsistencies.

1. This book is interesting, lively, and also an informative piece of writing.
2. By nine o'clock the book was read, the cat was put out, and he had gone to bed.
3. Jane was alone in the house. The wind banged a shutter and she was frightened.
4. We never tired of exploring the old house; happy hours were spent there.
5. Friendships I will make here and how to be tolerant of others will be valuable all my life.
6. After his history assignment had been prepared, he went to a movie.

7. He told her she was selfish, demanding, and to leave him alone.
8. My employer is a kind man; he often lets you go home early.
9. If your work improves, so will your marks. One should realize that most teachers are fair.
10. Shelley expresses movingly the feeling of beauty, but when you get down to the idea, he doesn't put it across very well.
11. I was waiting for the bus. I was going to Chicago. I started a conversation with a girl who was in the station too.
12. She said he was old and didn't want to see him.
13. Because he was a scholar, deeply learned in ancient civilization, I thought that when he talked about the Greeks he would know his stuff.
14. The more you know about language, the more convinced one becomes of the importance of context.
15. Tom took his seat in the classroom, looked at the examination, and, with a reproachful glance at the professor, begins to write.
16. Tom received the examination paper, looked at it hopefully, sighed audibly, and walked disconsolately away.
17. The driver puts the car in neutral and pushes the starter. Turn on the ignition first.
18. Being too early, even if it wastes valuable time, is better than to get there late.
19. The Taft-Hartley bill is highly controversial. labor groups have denounced it; employers have defended it; and it has been passed by Congress over the President's veto.
20. My first date was with a medical student. He was in his second year at medical school. He was tall. He was handsome. He was the one all the girls in the dormitory wanted to meet. He was supposed to come at nine o'clock and he was late. He came at nine-thirty. I met him at the door. I was afraid he hadn't wanted to come at all and that was the reason he was a half hour late. I was very nervous. I wanted to make a good impression.

IV. All of the following passages, taken from freshman themes, contain errors or violations of conventional usage. Give the exact name, whenever you can, of the fault or faults

in each passage, and indicate how the passage could be made satisfactory.

1. As an inexperienced writer I tend to expand to much energy and flow of speech upon the first few points, and then telescoping the rest as the task begins to wear upon me.
2. After complying with all the rules I have fulfilled my obligation in writing this theme except for one thing, that is, that this theme should be five hundred words. It will be found that I am lacking approximately one hundred words, but quality not quantity is asked for.
3. A great deal depends upon the commander in charge of a division to be able to read quickly with full understanding a message from his superiors, since the lives of thousands of men might hang in the balance of this commander's quick wit in reading knowledge.
4. I learned long ago that such forms of oral work teaches more than any other method.
5. The people I did write these letters to were my friends with whom I had much in common and know me as I am.
6. Because my reading capacity is so limited, I am resigned to make such a deficiency my excuse, although being inexcusable.
7. The derivation of these facts are most extraordinary.
8. I hope to hear from you soon, I remain respectively yours.
9. In reply to your advertisement for an assistant to one of your account executives in the Sunday Transcript, I would like to submit my qualifications.
10. I have worked in the administrative offices of the Edison Power company for two years; thus, I believe, giving me a reasonable background for personnel work.
11. We who recognize the word leprosy have come across it at some time or other in our reading and know that it is a horrible sort of skin disease.
12. Leprosy is mentioned quite often in the bible where it was regarded in the biblical stories as a manifestation of evil and outcasts made of those persons suspected of having contracted the disease.
13. He made the seemingly insignificant discovery that when a beam of white light, passing through a prism, it is broken down into varied bands of color.

14. In making up an advertisement, one must be skillful, have a complete knowledge of the product, well-trained and experienced.
15. The twenties were a time of prosperity and prohibition made it a daring epoch.
16. As a boy Franklin had always longed to go to sea and many a day was spent by his sitting on the shore and watching the ships go in and out.
17. The most important discovery was Irving's grave, a lieutenant under Franklin.
18. He was admitted to knighthood by a formal ceremony, dressed in the hauberk and donned the helmet.
19. A new name in the automotive industry is Keller. Keller is producing a new all steel station wagon. The buyer can choose either a front or rear engine model as both are manufactured. The price is $1100. Another new name in the industry is Davis. He is the producer of the most radical car in the U.S. today.
20. He admired her courage above all the rest of her good qualities seeming secondary to this one.

V. Supply the punctuation marks and capital letters needed in the following passage. If you are uncertain about the use of any mark of punctuation, or about the position of quotation marks used with other marks, consult the section on punctuation in the Handbook, p. 411.

he walked restlessly to the window stared for the twentieth time at the deserted bus stop in front of the high school then turned to look at the clock again it was nearly six she had called an hour and ten minutes ago

darling she had said ill be home early just as soon as i can get a bus and i have the most marvelous news

what is it he had asked

its a surprise you be guessing and ill see you soon oh i almost forgot what i called for will you put some potatoes in the oven we have to eat early you know because we have to leave for the waldens party about seven

an hour and ten minutes ago now it was six oclock the potatoes were done he had taken them out of the oven wondering helplessly if you could rewarm a baked potato

a bus ground to a stop across the street and he rushed to the window again a woman loaded with bundles got off then two small boys and an old man with a cane the bus pulled away there wouldnt be another one for at least ten minutes theres no point in worrying he thought she probably stopped to do some shopping she said she was coming right home but she probably remembered that she hadnt bought any food for dinner he went to the kitchen to see

the potatoes which he had put on the side of the stove were getting cold opening the door of the frigidaire he checked over the supplies everything was there lamb chops frozen peas lettuce tomatoes and margarine the can of maxwell house coffee was full and there was a half loaf of swedish rye bread in the bread box he knew that she couldnt be shopping theres no point in worrying though he told himself again

back in the living room he picked up the penguin book portrait of jennie that he had bought in the station on the way home sat down in the chair opposite the clock and stared at the first page he could see molly coming out of her office building hurrying to get home to tell him her good news maybe it was a raise maybe an extra weeks vacation she hurried across the street not watching not seeing the third avenue bus bearing down on her there was a screech of brakes a womans high scream a crowd gathered he could see their horrified faces he could see the blood spattering the blue dress she had worn this morning

he jumped to his feet the clock which was if anything slow said six fifteen he would call the police he would

suddenly he heard her running up the stairs and he jerked open the door

oh john she said breathlessly i got a ride home with janet but she had a few errands to do and it took forever were you worried

of course i wasnt worried he shouted but this is a fine way to treat your husband the potatoes are stone cold

VI. The following passage is a corruption of a paragraph from an essay by Stuart Chase. The original sentences have been cut into monotonous, choppy sentences which give equal stress to important and unimportant ideas. Revise and combine the sentences, subordinating the less important ideas, and adding transitional words when they are needed for clarity.

There are ten million factory employees in America today. There are two million in the building trades. There are two hundred thousand engineers. Few of them can take pride in what they make. How many of them can hold up their hands and say that they take pride in it? Many of them are operating specialized processes. They don't know what they are helping to produce. The majority are probably still aware of it. The show of hands is not impressive. Consider the weighted silks. Consider the bulk of the patent-medicine traffic. Consider the jerry-built bungalows. I have talked to the carpenters working on them. Consider shoes that dissolve into their essential paper. Consider rickety furniture. It is brave in varnish. Consider commodity after commodity. Consider process after process. One will see why the show of hands is not impressive. The reason is sufficiently clear.

CHAPTER FOUR

EXERCISING INTELLIGENT CHOICE

WE HAVE SEEN, in Chapter Three, that some of the techniques for using English well are determined by convention. One cannot, for example, spell words phonetically or impressionistically with no regard for the dictionary spelling, or violate established forms of English grammar and sentence structure, or take liberties with some of the accepted uses of punctuation marks, without incurring the disapproval of academically and socially educated people who expect other educated people to know and conform to these basic conventions. The intelligent user of English, therefore, must know the conventions. He may take liberties with some of them; but before he does, he should consciously weigh the positive gain in violating accepted usage against the probable displeasure of receivers who have definite standards in mind.

Many important uses of English, however, do not involve established conventions, but are matters of choice and judgment. The communicator needs to choose, among a number of possible, and equally correct, ways of expressing an idea, the way best suited to the circumstances and to his intention. He needs to select not simply an acceptable word, but the word exactly right in its connotation—that is, in its suggestion, its emotional charge as well as its referential meaning—for the purpose of his communication. He needs to use, not simply

a correctly constructed sentence, but the sentence which, by its phrasing and emphasis, will drive its idea into the receiver's mind. His ability to choose wisely will depend first, of course, on his awareness of alternatives.

The ignorant speaker or writer uses the first expression that occurs to him because he is not aware of alternatives. The lazy speaker or writer accepts the first phrasing of his idea because thinking of other possible expressions of the idea would involve undesired effort. The intelligent speaker or writer considers the alternatives and exercises intelligent choice. In time, he develops habits and patterns of judgment; his choice, in some matters, becomes automatic.

In this chapter we shall consider three of the many aspects of English which involve choice. The intelligent communicator will choose an appropriate level of usage; he will choose words suited to the time and place; and he will, for clear and exact communication, choose concrete rather than abstract expressions.

I. THE APPROPRIATE LEVEL OF USAGE

During the past twenty years, students of language, observing and describing current English, have been pointing out that different degrees of education and different social situations produce different levels of English usage, that is, differences in construction, pronunciation, and vocabulary. The purpose of these studies of language is not to establish any level as "good English" or any as "bad English," but to establish the fact that the different levels exist, and that their existence should be recognized in a realistic approach to the study or teaching of current English. Three main levels of usage are the result of differences in education and social status. We shall call these levels formal English, informal English, and vulgate [1] English.

[1] This level of usage is variously called "vulgar" English, "illiterate" English, "popular" English, and "vulgate" English. The word *vulgar,* because of

The lines between the levels of usage are not distinct: thousands of words, as well as the conventional sentence structure of English, are common to all three, and many sentences could be properly classified either as formal or as informal English. Furthermore, the levels are not static: since good usage at a particular time is determined by the practice of educated people of that time, expressions once considered vulgate have, through general usage by educated people, been accepted as part of informal English; and numerous expressions once in good standing are now regarded as vulgarisms because they are no longer used by educated people. The levels, then, are not settled and not mutually exclusive; but, in spite of their shifting and overlapping, it is possible to point out certain characteristics of vocabulary and construction which distinguish these three kinds of usage.

A. Formal English

Formal English is the English, more often written than spoken, used by highly educated people addressing an audience of their peers. One finds examples of formal English in scholarly articles and theses, in formal lectures to specialized audiences, in technical and scientific writing, in many textbooks, in most sermons, in most business correspondence, and in essays, novels, and poetry intended for well-educated and cultivated readers. Characteristic of formal English are long sentences, often in parallel and balanced construction, often with modifiers interrupting the normal sentence order; periodic sentences—sentences with the meaning suspended until the end; triads—three parallel phrases or clauses; and allusions—brief references—to literature or history which only a well-educated audience would understand. Formal English

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the way it is commonly used, is likely to give a wrong impression of this level of language; *illiterate*, since one of its meanings is "unable to read and write," may be misleading; and *popular* may make this use of uncultivated English seem more desirable than it actually is. We have, therefore, chosen the term *vulgate*, first popularized by H. L. Mencken in *The American Language*.

is likely to be impersonal rather than personal in its style; the writer usually is concerned with communicating his subject rather than his feeling toward it. Contractions (*can't, won't, shouldn't,* etc.) are avoided in formal usage. An important characteristic of formal English is a wide and exact vocabulary, frequently specialized or technical.

Some examples will clarify these generalizations. The following passage of formal English was written by a twentieth-century historian:

> To have faith in the dignity and worth of the individual man as an end in himself, to believe that it is better to be governed by persuasion than by coercion, to believe that fraternal goodwill is more worthy than a selfish and contentious spirit, to believe that in the long run all values are inseparable from the love of truth and the disinterested search for it, to believe that knowledge and the power it confers should be used to promote the welfare and happiness of all men rather than to serve the interests of those individuals and classes whom fortune and intelligence endow with temporary advantage—these are the values which are affirmed by the traditional democratic ideology. . . . The case for democracy is that it accepts the rational and humane values as ends, and proposes as the means of realizing them the minimum of coercion and the maximum of voluntary assent. We may well abandon the cosmological temple in which the democratic ideology originally enshrined these values without renouncing the faith it was designed to celebrate. The essence of that faith is belief in the capacity of man, as a rational and humane creature, to achieve the good life by rational and humane means. The chief virtue of democracy, and the sole reason for cherishing it, is that with all its faults it still provides the most favorable conditions for achieving that end by those means.
>
> CARL L. BECKER, *New Liberties for Old*

This passage, with its formal vocabulary and sentence structure, illustrates many of the traits of formal English. The most conspicuously formal construction is the periodic first sentence; the main idea, suspended until the end, is preceded by five parallel phrases: *To have faith . . . to believe . . . to believe . . . to believe . . . to believe . . . these are the*

values. . . . Conspicuously formal words are *coercion, contentious, ideology, cosmological, enshrined.*

Another example of formal English, the conclusion of Henry Adams' *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres,* also begins with a periodic sentence, and employs a consistently formal and exact vocabulary which is appropriate to the discussion of the significance of the Gothic cathedral:

> Of all the elaborate symbolism which has been suggested for the Gothic cathedral, the most vital and most perfect may be that the slender nervure, the springing motion of the broken arch, the leap downwards of the flying buttress,—the visible effort to throw off a visible strain,—never let us forget that Faith alone supports it, and that, if Faith fails, Heaven is lost. The equilibrium is visibly delicate beyond the line of safety; danger lurks in every stone. The peril of the heavy tower, of the restless vault, of the vagrant buttress; the uncertainty of logic, the inequalities of the syllogism, the irregularities of the mental mirror,—all these haunting nightmares of the Church are expressed as strongly by the Gothic cathedral as though it had been the cry of human suffering, and as no emotion had ever been expressed before or is likely to find expression again. The delight of its aspiration is flung up to the sky. The pathos of its self-distrust and anguish of doubt is buried in the earth as its last secret. You can read out of it whatever else pleases your youth and confidence; to me, this is all.
>
> HENRY ADAMS, *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres*

In this passage, *nervure, vagrant,* and *syllogism* are probably the most conspicuously formal words. The formality of the writing lies, however, less in particular words than in the general level of language and the structure of sentences. The passage contains, in addition to the periodic sentence already noted, a number of balanced sentences, and some good examples of the triads, or triple constructions, which occur frequently in formal English: "The peril *of the heavy tower, of the restless vault, of the vagrant buttress; the uncertainty of logic, the inequalities of the syllogism, the irregularities of the mental mirror, . . .*"

The following paragraph, written by a contemporary phi-

losopher, is another example of formal English. It is less formal in vocabulary and sentence structure than the two passages just quoted. The reader should note, though, the exact vocabulary, the balanced sentences, and the numerous triads.

But if men forget that the future will some day be a present, they forget, too, that the present is already here, and that even in a dark time some of the brightness for which they long is open to the responsive senses, the welcoming heart, and the liberated mind. The moments as they pass even now have their tang and character. They may yield even now the contagious joy of feeling and perception. Here are the familiar flowers, the music we love, the poetry by which we are moved. Here are the books and companions, the ideas and the relaxations, the gaieties and the co-operative tasks of our familiar world. These things may be threatened, they may be precarious, they may be ours only by the grace of God, or of geographical or economic accident. But undeniably, beckoningly, along with the portents and alarms, here they are. Here, in all tragic times, they always have been, affording challenge and delight to the senses, solace and nourishment for the affections, and friendly stimulus to the understanding.

IRWIN EDMAN, *Candle in the Dark*

College students, in most of their communication, will not be using formal English. They will, however, hear formal English in lectures, and read it in texts, critical articles, and literature. They will also, in their formal papers and reports, and in their later communication with professional groups, need to use as well as understand this level of English.

B. Vulgate English

At the other end of the scale, vulgate English—nearly always spoken, seldom written except in fiction which reproduces this type of speech—is the English used by people with little or no education. As we have said before, vulgate English has in common with higher levels of usage hundreds of nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and prepositions. One of the chief characteristics of vulgate English, however, is its limited vo-

cabulary; people of little education seldom use, seldom know, words which express subtle or complex meanings. It is possible to express almost any idea in the language of vulgate, but many words may be needed to define or clarify the idea, because the definitive, more formal word is not known: "He's plastered all the time; what I mean is he can't help himself. Doc says it's a disease-like. He can't seem to get along without liquor." Speaking more formally, one could say, "He's an alcoholic," or, perhaps, "He is a dipsomaniac."

Other characteristics of vulgate English are the misuse of words, the use of nonexistent words, and the corruption of what is now considered correct or conventional grammatical form. The following sentences illustrate these traits of vulgate English:

I *can't hardly* stand to hear it.
I wanted to tell you something, but I *disremember.*
He said he was going *irregardless* of what she *suspicioned.*
He said he *didn't have no* interest in *this here* election.
She's light-*complected.*
He *run over* and *laid* down on the grass.

Slang is an important part of vulgate English, and, indeed, of language in general. In the area of slang and shoptalk, vulgate and informal English overlap. Shoptalk is the talk, often consisting of verbal short cuts, which is used by people in the same occupation. (*Prexy, math, ec, soc, dorm, cat lab,* for instance, have been used by generation after generation of college students.) This type of slang, particularly when it names something new in a trade or profession, may eventually take its place as an accepted part of informal usage; *close-up* and *fade-out* from the movie industry, and *squeeze play* from baseball and bridge are examples. Most slang is, however, by its very nature faddish and ephemeral. It aims at an ever-changing novelty and liveliness, chiefly through incongruous figures of speech. The virtue of slang as a part of language is this novelty and freshness—when it is new. Its weaknesses are that it so quickly becomes unoriginal; that it

is often unintelligible to a general audience; and that it conveys a poor impression of the user, who appears to lack the power of individual expression, since he relies heavily on stereotyped expressions which have been provided for him. Slang is used in the informal conversation of educated people, and in very informal writing. It becomes objectionable when it is overused, or used inappropriately in situations which require more formal language.

Since college students will be speaking to and writing for educated groups, they will, of course, need a command of English well above the vulgate level in order to express complex ideas in a manner which merits attention and respect.

The following passages illustrate some of the differences between vulgate English and the third level of usage, informal English. The first excerpt, from a short story, reproduces a certain type of vulgate speech; the second presents a similar idea, expressed in high informal English, from the translation of a novel by Thomas Mann:

I can smell death. It's a gift, I reckon, one of them no-count gifts like good conversation that don't do you no good no more. Once Cousin John Mebane come to see us, and as he leaned over to pat me on the head—he was polite and hog-friendly to everybody, chillun and poverty-wropped kin especial—I said, "Cousin John, what makes you smell so funny?" Ma all but took the hide off'n me; but four days later they was dressen him in his shroud. Then I didn't know what it was I'd smelled, but by this time I'd got better acquainted with the meanen.

ANDREW NELSON LYTLE, "Mister McGregor"

She wept bitterly when the hour came to bid little Johann farewell. He put his arms about her and embraced her. Then, with his hands behind his back, resting his weight on one leg while the other poised on the tip of the toes, he watched her out of sight; his face wore the same brooding, introspective look with which he had stood at his father's death-bed, and his grandmother's bier, witnessed the breaking-up of the great household, and shared in so many events of the same kind, though of lesser outward significance. The departure of old Ida belonged to the same category as other events with which he was already familiar:

breakings-up, closings, endings, disintegrations—he had seen them all. Such events did not disturb him—they had never disturbed him. But he would lift his head, with the curling light-brown hair, inflate one delicate nostril, and it was as if he cautiously sniffed the air about him, expecting to perceive that odour, that strange and yet familiar odour which, at his grandmother's bier, not all the scent of the flowers had been able to disguise.

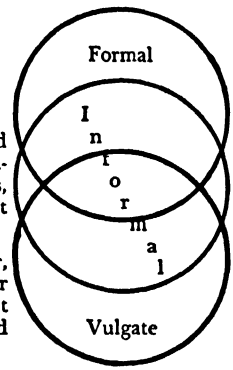
THOMAS MANN, *Buddenbrooks*

C. Informal English

Informal English, the English most commonly spoken and written by educated people, lies between vulgate and formal English and overlaps both of these levels. It ranges from the very informal usage in the everyday conversation of educated people, which, as we have said, may include some slang and shoptalk, to the rather formal informality of newspaper editorials, lectures for unspecialized audiences, and informal essays. It employs, characteristically, a wider and more exact vocabulary than is typical of vulgate English, and a less formal and specialized vocabulary than that of formal English. Informal English is, in its sentence structure, less elaborate than formal English. Its sentences are likely to be shorter, and to have the directness and rhythm of speech. It is more often personal than impersonal; that is, the communicator includes himself and his feelings and attitudes in his communication. Allusions in informal English are usually to widely understood current events rather than to the historical and literary events of which formal English assumes understanding. This book, designed primarily for college freshmen, is written in a rather high level of informal English, as are most current magazine articles, novels, short stories, and plays. Informal English is, in short, the level of English which most educated people will be using in most of their activities in life. College students should, therefore, aim at a high informal level in most of their writing.

The following diagram shows the overlapping of the levels

of usage we have been describing, and may clarify for the reader the meaning and relationship of the three levels.



English which is used by highly educated people addressing an audience of their peers. Found often in poetry, formal essays, scholarly articles, lectures, and sermons.

High informal English, used in many newspaper editorials, personal essays, stories, novels, lectures, and in most business correspondence.

English words and constructions common to all levels.

Low informal, or familiar, English, used in familiar conversation and letters. It may include some slang and shoptalk.

English below the level of cultivated speech and writing.

The intelligent user of English should develop an awareness of levels so that he can exercise judgment in choosing the level best suited to his intention, his audience, and the circumstances in which he is speaking or writing. Formal English is not always the "best" level; it may, in fact, be extremely inappropriate and ineffective if the subject is simple or personal, or if the audience expects an easy, informal discussion. Nor is vulgate English necessarily "bad"; talking the language of the audience, even if that language is vulgate, may, in exceptional circumstances, accomplish the speaker's purpose; some political speakers know this well. The best level is the one which will be most effective in the whole context of the communication. Choosing it wisely requires an awareness of the different levels of expression which are possible, and of the different effects they are likely to produce.

Consider the choice involved in the following expressions of the same idea:

He's nuts.
He's insane.
He's schizophrenic.

He pounded it out on the keys.
He played some lively music.
He played a gavotte.

We put on the feed bag at six.
We eat at six.
We dine at six.

He always lays down for his beauty sleep at ten.
He always hits the sack at ten.
He always goes to bed at ten.
He habitually retires at ten.

In most cases, particularly if the communication is written, the slang expressions will be rejected as inappropriate; certainly the ungrammatical vulgate expression in the last example will be. But how will one choose between *insane* and *schizophrenic, some lively music* and *a gavotte, eat* and *dine, always goes to bed* and *habitually retires?* To a considerable extent, the choice will be determined by the formality of the subject, the audience, and the circumstances. It should be noted, though, that *schizophrenic* is more exact than *insane* (as *insane* is more exact than *nuts, batty, crazy,* etc.) ; for one who knows the word, it defines the insanity; it carries precise information. The same is true of *gavotte;* the word is more accurate than *some lively music.* For an audience which would understand them, then, there would be an advantage in using these more exact, more formal words. On the other hand, there is no difference in exactness between *eat* and *dine, goes to bed* and *retires;* furthermore, the simple informal expressions seem more appropriate than the formal ones for simple statements about habits of eating and going to bed; in most circumstances, therefore, they would be the right expressions to choose.

Some college students err in trying to write too formally; they strive for elegance and impressiveness by substituting formal locutions for informal ones which have the same referential meaning and which are more appropriate for the material under discussion. Formal words used unnecessarily in an informal context are "heavy words"; they have too much bulk or weight for the situation; the result of using them is strained, pretentious, "heavy" writing. The following sen-

tences are examples of this undesirable heaviness in the expression of comparatively slight ideas:

I endeavored to peruse the volume. [I tried to read the book.]
I anticipate the termination of the current semester. [I anticipate, or look forward to, the end of this semester.]
I requested her permission to view the kittens. [I asked her to let me see the kittens.]
I decided to wend my way to my place of residence. [I decided to go home.]

Writers of such pompous absurdities need to be told to say what they have to say as simply and directly as possible. Usually they are happy to learn that they can relax and write more naturally.

Many college students, on the other hand, relax too much. They need to raise the level of usage in their writing, not by straining for elegance, and not by trying to ornament their prose with long or heavy words, but by using accurately words which have precise meanings and which are appropriate to the subjects they are discussing. Such words often, though not always, belong to a high informal or formal level. Lack of adequate vocabulary, as well as an unsure sense of the levels of usage, probably accounts for the lapses into incongruous informality in the following sentences:

I admired the clear, concise way Einstein *put across* the thought. [expressed or conveyed]
He gave *a bunch of figures on the amount of the soil washing away.* [statistics on soil erosion]
We become familiar with many modern ideas and the trends *in back of them.* [which produced them]
Primitive tribes believed in *a God that had the shape and looked like a man.* [an anthropomorphic God]
The essays were all stimulating, though the one by John Dewey was *rough.* [difficult, or complex, or abstract—something which says more exactly what the writer means]
When I came to college I *was all set to be* a pre-medical student. [intended to be]
Every statement was *well covered with proof* by his own experiments and those of other authorities. [substantiated]

After an analysis of immigrations to the United States, the author *got going on the bad ideas of race.* [discussed the misconceptions about race]

Hamlet was disturbed and unbalanced when he found that his father had been *bumped off.* [murdered]

The reader will note that one objection to these sentences is that their level is not consistent; a more serious objection is that the extreme informality is not appropriate to an academic discussion of such subjects as Dewey, Einstein, Hamlet, and anthropology.

In general, then, the college student should develop an awareness of the levels of usage which will enable him to choose the level best suited to the occasion and to his intention. The level will not always be the same. Students preparing for the professions will, perhaps more than others, realize that a competent doctor, lawyer, teacher, sociologist, or psychologist must be effective, linguistically, on more than one level, since he must address his colleagues in a way which engenders respect, and must also communicate clearly and effectively with people who lack his training and vocabulary. The best preparation for this multiple communication is practicing good informal usage, and, at the same time, developing an ability to use words on the higher level when those words convey meaning accurately to an audience which understands and expects them.

II. CONSIDERATION OF PLACE AND TIME

Localisms or provincialisms are expressions peculiar to a particular place or section of the country. In that area they are inconspicuous, an accepted part of informal speech. Examples of localisms are *I reckon* (think), *you all, I'll go a piece* (part of the way), *she wants out* (wants to go out). Outside the locality in which they are common, such expressions are conspicuous, sometimes unclear, often considered "bad English." They are used in narrative writing to give

local color and flavor, but they are out of place in formal English, and usually in informal writing. Even in informal speech to an audience unfamiliar with the expressions they should be used with caution, since they may create a poor impression, or may be imperfectly understood.

The different names for common things used in different sections of the United States (*woodchuck—groundhog; poke —sack; spider—skillet; pit—seed; stoop—porch; tonic—soft drink*) are sometimes a hazard to communication. It is wise, therefore, to adopt the term familiar to the audience addressed. One will be misunderstood if he persists in offering *tonic* to a person who considers it a medicine; and he will be unrealistic if he maintains that *tonic* is the "right" term and *soft drink* the "wrong" one. Both are right—in their place.

Consideration of time means, chiefly, writing modern English; that is, avoiding obsolete words (words no longer in use) and archaic words (out-of-date words very seldom used). Inexperienced writers sometimes strive for a "literary" effect by using such expressions as *wot, mayhap, peradventure, in sooth, e'en so, quoth he, methinks.* These archaisms, and others, are out of place in modern writing. They are sometimes used for humor, but the result is usually less humorous than the writer hoped.

In the use of very new words, too, some discrimination should be practiced. Hundreds of newly coined words appear in print each year. Some of them are widely accepted and understood, and will eventually be included in dictionaries. Examples of comparatively new words, many of them necessary names for new things, are *draftee, Wave, blitz, jeep, iron curtain, genocide, quisling, existentialism, radar, plutonium, decontrol.* One should feel no hesitation about using such commonly accepted new words, even though they are not in all dictionaries.

It is, however, wise to avoid, in writing, new linguistic inventions which have not been widely used, which may not be widely understood, and which belong, thus far, in the realm

of novelty-language. Current examples of such innovations, often involving an extension, or a new grammatical form, of an accepted word, are: *DAR-ism, Bilboism, brass-hattism, whole-loafism, smug-busting, telethought, rubbleized, to DDT, to religify, disadmire.* One may defeat the purpose of language—clear and effective communication—if he uses expressions which, like some of these, are obscure. or which may offend the reader or listener by their unconventional, unfamiliar form.

Dictionaries are, in general, conservative about attaching the labels obsolete (*Obs.*) and archaic to words which, in fact, have long been out of current usage. They are also conservative in admitting new words.[2] The modern writer must, consequently, employ common sense and personal experience, as well as the dictionary, in making his choice of words.

III. CONCRETE EXPRESSION

Students who have had training in writing themes have usually been told repeatedly to use concrete words and to develop their material with concrete detail. Frequently, though, the reason for the advice is obscure; the instructions are regarded as the whim of a particular teacher who "wanted us to use examples."

In Chapter One we have discussed part of the principle which underlies this insistence on concreteness: abstract terms like *truth, justice, freedom, honor, rights of individuals, liberty, socialism, American way,* do not have clear and definite referential meaning for different receivers unless their meaning is established by the context. They are necessary in language for expressing general ideas, pronouncing judgments, and stating conclusions; and they are powerful, carrying as

[2] Students will find *The American College Dictionary* (1947) and the *New College Standard Dictionary,* Emphatype edition (1947) notably up-to-date and liberal in their inclusion of new words.

they so often do a heavy emotional charge. But because of their multiple meanings and emotional associations, they often confuse rather than clarify; at best, unless they are defined by concrete illustration, they leave only a vague impression of what the communicator had in mind when he used them.

Concrete words, on the other hand, point to things which have existence in the physical world, on the nature and meaning of which, therefore, people can agree. Concrete words like *cat, desk, chair, typewriter, piano, tree,* call up an image of the object named. It is true, of course, that there are different kinds of cats, chairs, typewriters; still, in a context, the label carries a reasonably definite meaning. Concrete words, therefore, communicate more exactly the image or idea which the writer has in mind.

The conventional terms *abstract* and *concrete* are actually relative terms; that is, there are many degrees of abstractness and concreteness. The writer trying to express himself definitely often needs to choose, not simply between abstract and concrete words, but between concrete and more concrete words. Notice the degrees of definite meaning in the following sets of expressions:

I bought
- a piece of furniture
- a chair
- a Morris chair

She went out to get
- some food
- some vegetables
- some carrots

I was greeted joyously by
- the animal
- the dog
- the dachshund

From his window he can see
- a masterpiece of nature
- a tree
- a red maple

The speaker discussed
- world problems
- our foreign policy
- our relations with Germany
- the question of sending food to Germany

He is happy about
- his academic success
- his high grades
- his *A's* in chemistry and biology

She
- is in an awkward situation
- is in trouble with the bank
- has overdrawn her account

The most concrete expressions, *Morris chair, carrots, dachshund,* etc., communicate most exactly the writer's meaning. Writing becomes clearer, and also more interesting, when, as often as possible, such concrete expressions are substituted for more general words.

Concreteness is often achieved, not simply by substituting a specific word for a general one, but by concrete *expansion* of a general statement. The expansion consists of specific examples and details which enable the reader to visualize more clearly or understand more exactly what the writer means. The following sentences illustrate both of these methods of achieving concreteness—substitution of concrete terms and expansion by concrete detail:

1. Our dog attacked someone today.
2. Our Irish setter came around the corner of the house this morning with part of the grocery boy's black-and-white jacket in his mouth.

1. He engages in un-American activities.
2. He is a member of the Ku Klux Klan.

1. The house was disorderly.
2. There were papers on the floor, glasses and beer bottles on the mantel, and egg-smeared plates in the sink.

1. A dangling modifier often produces a ridiculous sentence.
2. A dangling modifier often produces a ridiculous sentence —for example, "Walking up the road, the moon shone brightly."

1. He seemed embarrassed.
2. He shuffled his feet and stammered; his cheeks and ears glowed.

1. He objected to the college requirements.
2. He objected to having to take two years of French or German and a year of mathematics.

1. Having a wonderful time.
2. Having a wonderful time swimming and surf-boarding and dating the beautiful redhead you introduced me to last summer.

Another way of attaining concreteness is the use of *figures of speech,* particularly similes and metaphors, which make or imply comparisons. In similes the comparison is stated, and is usually introduced by *like* or *as:* He had a laugh *like* thunder; she was as changeable *as* New England weather. In metaphors the comparison is implied: her *kittenish* ways; the *merry-go-round* of modern living. Although figurative language is sometimes considered purely literary and rare in everyday usage, actually figures of speech are a very important part of common language. Slang is largely figurative: *out in left field with snowshoes on, tight as a drum, mad as a wet hen, wet blanket, slick chick.* And current idiom is full of such figures of speech as *cauliflower ears, red-baiting, witch hunt, on the horns of a dilemma, bury the hatchet, fish story, tall tale, red tape, sandwiched, skeleton in the closet, hand-to-mouth, break the ice, cold shoulder, family tree.* Figures of speech are, in fact, the very lifeblood of language; and one of their principal values is that they make a general and abstract idea specific by associating it with something concrete and familiar.

Figurative language should be used with discretion, for it presents two pitfalls: strained or inappropriate comparisons (*her eyes glowed like a lighthouse light*) ; and trite expressions (*tired as a dog, white as a sheet, sober as a judge, like a rat in a trap*) . But good, fresh comparisons are one of the most valuable tools of the writer interested in communicating his

ideas clearly and vividly. Some examples will show this vivifying, clarifying power of figurative language.

Lord Chesterfield, writing in the eighteenth century when watches were rare possessions, used a simile to advise his son how to "wear" learning:

> Wear your learning like your watch, in a private pocket; and do not pull it out and strike it, merely to show that you have one. If you are asked what o'clock it is, tell it, but do not proclaim it hourly and unasked, like the watchman.

Mortimer J. Adler, writing for a contemporary audience, uses this figure of speech to clarify the complex subject of intelligent reading:

> Every book has a skeleton hidden between its boards. Your job is to find it. A book comes to you with flesh on its bare bones and clothes over its flesh. It is all dressed up. I am not asking you to be impolite or cruel. You do not have to undress it or tear the flesh off its limbs to get at the firm structure that underlies the soft. But you must read the book with X-ray eyes, for it is an essential part of your first apprehension of any book to grasp its structure.[3]
>
> MORTIMER J. ADLER, *How to Read a Book*

Albert Deutsch, in the newspaper *PM,* packed his writing with figurative language to make concrete and immediately clear his point about the varied meanings attached to the abstract word *liberal:*

> What is a liberal? Is he, as some cynics suggest, a man with both feet planted firmly in midair? Or one with his mind open —at both ends? Or, as one hard-bitten critic defined him, "a radical with a wife and two kids?" . . . Where, in this suicidal panic [of so-called liberals deserting liberal causes] are the liberals who traditionally have looked beyond the label to evaluate the substance, who wouldn't be panicked by the mad cries of the smear hounds.
>
> The plain truth is that the house of liberalism looks too much

[3] Reprinted from *How to Read a Book* by permission of Simon and Schuster, Inc. Copyright, 1940, by Mortimer J. Adler.

like Noah's Ark these days, filled with a strange assortment of creatures. Some of the old tenants find it too crowded for comfort.

ALBERT DEUTSCH, "Who Are the Real Liberals?"
PM, February 28, 1947

Thus far in this discussion we have been concerned chiefly with the power of concrete words to convey clear referential meaning. But concrete words and concrete figures of speech have another, equally important, power—the power to evoke strong and definite feeling. Charged abstract words, as we have seen, often produce a strong emotional response; but that response is likely to be a confused cloud of feeling, aroused by the word, unfocused on any particular referent, and possibly far removed from the idea in the communicator's mind. With concrete words the feeling is different. Since concrete words refer to more definite things, the emotion they evoke will be a more definite and relevant emotion; it will spring, not from an habitual reaction to a multiple-meaninged *word,* but from a fresh reaction to the *image of a particular thing* called up by the word. When communication is concrete, the reader has the sense of being present in the situation or experience; of seeing what the writer saw, touching and smelling and hearing as the writer did. He comes closer, therefore, to sharing the writer's feeling. A more exact emotional meaning is communicated.

Here is a simple example of the difference in emotional meaning between abstract and concrete expression:

1. He treated his daughter cruelly.
2. He beat his little seven-year-old daughter Eleanor with his belt until red welts stood out on her thin shoulders and arms.

The second sentence illustrates concrete expansion of a general idea: the situation is clarified because the daughter is given a name and an age, and the type of cruelty is specified. But we are concerned here not simply with the difference in

plain-sense clarity or definiteness, but with the difference in the emotions which the two statements produce. Since treating a daughter cruelly may mean anything from beating her to speaking to her sharply, the general statement is unlikely to produce anything more than a vague emotion. Or, if a reader does respond definitely because of some personal association he has with a father's cruelty to a daughter, he is reading into this general statement and responding emotionally to something the writer may not have intended; his response is, then, a response to an idea in his own mind which may be remote from what the communicator is trying to say. When, however, as in the second sentence, the meaning is made concrete and explicit, when one is told the age of the daughter and is given an image of red welts on thin shoulders and arms, the emotional reaction is more specifically what the writer intended it to be.

The purpose of a great deal of writing is to convey to the reader the writer's sense of a whole experience. When the reader can grasp the facts, observations, and sensations which are the bases of the whole experience, he can more nearly grasp the total meaning, referential and emotional, which the writer is trying to convey.

Modern writing is increasingly concrete, but concreteness is by no means a characteristic only of modern style. If we consider the great pieces of literature, those writings which, generation after generation, have been most appealing to men, we see that a large part of their human appeal lies in the power they have, not only to clarify ideas, but also to stir the senses and to clarify emotion by calling to mind vivid images which produce definite feelings. Much of the power of Biblical prose lies in its concrete imagery. The language of the Bible represents such abstract ideas as death, grief, God, wisdom, love, in terms of concrete actions and concrete, familiar experience. It is language which makes pictures in the mind:

He shall come down *like rain upon the mown grass.*

Thou makest us *a byword* among the heathen, *a shaking of the head* among the people.

Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, *a little folding of the hands to sleep.*

As the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of a fool.

I shall light a candle of understanding in thine heart, which shall not be put out.

The *grasshopper* shall be *a burden,* and desire shall fail; because man goeth to *his long home,* and *the mourners go about the streets.*

Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm; for love is strong as death; jealousy is *cruel as the grave; the coals thereof are coals of fire,* which *hath a most vehement flame.*

Homer's *Iliad* has this same picture-creating quality which makes the experience, and the reader's feeling for it, immediate and real. Hector, the Trojan hero, speaks to his wife before going into battle:

"So [if Troy is defeated] shalt thou abide in Argos and *ply the loom at another woman's bidding,* and *bear water* from fount Messeis or Hypereia, being grievously entreated, and sore constraint shall be laid upon thee. And then shall one say that *beholdeth thee weep:* 'This is the wife of Hector, that was foremost in battle of the *horse-taming Trojans* when men fought about Ilios.' Thus shall one say hereafter, and fresh grief will be thine for lack of such an husband as thou hadst to ward off the day of thraldom. But me in death *may the heaped-up earth be covering,* ere I *hear thy crying* and *thy carrying into captivity.*"

Similarly the language of Shakespeare is packed with image-evoking words and figures of speech by which the general idea is made particular and graphic:

'Tis better to be lowly born
And range with humble livers in content
Than to be *perked up in a glistening grief*
And *wear a golden sorrow.*

Though yet of Hamlet our dear brother's death
The memory be green; and that it us befitted
To *bear our hearts in grief,* and our whole kingdom
To be contracted in one brow of woe. . . .

Leave her to heaven
And *to those thorns that in her bosom lodge*
To prick and sting her.

Have *stooped my neck* under your injuries,
And *sigh'd my English breath in foreign clouds,*
Eating the bitter bread of banishment.

Pluck from the memory *a rooted sorrow,*
Raze out the written troubles of the brain.

The appeal of this famous passage from John Donne lies in the vivid figurative phrasing of the idea:

No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main: if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as if a manor of thy friends or of thine own were; any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind. And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.

Some excerpts from modern writing, closer to the writing students will be able to do, will further illustrate the value of concrete words in giving the reader an immediate and accurate perception of the writer's meaning. In a passage from a novel, Julia Peterkin, by a collection of concrete details, gives a picture, which no general statement could convey, of a house decorated for a wedding:

"Fire couldn' catch me today, Auntie. Not me," Mary said, but she stood farther back and ate her potato slowly while she looked around at all the things she had done to make the room attractive. Every board in the floor had been scrubbed white with lye and sand, her hands were still sore with lye cuts. The walls were fresh covered with newspapers bought from Grab-All with eggs; circles of fringed papers sewed to barrel hoops and tied to the rafters looked like big lanterns as they swung gently overhead in the cold drafts of morning air which fell through the broken

shingles in the roof. The wide rock hearth was newly reddened with clay, and the mantel-shelf had a newspaper cover which she had carefully scalloped and cut with holes to make blossoms and stars. That was lovely. She tried hard to get one more paper to fix a cover like it for the water-shelf where the cake and wine stood, but not another paper was to be had for eggs or peanuts or anything else. June whitewashed the shelf with the white clay that fell in lumps out of the side of the duck dam gully and it matched the whitened front door and window-blinds, and looked clean and nice enough.[4]

JULIA PETERKIN, *Scarlet Sister Mary*

Paul de Kruif, writing about an early "microbe hunter," expands the first general sentence of his paragraph with details about what Leeuwenhoek did, specifically, with his microscope. The detail is not only informative; it conveys the interest and excitement of the activity:

Now this self-satisfied dry-goods dealer began to turn his lenses onto everything he could get hold of. He looked through them at the muscle fibers of a whale and the scales of his own skin. He went to the butcher shop and begged or bought ox-eyes and was amazed at how prettily the crystalline lens of the eye of the ox is put together. He peered for hours at the build of the hairs of a sheep, of a beaver, of an elk, that were transformed from their fineness into great rough logs under his bit of glass. He delicately dissected the head of a fly; he stuck its brain on the fine needle of his microscope—how he admired the clear details of the marvelous big brain of that fly! He examined the cross-sections of the wood of a dozen different trees and squinted at the seeds of plants. He grunted "Impossible!" when he first spied the outlandish large perfection of the sting of a flea and the legs of a louse. That man Leeuwenhoek was like a puppy who sniffs—with a totally impolite disregard of discrimination—at every object of the world around him!

PAUL DE KRUIF, *Microbe Hunters*

The following paragraphs by Thomas Wolfe are part of a long passage in which, by calling up particular sights, smells, and sounds, he communicates the meaning of the word and

[4] From *Scarlet Sister Mary* by Julia Peterkin, copyright 1928. Used by special permission of the publishers, The Bobbs-Merrill Company.

the idea "October." Notice also, in the second paragraph, his use of figurative language.

The corn is shocked: it sticks out in hard yellow rows upon dried ears, fit now for great red barns in Pennsylvania, and the big stained teeth of crunching horses. The indolent hooves kick swiftly at the boards, the barn is sweet with hay and leather, wood and apples—this, and the clean dry crunching of the teeth is all: the sweat, the labor, and the plow is over. The late pears mellow on a sunny shelf; smoked hams hang to the warped barn rafters; the pantry shelves are loaded with 300 jars of fruit. Meanwhile the leaves are turning, turning, up in Maine, the chestnut burrs plop thickly to the earth in gusts of wind, and in Virginia the chinkapins are falling.

There is a smell of burning in small towns in afternoon, and men with buckles on their arms are raking leaves in yards as boys come by with straps slung back across their shoulders. The oak leaves, big and brown, are bedded deep in yard and gutter: they make deep wadings to the knee for children in the streets. The fire will snap and crackle like a whip, sharp acrid smoke will sting the eyes, in mown fields the little vipers of the flame eat past the black coarse edges of burned stubble like a line of locusts. Fire drives a thorn of memory in the heart.

THOMAS WOLFE, *Of Time and the River*

The inexperienced writer, unlike the writers we have just quoted, frequently assumes that his readers know intuitively, and therefore do not need to be told, the contents of his mind. He believes that when he has written "She wore a strange hat," he has described the hat, because the image of green feathers and yellow veil is completely clear in his own mind. Or, thinking of a gray farmhouse, beaten by rain, set in an expanse of treeless, plowed acres, he feels that he has conveyed that picture when he writes, "The countryside was dreary."

The following very poor freshman theme illustrates the appalling vagueness which may come from the assumption that the reader of the paper can also read the writer's mind. The assignment was to write a well-organized paragraph on the student's reason for coming to college.

One good reason why I came to college is to acquire a higher education. I believe that a college education is the only way in which a young man may equip himself to cope with the many difficult tasks and obstacles which he will encounter in life. During college life, the student has to carry on a great many responsibilities which will indeed prove themselves to be a tremendous factor in future life. Another of the beneficial factors of college life are the activities which will be a true asset in the near future. A college education is a necessity for my chosen profession. Whether I am successful in my ambition or not, I will still have a priceless education which I may be dependent upon, a priceless education which will prove beneficial in both society and livelihood. In this day of scientific triumphs, no man can be successful in a profession without attending a school of higher learning. The acquisition of knowledge is not only essential for the enjoyment of higher standards of living and the finer things of life, but also is a source of self-satisfaction and pleasure. Knowledge provides an individual with a broad perspective, thereby giving an opportunity to enjoy a fuller and better life.

This paper has many weaknesses, but its chief weakness is that it says nothing. Among the marginal comments made on it were: "Be specific," "Give examples," "Too general," "What profession?" "Vague, trite and meaningless," "What do you mean?" The writer of the theme, faced with the comments and a grade of F, was at first bewildered by both. Knowing what he meant by "responsibilities," "activities," and "my chosen profession," and having, perhaps, a hazy idea of what he meant by "finer things of life," "broad perspective," etc., he failed to realize how incomplete his communication had been.

Compare the following paragraph, written on the same assignment, by a student who had chosen the same profession as the writer of the first theme:

My plans were forcibly interrupted immediately after my graduation from high school by induction into the United States Army. Even so, I was more fortunate than others with my ambitions, because I was at least assigned to the branch of service which would test my hope and make my decision final. From

the time I entered high school I had intended to study medicine. After being assigned to the Medical Department of the Army and attending a three months' course to become a Surgical Technician, I realized that my desire for a medical education was a true one and not like a small boy's fancy to be an Indian or a fireman. Overseas, assigned to a general hospital, I had an opportunity to see not only the glorious side of medicine, but also the long tedious hours of physical and mental labor which make up the life of the physician today. Our medical officers and nurses were often busy from early morning until late at night, only to be awakened again after an hour's sleep to cope with some new emergency. They were always ready and willing to work. I attempted to gain as much knowledge of medical science as possible from these men. Necessarily the things I learned were of the practical sort as my education was inadequate for diagnosis and therapy. Now three school years have been lost to me, and I want to learn medical science as soon as I can in the best way that I can. Therefore, college is a means to an end and a beginning of my life work.

Here, though the writing is not excellent—it could well be more concrete toward the end—the writer has, by his specific statements, communicated his meaning clearly.

The following passage is an example of thin, generally vague writing:

When I hear the word "Maine" I think of the winters I spent there when I was a boy. Winter in Maine was so different from summer. It was hard in many ways, for we had frequent blizzards, and we lived in an isolated farmhouse. But I remember many things that were pleasant, like playing in the snow and the coziness of the house inside when there was a storm outside.

Now read this passage from another student theme. The writer here, by recording specific details, recollections, and sensations, brings to life for the reader the experience and the pleasure of the boy during the Maine winter:

For all its force and fury, winter was mainly memorable to the boy for little things; sights and sounds that hit his sharpened senses like a silver hammer: the soft glow of early lamplight; the ticktack of sleet on frosted windowpanes; the song

of the wind in the chimney; the gray blur of the sheep snuggled in their pen at nightfall; the look of the cows chewing their cuds; the morning crackle of birch bark in the kitchen stove; the stirring jangle of sleigh bells; the stillness of winter woods. Winter's ways were so different from those of the slow, sweet scroll of summer, on which buds swelled into blossoms, sunshine melted into rain, day drifted into night. But winter had many enchantments. The boy felt their quick tug as he trudged home from school, bent low to the gale, and suddenly saw through the swirling snow the smoke of his own chimney; as he jumped shivering into bed and felt the warm, flannel-wrapped soapstone which his mother had tucked between the blankets; as he raced downhill on his sled with the ends of red scarf streaming out behind him.

He felt the enchantment most of all at night when a blizzard was beating in baffled fury against the stout walls of the farmhouse. How good was the snugness of that sanctuary! Never did the kitchen seem so warm and cheerful, the lamplight quite so bright. By the time his mother had brought her sewing close to the lamp and his father's stockinged feet were propped up on the open oven, the boy would have the corn popper waiting. First he tried the top of the stove with a spit-wet finger. The sizzle mustn't be too sharp or too soft—only a trained ear could catch the proper pitch.

Another example of porous, thin, abstract writing:

I remember the little boy I was many years ago. There was nothing distinctive about him. Like other children of that age, he amused himself with his own toys and his own games. He was, I'm afraid, often into mischief. Then he grew older, and one day he was ready to go to school.

And now, this excellent paragraph from another freshman theme:

The little boy's exact age was that of children still able to create their own toys—the challenge of a ball to be caught; the enchanting beckon of an unwatched ladder to make one tall; the swift decisiveness of a scissors, teaching that lines cut away leave empty spaces. And music, too. His music was in the midnight-creak of stairs leading down from his room, or the patter of rain, or the clatter of horses' hoofs on a tar road. His days were

for testing, touching, stretching, and trying. He learned that wood was hard, and solid for its weight; that swinging was not all fun, that someone had to push; that Pussy scratched sometimes. He heard a church bell, he saw a rainbow, he felt velvet, he tasted dirt, he smelled wet grass, he poked at a worm. It was the age of the boundless world, when marbles are soldiers. But, as he grew older, each one turned into a marble again, and one day they were forgotten somewhere, where children's toys are always forgotten.

Abstract words, with their power to summarize, to generalize, to relate, and to arouse feeling, are indispensable. But the writer who is interested in making clear exactly what he means, or in sharing his experience with others, will write as concretely as possible, and will define his abstractions with concrete examples, figures of speech, and concrete details. Concreteness is not hard to achieve; it comes, though, from a habit of mind which many inexperienced writers have not developed—the habit of remembering and setting down the actual observations, facts, and thoughts which are the basis of a general statement, and which make that general statement understandable and real to the reader.

CHAPTER REVIEW

If your reading of the chapter has been adequate, you should be able to define and illustrate each of the following terms, and to give clear, full answers to the questions below.

formal English	"heavy words"
vulgate English	localisms
informal English	concrete words
slang	abstract words
shoptalk	figurative language

1. What are the characteristics of each of the three main levels of usage?
2. What are the advantages of formal English? Of informal English?
3. Why is extensive use of slang undesirable?

4. How can one determine the appropriate level of usage?
5. What are the values of concrete expression?
6. By what specific methods can one achieve concreteness in expression?

EXERCISES

I. The three passages below present similar ideas in formal, informal, and vulgate English. Point out in each passage the specific traits of style and language which establish its level and which are characteristic of that level of usage.

What a monstrous specter is this man, the disease of the agglutinated dust, lifting alternate feet or lying drugged with slumber; killing, feeding, growing, bringing forth small copies of himself; grown upon with hair like grass, fitted with eyes that move and glitter in his face; a thing to set children screaming;—and yet looked at nearlier, known as his fellows know him, how surprising are his attributes! Poor soul, here for so little, cast among so many hardships, filled with desires so incommensurate and so inconsistent, savagely surrounded, savagely descended, irremediably condemned to prey upon his fellow lives: who should have blamed him had he been of a piece with his destiny and a being merely barbarous? And we look and behold him instead filled with imperfect virtues: infinitely childish, often admirably valiant, often touchingly kind; sitting down, amidst his momentary life, to debate of right and wrong and the attributes of the deity; rising up to do battle for an egg or die for an idea; singling out his friends and his mate with cordial affection; bringing forth in pain, rearing with long-suffering solicitude, his young. To touch the heart of his mystery, we find in him one thought, strange to the point of lunacy: the thought of duty; the thought of something owing to himself, to his neighbor, to his God: an ideal of decency, to which he would rise if it were possible; a limit of shame, below which, if it be possible, he will not stoop.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON, *Pulvis et Umbra*

In fact, I'm amazed at how much goodness there is in people even in a system that puts a premium on badness. It's striking to see how generous we can be when our imaginations are

touched by a great emergency, a flood, say, or a fire. It's encouraging to see how much sheer heroism there is, how people will forget their own skins and risk their lives for others. I know plenty of dishonest people, but I know few who seem to enjoy their dishonesty, and even they might have been all right if they'd been caught young enough.

If people are as good as this when it pays to be bad, what mightn't we expect of them if the incentive to disloyalty and dishonesty could be taken away? I have known a man to go out of his way to help me when I was in trouble, and then try to cheat me out of three cents on an order of groceries. I'd trust that man in a cooperative society, and I'd trust myself, though I've done my share of dishonest things.

GRANVILLE HICKS, *I Like America*

"This here ol' man jus' lived a life an' jus' died out of it. I don't know whether he was good or bad, but that don't matter much. He was alive, an' that's what matters. An' now he's dead, an' that don't matter. Heard a fella tell a poem one time, an' he says, 'All that lives is holy.' Got to thinkin', an' purty soon it means more than the words says."

JOHN STEINBECK, *The Grapes of Wrath*

II. Criticize the levels of usage in the following sentences, suggesting revisions when the usage seems inappropriate. In judging appropriateness, you will need to consider the probable context of each sentence.

1. I deem it advantageous to take math along with chem.
2. "I tell ya, Gertie, men are all alike; they's none of them won't hand ya that line."
3. When we penetrate to the final entities, the startling fact of spatial existence discloses itself.
4. Upon his admission to the institution of his choice, he entertained hopes of affiliating himself with a fraternal organization.
5. However, because of his misdemeanors, he was, before initiation, kicked out.
6. The President announced the plan of building a new dormitory as soon as funds are available.
7. Prexy says they're going to build a new dorm when they get the money.

8. Prexy announced the plan of erecting a new dorm as soon as the cash is available.
9. The night closed down, black, cavernous, deep in palpable loneliness. To hell with it all, he thought.
10. "Listen, Prof, maybe I messed up the English exam; O. K., but I knew it cold. I think I rate another try."

III. Rewrite the following sentences, making them more interesting and more exact by using concrete words and details. The rewritten version may consist of more than one sentence.

1. He bought several articles of clothing for which he had to pay a large sum.
2. I read a book until late last night.
3. She put the utensils into a large container.
4. We had a conversation about a controversial question.
5. He had been indulging in a certain amount of entertainment during his stay in the city.
6. As he stepped onto the porch, the bundle he was carrying broke open and the contents spilled.
7. She wore a brightly colored costume.
8. He belongs to some radical organizations.
9. His business is selling machinery.
10. She was worried about losing an important paper.
11. This sentence is poorly constructed.
12. He spoke on matters of local interest, denouncing communist infiltration into education.
13. The committee decided to raise funds for local improvements.
14. I am busy today with a number of social engagements.
15. He performed a good deed.
16. When the teacher wasn't looking, we were likely to misbehave.
17. The vehicle moved along the road at a rapid rate.
18. I hid in the far corner of the yard, among the trees and flowers.
19. She was the picture of health.
20. My little brother is always asking me absurd questions.
21. Because of his misdemeanors, he came within the grip of the law.
22. A member of the faculty influenced me in choosing my vocation.

23. I voted for Brown for Congress because he has a good record.
24. He does well in games that require physical endurance.
25. She constantly irritates me in little ways.

IV. Write a paragraph of at least 150 words in which, by means of accurate concrete statement and detail, you expand one of the general statements below.

1. It was a dismal rainy night.
2. He was the queerest character I ever met.
3. A storm was approaching.
4. The room was cozy and warm.
5. I was impressed with his efficiency.
6. The world looks different in the very early morning.
7. The house belonged to another age.
8. The scene was magnificent.
9. People on the subway are interesting.
10. So late at night, the dormitory seemed strange.

CHAPTER FIVE

DEVELOPING AN EFFECTIVE STYLE

STYLE IS A HARD-TO-DEFINE QUALITY of excellence and distinction in expression. Let us assume that a writer has something to say, some idea or experience that is worth communicating; let us further assume that his writing is free from careless or ignorant violations of the conventions. Still his writing may be so colorless, boring, and ineffectual that his readers will stop reading after the first few paragraphs, or, if they continue, will be unimpressed or unconvinced by what he says. Such a writer has failed in communication, not because he lacks material and not because he makes blunders, but because his writing has no characteristic flavor, no distinctive quality to interest the reader. His style is poor; or, as we sometimes say, he has no style.

There is not, of course, a single "good style" or "right style," for style is highly individual. It is compounded of many elements, including the writer's personality, his way of thinking, his choice of words, his arrangement of words, the length and rhythm of his sentences. A particular style cannot, then, be imposed on a writer; in a sense, style cannot be taught, because it is the result of the writer's accurate and effective expression of himself—an individual unlike any other. But in developing his own style, the student can learn much about how to express himself accurately and effectively

by analyzing and practicing the techniques used in successful writing.

Nearly all interesting and effective writing has these characteristics: it is economical and concise in language; it is original in expression; its sentences are varied to avoid monotony and to produce the exact effect the writer wants; it gives precise emphasis to important words and ideas. In this chapter we shall discuss some of the techniques by which these elements of style are achieved.

I. ECONOMY AND CONCISENESS

The briefest expression is not always the best. Writing stripped to bare statements of facts, without supporting and elaborating detail, will lack both clarity and interest; great literature loses its quality of greatness if it is reduced to a plain-sense paraphrase. At the same time, in all effective prose every word counts. No words occupy space without contributing positively, either referentially or emotively, to the meaning of the passage. Economical and concise expression comes, then, not simply from using fewer words, but from choosing words which work, and so warrant the space they take in the sentence.

We shall give examples in this section of various types of wordiness, and show how one or two working words can often effectively replace five or six weak words. The reader should bear in mind, however, as he reads the examples given here, what has been said earlier about the importance of context. In brief examples, phrases and sentences are necessarily presented without context. It is possible to imagine certain contexts in which the wordy expressions which we condemn would be acceptable, or even desirable: a wordy phrasing of an idea may, for instance, establish an informality or an attitude of modesty which the communicator wants to establish; there are occasions on which one wishes to speak generally, even vaguely, rather than concisely; in conversation, if one

does not immediately think of the exact word, a roundabout phrasing is usually preferable to an awkward pause in which one gropes for the right word. Context can never be disregarded, and brief examples, taken out of context, are subject to modification by particular contexts.

With these necessary qualifications, we can proceed to a discussion of ways of achieving economy and conciseness in writing.

A. Avoiding Padding and Jargon

The first step in economical expression is recognizing and eliminating useless words. *Padding* is a term for words and phrases which add nothing except unnecessary length to a sentence, which clutter it and obscure its meaning. Usually padding can simply be struck out, leaving the sentence cleaner and clearer without the dead weight of this meaningless verbiage; sometimes, when the padding is removed, some rephrasing or substitution is required. Common types of padding are illustrated in the phrases and sentences below.

Awkward and meaningless repetition of the idea:

six *in number*
round *in shape*
red *in color*
large *in size*
repeat *again*
continue *on*
endorse *on the back*
recur *again*
each *and every*
true fact
necessary requisite
important essential
exchanged cards *with each other*
always invariably arrived late
came punctually *on time*
first beginning
resultant effect
so consequently *as a result*
most paramount
absolutely parallel
absolutely unique
complete absence
habitual custom
received free *gratis*
sunset *in the west*
of a useful *character*
biography *of his life*
my *own* autobiography
modern house *of today*
I thought *in my own mind*
six A.M. *in the morning*

Wordy delaying of the subject:

There are many students *who* should not be in college. [Many students should not be in college.]

It happens that I have known him for twelve years.

There is one circumstance *which* is in his favor.

There are two reasons *that* I have for not going: *the first is that* I have an exam to study for; *the second is that* I have no money. [I have two reasons for not going: I have an exam to study for, and I have no money.]

Wordy phrasing:

He spoke to me *concerning the matter of* my future. [about my future]

He *put in an appearance.* [appeared]

I am interested in work *along the line of* radio. [work in radio]

He went to the theater *on the occasion of* his birthday. [on his birthday]

A large percentage of people are gullible. [Many people]

In the case of most people, *they* believe what they read. [Most people believe]

I consulted a lawyer *with regard to* the accident. [about]

During the time that she was in college she worked in the cafeteria. *This was due to the fact that* she needed money. [While she was in college she worked at the cafeteria because she needed money.]

She *came in contact with* many interesting people. [met, if this is what *came in contact with* really means]

I wish to ask your advice *in respect to the matter of* raising funds for the organization. [about raising funds]

My *field of* work is *that of* teaching. [My work is teaching.]

I shall go *despite the fact that* I am ill. [although I am ill]

More than two hundred years ago, Alexander Pope wrote of such wordiness:

> Words are like leaves; and where they most abound
> Much fruit of sense beneath is rarely found.

Padding is not always as deliberate as its name may indicate; very frequently, though, it springs from the lazy hope (con-

scious or only half-conscious) of meeting a writing assignment by filling space with words. Padding is not an acceptable substitute for the "fruit of sense."

A kind of wordiness closely akin to padding is *jargon.* Jargon is verbose, puffed-up, pretentious language, full of unnecessarily long and formal expressions, and inappropriate borrowings of semi-technical terms from such fields as sociology, psychology, education, and economics. The writer of jargon hopes to achieve dignity and impressiveness by his learned polysyllabic words. He achieves, instead, pomposity and obscurity. As the following examples show, jargon often consists of the "heavy words" discussed in Chapter Four:

higher institution of learning [school, or college, or university]
extensive conflagration [big fire]
He was in the $10,000 income bracket. [He earned $10,000.]
discharge his financial liabilities [pay his debts]
The individual rejoined in the negative. [He said no.]
She rendered a vocal selection. [She sang.]
He was the recipient of the munificent presentation. [He received the costly gift.]
He had an inferiority complex [or a phobia] about the Germanic tongue. [He did poorly in German.]
in the initial instance [in the first place]
Terminate the illumination. [Turn off the lights.]
a substantial segment of the population [many people]
an over-all report [a report]

Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch has ridiculed jargon (he includes in the term what we have called "padding") by jargonizing the famous "to be or not to be" soliloquy in *Hamlet.* These are Shakespeare's lines:

> To be, or not to be—that is the question:
> Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
> The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune
> Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
> And by opposing end them. To die—to sleep—

No more; and by a sleep to say we end
The heartache, and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to. 'Tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wish'd.

The translation into jargon:

To be, or the contrary? Whether the former or the latter be preferable would seem to admit of some difference of opinion; the answer in the present case being of an affirmative or of a negative character according as to whether one elects on the one hand to mentally suffer the disfavor of fortune, albeit in an extreme degree, or on the other to boldly envisage adverse conditions in the prospect of eventually bringing them to a conclusion. The condition of sleep is similar to, if not indistinguishable from that of death; and with the addition of finality the former might be considered identical with the latter: so that in this connection it might be argued with regard to sleep that, could the addition be effected, a termination would be put to the endurance of a multiplicity of inconveniences, not to mention a number of downright evils incidental to our fallen humanity, and thus a consummation achieved of a most gratifying nature.

SIR ARTHUR QUILLER-COUCH, *On the Art of Writing*

Padding and jargon are the worst enemies of concise expression, but they are also easy to recognize and eliminate. The way to avoid both padding and jargon is to keep one's writing as simple and direct as possible.

B. Cutting Clauses

Cutting clauses means reducing clauses, either independent or dependent, to concise phrases or even single words which do the work of the whole clause. The following sentences will illustrate this reduction. The reader should note that the revised sentences are better not only because they say the same thing in fewer words, but also because they are free of weak clauses and are therefore more emphatic.

The wind which blew through the cracks made a whistling sound. [two clauses, one independent, one dependent]

Revised: The wind whistled through the cracks. [one clause; an exact verb saves five words]

He walked down the street as if he had a purpose. [two clauses, one independent, one dependent]
Revised: He walked purposefully down the street. [one clause; an adverb takes the place of six words]

The student who is conscientious prepares every day for each of the courses he is taking. [three clauses]
Revised: The conscientious student prepares for his courses every day. [one clause; an adjective and a possessive pronoun do the work of the weak clauses]

Mr. Brown, who is a devoted husband, bought his wife a mink coat which cost $6000.
Revised: Mr. Brown, a devoted husband, bought his wife a six-thousand-dollar mink coat.

She made a slip of the tongue which revealed her fear, but she did not know it.
Revised: Unconsciously, by a slip of the tongue, she revealed her fear.

As he walked through the crowd he bumped with his shoulders people who were in the way.
Revised: He shouldered his way through the crowd.

Skillful parallel expression often helps to reduce clauses and produce clearer and more concise expression:

It seemed to me, as I told her, that she should take the noon train. I advised her to make her reservations early. I also thought she should wire Aunt Mary that she was coming.
Reduced and improved by parallelism: I advised her to take the noon train, to make her reservations early, and to wire Aunt Mary that she was coming.

In the following example, parallelism provides more polished as well as more economical expression:

He asked just a few simple things of life. He wanted one or two small luxuries, like wine with his dinner. It was important to him to be absorbed in whatever work he did. And he yearned for romantic love.
Improved by parallelism: He asked of life, quite simply, wine with his dinner, absorption in his work, and romance in his love.

C. Choosing Exact Words

Economy and conciseness come, above all, from using exact words which convey immediately and accurately a complex idea. Colorless and general verbs like *walk, go, said, look,* can often be replaced by concrete verbs which convey the action more vividly and exactly. We have seen examples of the value of strong verbs in reducing clauses (He *shouldered* his way through the crowd. The wind *whistled* through the cracks). In the following examples, an accurate verb can do in one stroke the work of a weak verb and a qualifying phrase:

He *walked* down the street *in an unsteady way.* [tottered or lurched or staggered—whatever he actually did]

The dishes *fell* to the floor *with a loud noise.* [crashed or clattered]

He *sat* in the chair *looking idle and lazy.* [lolled]

He *walked* along *slowly.* [sauntered, ambled]

He *looked* at her *in an angry way.* [glowered, glared]

He *went through* the blocks, *separating them* according to color. [sorted]

The dog *gave a high, excited bark.* [yelped or yipped]

He *looked* at her *with his mouth open.* [gaped]

They were trying to *get* money from him *by dishonest means.* [extort]

He *took* the bank funds *and ran away with them.* [absconded with]

He *had funny expressions on his face* as he talked. [grimaced]

He *looked* at her *with a self-satisfied and affected smile.* [smirked]

Loose, wordy expression is frequently the result of the writer's not knowing, or not being careful enough to use, the exact name for a thing or a process. The following sentences illustrate the economy of accurate naming:

The teacher leaned on the *little stand that held his notes.* [lectern]

The conductor lifted *the stick that he uses to direct the orchestra.* [his baton]

We read a *fourteen-line poem* by Shakespeare. [sonnet]

She has *a big red dog with long ears.* [an Irish setter]

The way he stood when he was ready to hit the golf ball was not good. [His stance]

He *hit a drive that curved to the right and went* into the woods. [sliced his drive]

He made the touchdown *by starting in one direction, then turning and going in the other.* [by reversing his field]

She *led the queen from her hand, hoping that if the person on her left had the king he would play it and she could take the trick with the ace on the board.* [finessed her queen to the ace on the board]

As we pointed out earlier, in the discussion of levels of usage, formal words are often more precise than their informal equivalents. Sometimes, therefore, semiformal or formal words are necessary for economical and concise expression. The following sentences are taken from freshman themes written in class, with little time for revision. The sentences would have been improved if the wordy informal locutions, most of them clauses, had been replaced by accurate, more formal words:

It seemed it just had to happen the way it did. [It seemed inevitable.]

Once the words were said, they couldn't be taken back. [The words were irrevocable.]

She told a story that no one could believe. [She told an incredible story.]

He had no weak point where he could be attacked. [He was invulnerable.]

The exercises were such that we couldn't do without them. [The exercises were indispensable.]

She faced two courses of action and didn't know which one to choose. [She was in a dilemma.]

The use of exact words offers endless possibilities for improvement. Inaccurate expression is often the result of care-

lessness—of not bothering to think of the accurate word or to discriminate between roughly synonymous terms. Often, though, inaccurate expression is the result of inadequate vocabulary—of not knowing well, and therefore not being able to use naturally and confidently, the exact word which does the work of five or six words. Most college students need to extend their active vocabularies in order to achieve concise and economical expression.

It is very important for the reader, as he considers this discussion of economy and conciseness, to understand that elaboration of a general statement for clarity and vividness, and repetition for desired emphasis are *not* wordiness. On the contrary, additional concrete detail often makes a meaningless statement rich and meaningful by enabling the reader to feel and see the particular things the writer felt and saw. Repetition of words or phrases may drive home an idea, or may create an atmosphere or arouse an emotion which is an important part of the writer's communication. The longer expression of an idea is sometimes preferable to the short one, for sometimes the very length and rhythm of a longer sentence establish a tone or a feeling which is part of the full meaning intended. The long locutions below are examples; their length as well as their phrasing carries the desired tone of solemnity and dignity:

Fourscore and seven years ago, our fathers brought forth on this continent . . . .
Shorter, but less effective: Eighty-seven years ago our fathers made here . . . .

The President of the United States gave an address.
Shorter, but less effective if one wishes to emphasize the dignity of the occasion: Truman spoke.

Economical and concise expression is probably the most striking trait of really good English. But, when an inexperienced writer understands this and begins to prune his writ-

ing, there is some danger that he will cut out the vital as well as the useless parts. Economy and precision, properly understood, are not achieved simply by brevity, and never by sacrificing words or details which contribute positively either to the development of sense or to the communication of atmosphere or emotion. True economy and conciseness come from removing the lazy clutter of padding, jargon, weak clauses, and purposeless circumlocution, and replacing it with clear, strong, working words.

II. ORIGINALITY

Effective writing is original because it communicates accurately the thought, observation, knowledge, experience, and, except in very impersonal writing, the personality of a human being who is not exactly like any other human being in the world. Originality should not be confused with eccentricity or straining for the unconventional. It is simply the direct expression of an individual alive in the world, seeing with his own eyes and hearing with his own ears, absorbing experience, and using language to relate the things he sees and hears and believes.

One of the obstacles to individual writing is the *trite expression* or *cliché*. Clichés are phrases which have become stale through overuse. Too-familiar combinations of words (*tired but happy, icy chill, last but not least, pure and simple, conspicuous by its absence*); worn-out quotations ("to be, or not to be," "kill the fatted calf," "home sweet home"); and worn-out figures of speech (*like a rat in a trap, sober as a judge, busy as a bee*)—these are the principal categories of trite expressions. At one time such expressions were new and vivid; now they have lost their force and have become mere words, incapable of carrying fresh meaning.

No one can entirely avoid overused phrases, in speech or in writing; and indeed it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between clichés and expressions which, though used for years,

have never become outworn but are an accepted and ageless part of our language. For example, is "damn with faint praise" a frayed quotation or simply familiar idiom? Is "freedom from fear" a relatively new cliché or simply a well-known phrasing of an idea? Furthermore (and this makes it particularly difficult to be dogmatic about avoiding triteness), a cliché in an unusual context, or a cliché spoken ironically, or a cliché twisted to have a different meaning in context, may be witty and effective. It is impossible to say, therefore, that worn-out phrases, quotations, and figures of speech should never be used. It is possible, however, to say that they should not be used unconsciously. The intelligent communicator, realizing that these once striking expressions have been dulled by continuous and lazy use, will avoid them unless he can give them a fresh twist, or unless some unusual element in the situation or in his intention makes it advisable for him to express himself tritely.

Students who have not read widely are often insensitive to triteness. There is no easy cure for this insensitivity; but, as an aid in recognizing clichés, we are listing here a number of too well-worn expressions, figures of speech, and quotations:

bright and shining faces
few and far between
at one fell swoop
history tells us
after all is said and done
it stands to reason
darkness overtook us
dull thud
ominous silence
doting parents [or] fond parents
blushing bride
the time of my life
proud possessor
humble origin
shadow of a doubt
tale of woe
fast and furious
breathe a sigh of relief
peace reigned supreme
finer things of life
with bated breath
pangs of remorse
depths of despair
wreathed in smiles
Mother Nature
Father Time
watery grave
irony of fate
crack of dawn
budding genius
soul of honor

trees like sentinels
tide of battle
bolt from the blue
rears its ugly head
diamond in the rough
in the arms of Morpheus
bright as a pin
smart as a whip
sly as a fox
brave as a lion
pretty as a picture
clear as a bell
tired as a dog
sick as a dog
dead as a doornail
brown as a berry
cool as a cucumber
pale as death
slow as molasses
green with envy
snake in the grass
work like a Trojan
calm before the storm
hit the nail on the head
chip off the old block
burn the midnight oil
get down to brass tacks
acid test
run like a flash
better late than never
age before beauty
method in his madness
all the world's a stage
people who live in glass houses
in the spring a young man's fancy
sadder but wiser
all that glitters is not gold
all work and no play
eat, drink and be merry
wine, women and song
lean and hungry look
improve each shining hour
cradle of the deep

Some use of trite expressions is, as we have said, unavoidable; the writer, and especially the speaker, cannot consider every phrase and reject it if it has been used before; and he may have some particular reason for using a cliché. But he should familiarize himself with common clichés and be sure that, in his writing at least, they do not occur frequently as serious substitutes for more individual and more exact expression. Some students have the idea that trite expressions are humorous. They are not, unless they are given some new and clever turn. Nor does putting them in quotation marks justify their use. The quotation marks simply indicate that the writer knows the expression is a poor one, and that, despite his knowledge, he is too lazy to find a better way of phrasing his idea.

Habitual triteness is evidence that the writer is not really thinking about his subject or making a serious effort to communicate it accurately. He is, instead, taking refuge in

ready-made phrases which hazily approximate his meaning. Consider, for example, the following passage:

Her fond parents thought her a budding genius; but although she was as smart as a whip and was always burning the midnight oil, she had no sense of the finer things of life. All work and no play makes Jill a dull girl.

What is the person described actually like? What, if he were forced to emerge from his smoke screen of clichés, would the writer have to communicate?

Eliminating triteness does not automatically produce distinctively original expression, but it clears the way for the originality which is well within the power of any college student—the accurate and interesting expression of his own fresh observation and thought.

III. VARIETY IN SENTENCES

Although the inexperienced writer is not always aware of it, sound and rhythm are very important parts of effective style. An undesirable repetition of the same sound, the same sentence length, and the same sentence structure will be irritating to a trained reader, or will lull him into utter disinterest. Sometimes an unwisely repeated sentence structure produces an effect like that of the recitation of poetry by third-grade pupils: the real meaning is lost in the monotonously repeated rhythm.

Variety in sentences is very closely related to effective emphasis, which we shall discuss in the next section. Indeed, it is difficult to separate the two qualities, even for purposes of discussion. We shall, however, point out in this section certain types of monotony which the skillful writer avoids, and outline some of the techniques by which he varies his sentence pattern. In applying these techniques, he must also apply the principles of emphasis.

Careless repetition of words, illustrated in the sentences

below, is a kind of monotony easily recognized and easily avoided:

Time has proved that Ibsen was a writer ahead of his *time*. Most of his plays are *timely* today.

We admired the *location* where his new house was to be *located*.

I *noted* in my *notes* all the important facts about this *noted* general.

All of the members of the *community gathered* at these *community gatherings*.

I am *attracted* by the *current attraction* at the *current* burlesque show.

Monotony in sentence length and repetition of sentence pattern are perhaps less conspicuous than repeated words; but, unless patterned sentences are used judiciously, for deliberate emphasis, they are even more ineffective and boring than thoughtlessly repeated words. The following passages illustrate some of the common types of monotonous sentence patterns:

He walked down the street. He scanned the numbers on the houses. He found the one he wanted. He went up the steps. He hesitated a moment. Then he rang the bell. [Repeated choppy sentences, with the same subject-verb order: *he walked, he scanned, he found,* etc.]

He walked down the street and scanned the numbers on the houses. He found the one he wanted and went up the steps. He hesitated a moment and then rang the bell. [Simple sentences with compound predicates]

Walking down the street, he scanned the numbers on the houses. Finding the one he wanted, he went up the steps. Hesitating only a moment, he rang the bell. [Repeated introductory phrases]

As he walked down the street, he scanned the numbers on the houses. When he found the one he wanted, he went up the steps. After he had hesitated for a moment, he rang the bell. [Repeated introductory clauses before the main clause]

He scanned the numbers on the houses as he walked down the street. He went up the steps when he found the one he wanted. He rang the bell after he had hesitated for a moment. [Dependent clauses trailing the main clause]

The first step in achieving variety in sentence movement is, of course, recognizing such monotonous sentence patterns. Reading the passage aloud and actually hearing it is probably the surest way of detecting the repeated rhythm. The monotony should then be remedied by the following techniques:

1. Varying the length of sentences; using occasional short sentences among longer ones, or occasional long sentences if the prevailing style is terse.

2. Using parallel and balanced constructions, not continuously, but as a change from simpler constructions. Robert Louis Stevenson, writing on style, simultaneously described and demonstrated the value of varied parallelism:

Nor should the balance be too striking and exact, for the one rule is to be infinitely various; to interest, to disappoint, to surprise, and yet still to gratify; to be ever changing, as it were, the stitch, and yet still to give the effect of an ingenious neatness.

3. Intermingling loose and periodic sentences. In loose sentences, the sentence continues after the main thought has been expressed:

We know that the young prince died, although we know little more.

In periodic sentences, the meaning is suspended until the end of the sentence:

About the subsequent events, the terrified repledging of loyalty, the whispered conspiracies, the promises exchanged behind locked doors, *we know but little.*

Frequent and elaborate periodic sentences are more characteristic of formal than of informal style. Occasional periodic sentences, however, are excellent for varied movement as well

as for the heightened suspense and emphasis of the sentences themselves.

4. Changing the position of modifiers and parenthetic elements for variety in movement and for better emphasis:

He met a most attractive girl at the party.
At the party he met a most attractive girl.
He met, at the party, a most attractive girl.

Consequently, he is no longer interested in Marie.
He is, consequently, no longer interested in Marie.
He is no longer interested, consequently, in Marie.

5. Changing the usual subject-verb-object order of some sentences:

He could never forgive this. [subject-verb-object]
This he could never forgive. [object-subject-verb]

At the last minute Sally rushed in. [subject-verb]
At the last minute in rushed Sally. [verb-subject]

By means of some of these devices, the walking-down-the-street passages cited on pp. 145–146 could be revised and varied as follows:

He walked down the street, scanning the numbers on the houses. When he found the one he wanted, he walked up the steps, hesitated a moment, and then rang the bell.

[*Or*]

He scanned the numbers on the houses as he walked down the street. Finding the one he wanted, he went up the steps and hesitated a moment. Then he rang the bell.

Sentence variety is closely related to emphasis because as the writer begins to vary his sentence length and structure and to change the position of modifying elements, he must consider what ideas he wants to emphasize by structure and position. Variety in sentences is not merely a matter of form and style. It is organic expression, in which sound and structure and rhythm all contribute to the full meaning the writer wishes to communicate. The following passage from *The*

Autobiography of Lincoln Steffens illustrates well the relationship between variety and emphasis. Below the passage is a partial analysis of the methods Steffens uses to achieve both variety and emphasis.

[1] It was conversation I was hearing, the free, passionate, witty exchanges of studied minds as polished as fine tools. [2] They were always courteous; no two ever spoke together; there were no asides; they all talked to the question before the house, and while they were on the job of exposition anyone, regardless of his side, would contribute his quota of facts, or his remembrance of some philosopher's opinion or some poet's perfect phrase for the elucidation or the beautification of the theme. [3] When the differences rose the urbanity persisted. [4] They drank their California wine with a relish, they smoked the room thick, and they pressed their views with vigor and sincerity and eloquence; but their good temper never failed them. [5] It was conversation. [6] I had heard conversation before; I have heard conversation sometimes since, but rarely, and never like my remembrance of those wonderful Saturday nights in San Francisco —which were my preparation for college.

[7] For those conversations, so brilliant, so scholarly, and so consciously unknowing, seemed to me, silent in the background, to reveal the truth that even college graduates did not know anything, really. [8] Evidences they had, all the testimony of all the wise men in the historical world on everything, but no decisions. [9] None. [10] I must go to college to find out more, and I wanted to. [11] It seemed as if I had to go soon. [12] My head, busy with questions before, was filled with holes that were aching voids as hungry, as painful, as an empty stomach. [13] And my questions were explicit; it was as if I were not only hungry; I was hungry for certain foods. [14] My curiosity was no longer vague.

[1] Loose sentence, medium length, with the complex appositive following the main clause.
[2] Long sentence; a series of short statements followed by a long, complex one, with parallel phrasing.
[3] Short sentence; a subordinate clause preceding the main clause which contains the main idea.
[4] Long sentence; parallel clauses.
[5] Short emphatic restatement of the topic idea of the paragraph.

[6] Long sentence with parallel phrasing, mounting rhythmically to a climax. "Conversation" repeated for emphasis.
[7] Long periodic sentence, with parallel phrasing and skillful placing of modifiers. "Conversation" repeated at the beginning for emphasis and transition.
[8] Object-subject-verb order to emphasize "evidences" and contrast "decisions" at the end of the sentence; long appositive.
[9] One word sentence for emphasis, after three rather long sentences.
[10] Compound sentence.
[11] Shorter complex sentence.
[12] Longer complex sentence with interrupting modifiers.
[13] Three clauses, the closely related ideas separated for emphasis.
[14] Short emphatic statement of the topic idea.

An even more striking example of organic expression, that is, of fitting the expression to the whole purpose, is the following passage from Virginia Woolf, an artist in modern prose. In the first paragraph, long complicated sentences are used to describe the complexity of darkness and sound and light; short sentences are used for dramatic action and realization: "Orlando leapt to his feet"; "The Queen had come." The short-sentence pattern of the second paragraph might seem, in a hasty eye-reading, to violate all principles of sentence variety. More careful reading will show that those short sentences are functional; they are used deliberately to communicate Orlando's distraught state of mind and at the same time his frantic, separate actions. The reader should note, too, how skillfully the short-sentence pattern is broken, just before it would become monotonous.

After an hour or so—the sun was rapidly sinking, the white clouds had turned red, the hills were violet, the woods purple, the valleys black—a trumpet sounded. Orlando leapt to his feet. The shrill sound came from the valley. It came from a dark spot down there; a spot compact and mapped out; a maze; a town, yet girt about with walls; it came from the heart of his own great house in the valley, which, dark before, even as he

looked and the single trumpet duplicated and reduplicated itself with other shriller sounds, lost its darkness and became pierced with lights. Some were small hurrying lights, as if servants dashed along corridors to answer summonses; others were high and lustrous lights, as if they burnt in empty banqueting halls made ready to receive guests who had not come; and others dipped and waved and sank and rose, as if held in the hands of troops of serving men, bending, kneeling, rising, receiving, guarding, and escorting with all dignity indoors a great Princess alighting from her chariot. Coaches turned and wheeled in the courtyard. Horses tossed their plumes. The Queen had come.

Orlando looked no more. He dashed down the hill. He let himself in at a wicket gate. He tore up the winding staircase. He reached his room. He tossed his stockings to one side of the room, his jerkin to the other. He dipped his head. He scoured his hands. He pared his fingernails. With no more than six inches of looking glass and a pair of old candles to help him, he had thrust on crimson breeches, lace collar, waistcoat of taffeta, and shoes with rosettes on them as big as double dahlias in less than ten minutes by the stable clock. He was ready. He was flushed. He was excited. But he was terribly late.

VIRGINIA WOOLF, *Orlando*

Because monotony is a common weakness in college writing, most students will profit by reading their themes aloud and listening carefully for monotonously repeated patterns. At first the process of breaking the pattern by changing the wording, structure, or length of some sentences may be purely mechanical. But as the writer deliberately—even laboriously—practices putting a verb before its subject now and then, interrupting a conventional sentence with modifiers and appositives, using some periodic sentences, tying related ideas together in parallel constructions, changing his pace with long and short sentences, he begins to develop a sense of the organic relationship between the pattern of sentences and the pattern of thought. From telling himself, "I ought to have a short sentence among all these long ones," he progresses to "This idea should hit hard; I'll put it by itself in a short sentence." Instead of thinking, "I have four subject-verb-

object constructions in a row; better change one or two," he thinks, "The object here is the most important word in the sentence; I'll pull it out of its normal position to give it emphasis." At this point he is no longer merely avoiding monotony; he is beginning to achieve that functional and organic variety which is an important part of effective expression.

IV. EMPHASIS

Emphasis in writing is more of a problem than emphasis in speaking. In speech, we depend a great deal on gestures, facial expressions, long pauses, and particularly on tone of voice to stress important words and ideas. The amateur in writing often attempts to reproduce the accents of speech by underlining and capitalizing, by frequent use of exclamation points, and by intensives like *very, so, most, frightfully, perfectly:*

I was so very tired at the end of the day, but I felt that I had never had such a perfectly wonderful time. It was simply marvelous!! I wouldn't have missed it for anything! And I met the most wonderful Man!

Such devices for emphasis may be appropriate in informal correspondence, where they suggest to the reader the vocal stress the writer would have given the words; but they are not effective in more impersonal writing, where the writer's vocal tone is irrelevant. Skillful writers seldom rely on mechanical devices or many intensives for emphasis; they get emphasis by their choice of words, sentence form, and arrangement of sentences in the paragraph and paragraphs in the whole piece of writing.

Here and there in the preceding sections of this book we have discussed a number of weaknesses which make writing unemphatic. It will be well to review them briefly before we discuss further ways of achieving effective emphasis:

A thoughtlessly repeated sentence pattern is unemphatic.

It gives the same weight and the same rhythm to ideas which are actually varied and therefore should be distinguished by varied expression.

Improper subordination destroys emphasis. In the examples below, lack of subordination gives equal stress to unequal ideas; the most important idea, therefore, is not emphasized:

I was walking around Walden Pond. It was a cool day last September. I saw a child fall in the water.
We reached the top of the hill and Mary wanted to rest and so we stopped.

Upside-down subordination, that is, putting the main idea in a subordinate clause or phrase, robs that idea of its proper emphasis:

He made his third proposal, which she accepted.
He eluded his opponent, crossing the goal line.
When the fire started, I was half asleep.

Overuse of the passive voice is unemphatic because the passive is often weak, wordy, and indirect. Weak passives like the ones in the following sentences should be avoided in favor of more emphatic active statements:

Your communication of August 26 was received by me today.
This paper is late because difficulties were run into by the writer.
As we opened the gate, a snarling dog was seen on the steps.
Many hours are spent by students in talking about their work instead of doing it.

Clichés are unemphatic because they are forceless and dull, and because they suggest laziness or disinterest on the part of the writer.

Padding, jargon, weak clauses, and circumlocutions are destroyers of emphasis. Their wordiness waters the meaning of the sentence and sometimes actually submerges it.

A kind of circumlocution which we have not discussed before is *euphemism.* Our word *euphemism* is derived from the

Greek *eu* meaning "well" and *phanai,* "to speak"; the Greek word *euphēmizein* meant "to use fair words, or words of good omen." Now, however, *euphemism* is a term applied to a mild, soothing, usually vague expression which is substituted for a precise, or blunt, or less agreeable term. It is a linguistic device by which people avoid talking about, and often thinking about, unpleasant realities. Common examples of euphemisms are:

passed away or *departed from this world,* for "died"
perspire, for "sweat"
expectorate, for "spit"
social disease, for "syphilis"
lung affliction, for "tuberculosis"
indisposed, for "sick"
visually handicapped, for "blind"
mortician, for "undertaker"
paying guest, for "boarder"
sanitation engineer, for "garbage collector"
deferred payment, for "installment buying"
defensive maneuver, for "retreat"
plant food, for "manure"

There are, of course, certain social and conversational situations in which euphemisms may be desirable. For example, good judgment would suggest saying "plant food" if the person to whom one is talking considers "manure" a shocking word; and tact and kindness might recommend "he passed away" or some other euphemism for "death" in conversation with one recently bereaved. But increasingly in modern writing euphemisms are rejected, because they are roundabout, inexact, hesitant, and weak. Like other vague terms and circumlocutions, they carry the reader away from, instead of bringing him close to the real meaning. They should be used only when a situation involving personal feelings demands a delicate avoidance of fact. Normally the blunt factual term should be used because it is more precise and more emphatic.

The writer who has learned to choose exact words, to subordinate skillfully, and to avoid wordiness, triteness, mo-

notony, weak passive constructions, and euphemisms, has gone far toward emphatic expression. His writing will become more effective as he also learns to use *pause, position,* and *repetition* for emphasis.

A. Emphasis by Pause

In speech, the pause is a common and effective device for emphasis. A pause before a word or statement arouses interest in what is to come; a pause after a word or statement stresses its importance by giving the audience time to absorb it. In writing, commas, dashes, semicolons, periods, paragraph breaks, and chapter divisions all create pauses which emphasize the material immediately preceding and following the pause. The degree of emphasis depends on the length of the stop indicated by the punctuation. Beginnings and ends of sentences and beginnings and ends of paragraphs derive much of their emphasis from the fact that the beginnings follow and the ends are followed by full stops. We have discussed earlier the emphatic quality of the occasional very short sentence. It is emphatic not only because it differs from the sentences around it, but because its few words stand between, and are emphasized by, two stops. Advertising commonly uses short sentences and even one-sentence paragraphs, so that each idea will make its impact separately and emphatically on the mind of the reader.

A writer who is addressing an intelligent audience will, of course, take care that the ideas emphasized by his pauses are worthy of stress. He will use pauses to throw emphasis exactly where he wants it in the sentence or the paragraph, and in the exact degree. The following examples show how different kinds of pause work to create different emphases:

He was flushed, he was excited, but he was terribly late.
Stronger emphasis by means of heavier pauses: He was flushed. He was excited. But he was terribly late.

First Mrs. Brown arrived, then Mrs. Jones, and last of all Mrs. Fitzpatrick.

Stronger emphasis, by means of additional pauses, to Mrs. Fitzpatrick and the fact that she arrived late: First Mrs. Brown arrived, then Mrs. Jones, and, last of all—Mrs. Fitzpatrick.

I swear that this is not at all unusual.

Stronger emphasis on "not" and "at all" because they precede and follow the pause of a sentence interrupter: This is not, I swear, at all unusual.

Shift in emphasis (and in meaning) by a shift in pause; context would determine the best emphasis: However, Malcolm refused to give serious consideration to this important question.

Malcolm refused to give serious consideration, however, to this important question.

Malcolm refused, however, to give serious consideration to this important question.

Malcolm, however, refused to give serious consideration to this important question.

Greater emphasis on the last two sentences by means of a paragraph pause: He crept along, on his hands and knees again. The seconds passed like individual units, almost as if he heard a clock ticking. He could have sobbed every time he heard a man mutter in his sleep. They were all around him! He seemed to exist in several parts now; there was the sore remote protest of his palms and kneecap, the choking swollen torment of his throat, and the unbearable awareness of his brain. He was very close to the final swooning relaxation a man feels when he is being beaten unconscious and no longer cares whether he can get up. Very far away he could hear the murmuring of the jungle in the night.

At a curve in the trail he halted, peered around, and almost screamed. A man was sitting at a machine gun about three feet away.

NORMAN MAILER, *The Naked and the Dead*

B. Emphasis by Position

Position is closely related to pause because, as we have just seen, pauses create positions of emphasis. Since the beginning and, particularly, the end of a sentence naturally receive the

greatest emphasis, those positions should be occupied by words which the writer wishes to stress.

The delayed beginning, which we have mentioned as a type of padding, wastes the emphatic first place in the sentence on non-contributing words:

There are many men who enjoy beating their wives.
More emphatic: Many men enjoy beating their wives.

It was on Christmas Eve that I finally made up my mind.
More emphatic: On Christmas Eve I finally made up my mind.

There is some hope on his part of getting home Friday.
More emphatic: He has some hope of getting home Friday.

Avoiding such wasted emphasis is not, however, enough. One should use sentence beginnings to emphasize important elements which, in a conventionally arranged sentence, would be buried in the middle of the sentence. The following examples show the emphasis given words and phrases when they are taken out of their normal position and put in place of the subject at the beginning of the sentence:

Sorrowfully she turned and walked down the road. [The adverb *sorrowfully* is emphasized by being taken out of its normal position after *turned.*]
Evidences they had . . . but no decisions. [The object is emphasized by being put before the subject and verb.]
Desperately he struggled to untie the last knot.
Across the field he fled in terror.
John I admire; *his brother* I detest.

Such inversion, or changing of the normal sentence order, should, of course, be practiced with discretion. The force of the unusual order is lost, and the writing becomes stilted and strained, if an unconventional pattern is used repeatedly.

The end of the sentence is a position even more emphatic than the beginning, partly because it is followed by the period stop, and partly because there is a well-established general expectation that important things come last. In informal speech, sentences frequently trail off in weak modifiers and

afterthoughts. In writing, such sentences should be revised to end strongly with words and ideas that merit a prominent position and receive an added emphasis from it.

Unemphatic: Julia made a vehement protest, however.
More emphatic: Julia, however, made a vehement protest.

Unemphatic: We loudly denounced him as soon as he came.
More emphatic: As soon as he came we loudly denounced him.

Unemphatic: The divorce rate is now decreasing—at least I read that in the *Herald.*
More emphatic: According to the *Herald,* the divorce rate is now decreasing.

Unemphatic: We were surprised at his daring, not at his knowledge.
More emphatic: We were surprised, not at his knowledge, but at his daring.

Unemphatic: He was patient with their conversation in the next room, but he slammed the door when they turned on the radio.
More emphatic: He was patient with their conversation in the next room, but when they turned on the radio he slammed the door.[1]

Here are two sentences about Leonardo da Vinci's *Last Supper:*

Leonardo painted the Last Supper on the damp wall of the refectory, oozing with mineral salts. The effort to see the Eucharist as one taking leave of his friends, not as the pale Host of the altar, was strange after all the mystic developments of the middle age.

Walter Pater, in *The Renaissance,* wrote them this way:

On the damp wall of the refectory, oozing with mineral salts, Leonardo painted the Last Supper. . . . Strange, after all the

[1] The reader should be reminded that particular contexts might well justify some of the sentences we have marked "unemphatic." If, for example, the last sentence (about the radio and the slamming of the door) occurred in a discussion of this man's aversion to radio, the clause "when they turned on the radio," even though it is subordinate, might be important enough to deserve the end position.

mystic developments of the middle age, was the effort to see the Eucharist, not as the pale Host of the altar, but as one taking leave of his friends.

In Pater's first sentence, the main clause is emphasized by its position at the end; in the second, the two important ideas, "strange" and "as one taking leave of his friends," are given emphasis by a sentence arrangement which puts them at beginning and end.

The strongest sentences build to a climax. The elaborate periodic sentence, with its thought suspended until the end of the sentence, is a striking example of climactic arrangement:

> To those among us, however, who have lived long enough to form some just estimate of the rate of the changes which are, hour by hour in accelerating catastrophe, manifesting themselves in the laws, the arts, and the creeds of men, it seems to me, that now at least, if never at any former time, the thoughts of the true nature of our life, and of its powers and responsibilities, should present themselves with absolute sadness and sternness.
>
> JOHN RUSKIN, *Sesame and Lilies*

But in less elaborate sentences, too, parallel elements should be arranged in an order of increasing importance.

> And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity. [The final clause states what the position of *charity,* last in the series, has already suggested.]

> The lark's on the wing;
> The snail's on the thorn:
> God's in his heaven—
> All's right with the world!

> A loaf of bread, a jug of wine, and thou
> Singing beside me in the wilderness.

> Not for just an hour, not for just a day,
> Not for just a year, but always.

> And so, when their day is over, when their good and their evil have become eternal by the immortality of the past, be it ours to

feel that, where they suffered, where they failed, no deed of ours was the cause; but wherever a spark of the divine fire kindled in their hearts, we were ready with encouragement, with sympathy, with brave words in which high courage glowed.[2]

BERTRAND RUSSELL, "A Free Man's Worship"

Violation of the natural order of climax robs a sentence of its force, unless the anticlimax is used deliberately for humor. The two sentences below illustrate intentional anticlimax; the writer wishes to emphasize the items which by most standards are the least important:

At the end of nine holes, the minister had lost his temper, his religion, and his golf ball.

Colonel McGunthrie has survived World War I, World War II, and twenty years of marriage to Mrs. McGunthrie.

The following sentences are examples of thoughtless anticlimax:

It was a stupendous performance, and very good.

She had no illusions. She distrusted her husband, herself, and her friends.

We find these psychological reactions in frogs, in guinea pigs, in men, and in rats.

In paragraphs, as in sentences, the position of elements is important. The principles of emphasis are much the same: the first and last sentences of the paragraph hold the positions of greatest emphasis; good paragraphs, like good sentences, begin strongly and build to a strong ending.

C. Emphasis by Repetition

We have said a good deal about wordy and ineffective repetition: the needless repetition of ideas ("punctually on time"), the careless repetition of words ("gathered at the gathering"), and the thoughtless repetition of the same sentence pattern. Repetition can be, however, one of the most effective means of emphasis. Skillfully used, it impresses key

[2] Reprinted from *Mysticism and Logic* by Bertrand Russell, by permission of W. W. Norton and Company, Inc. Copyright, 1929, by the publishers.

words and phrases on the reader's mind, creates emotional effects, and binds together sentences in a paragraph.

Specific illustration will show, more clearly than any amount of general exposition, the force of effective repetition. By repetition, Coleridge in *The Ancient Mariner* produces an effect not carried by the simple statement, "I was alone on a wide sea with no one to pity me." Read the stanza several times, letting the repetitions sink in—*alone, all, wide, soul:*

> Alone, alone, all, all alone,
> Alone on a wide, wide sea!
> And never a soul took pity on
> My soul in agony.

James Harvey Robinson, in the following paragraph, emphatically repeats the pronoun *my,* which is the crux of his idea:

> The little word *my* is the most important one in all human affairs, and properly to reckon with it is the beginning of wisdom. It has the same force whether it is *my* dinner, *my* dog, and *my* house, or *my* faith, *my* country, and *my* God. We not only resent the imputation that our watch is wrong, or our car shabby, but that our conception of the canals of Mars, of the pronunciation of "Epictetus," of the medicinal value of salicine, or the date of Sargon I, are subject to revision.
>
> JAMES HARVEY ROBINSON, *The Mind in the Making*

Count and *counting* are repeated by William James to emphasize the idea that separate actions do count in the formation of habits and of character:

> Every smallest stroke of virtue or of vice leaves its never so little scar. The drunken Rip Van Winkle, in Jefferson's play, excuses himself for every fresh dereliction by saying, "I won't count this time!" Well! he may not count it, and a kind Heaven may not count it; but it is being counted none the less. Down among his nerve-cells and fibres the molecules are counting it, registering and storing it up to be used against him when the next temptation comes. Nothing we ever do is, in strict scientific literalness, wiped out.
>
> WILLIAM JAMES, *Psychology*

Thomas Wolfe often uses repetition to create atmosphere and emotion. In the following passage, the phrase *in the night, in the dark* is repeated for lyric emphasis and power; it integrates the separate details in the paragraph:

Father, in the night time, in the dark, I have heard the thunder of the fast express. In the night, in the dark, I have heard the howling of the winds among great trees, and the sharp and windy raining of the acorns. In the night, in the dark, I have heard the feet of rain upon the roofs, the glut and gurgle of the gutter spouts, and the soaking gulping throat of all the mighty earth, drinking its thirst out in the month of May—and heard the sorrowful silence of the river in October. The hill-streams foam and welter in a steady plunge, the mined clay drops and melts and eddies in the night, the snake coils cool and glistening under dripping ferns, the water roars down past the mill in one sheer sheet-like plunge, making a steady noise like wind, and in the night, in the dark, the river flows by us to the sea.

THOMAS WOLFE, *Of Time and the River*

Archibald MacLeish, in the foreword to his radio play, *The Fall of the City,* is concerned with stressing the importance, in the untelevised radio play, of the spoken word. Repetition of *word* and some repetition of sentence pattern emphasize his idea and bind his sentences to the central theme of the paragraph:

The first fact which everyone knows is that radio is a mechanism which carries to an audience sounds and nothing but sounds. A radio play consists of words and word equivalents and nothing else. There is no visible actor disguised to assume a part. There is no stage-set contrived to resemble a place. There is only the spoken word—an implement which poets have always claimed to use with a special authority. There is only the word-excited imagination—a theater in which poets have always claimed peculiar rights to play. Nothing exists save as the word creates it. The word dresses the stage. The word brings on the actors. The word supplies their look, their clothes, their gestures. The more packed and allusive the word, the more illuminating its rhythms, the more perfectly is the scene prepared, the more convincingly is the play enacted.

Effective emphasis, involving as it does so many of the principles and techniques of good expression, might well be the subject of a whole book on writing. Effective emphasis occurs when the writer knows surely what he wants to say, when he says it in strong concise words, and when he uses sentence form and rhythm, order and position, pause, and controlled repetition to produce the exact stress he desires.

CHAPTER REVIEW

If your reading of the chapter has been adequate, you should be able to explain and to illustrate each topic in the following outline of the chapter:

I. Economy and Conciseness
   A. Avoiding Padding and Jargon
   B. Cutting Clauses
   C. Choosing Exact Words
II. Originality: Avoiding Clichés
III. Variety in Sentences
   A. Kinds of Monotony to Avoid
   B. Ways of Varying Sentence Patterns
IV. Emphasis
   A. Destroyers of Emphasis
   B. Emphasis by Pause
   C. Emphasis by Position
   D. Emphasis by Repetition

EXERCISES

I. The following varied passages, most of them famous or familiar, represent different kinds of effective expression. Analyze the style of each passage to see what makes the expression of the idea distinctive and memorable. Consider the elements of style discussed in this chapter: economy and conciseness; originality of phrasing; variety in sentences; emphasis by pause, position, and repetition. Consider, too, con-

creteness in expression, use of figurative language, parallelism and balance, alliteration, sentence rhythm, charged words, and, whenever you know the context, the communicator's intention and attitude, and the appropriateness of the language used.

A.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

The same was in the beginning with God.

All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made.

In Him was life; and the life was the light of men.

And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.

The Gospel According to St. John

B.

Read not to contradict and confute; nor to believe and take for granted; nor to find talk and discourse; but to weigh and consider. Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested; that is, some books are to be read only in parts; others to be read, but not curiously; and some few to be read wholly, and with diligence and attention.

FRANCIS BACON, "Of Studies"

C.

Man is born free; and everywhere he is in chains. One thinks himself the master of others, and still remains a greater slave than they. How did this change come about? I do not know. What can make it legitimate? That question I think I can answer.

JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU, *The Social Contract*

D.

Sir, a woman's preaching is like a dog's walking on his hinder legs. It is not done well; but you are surprised to find it done at all.

SAMUEL JOHNSON

E.

Is life so dear or peace so sweet as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not

what course others may take, but as for me, give me liberty, or give me death!

PATRICK HENRY, Speech in the Virginia Convention, 1775

F.

When my eyes shall be turned to behold for the last time the sun in heaven, may I not see him shining on the broken and dishonored fragments of a once glorious Union; on States dissevered, discordant, belligerent; on a land rent with civil feuds, or drenched, it may be, in fraternal blood! Let their last feeble and lingering glance rather behold the gorgeous ensign of the republic, now known and honored throughout the earth, still full high advanced, its arms and trophies streaming in their original lustre, not a stripe erased or polluted, nor a single star obscured, bearing for its motto, no such miserable interrogatory as "What is all this worth?" nor those other words of delusion and folly, "Liberty first and Union afterwards"; but everywhere, spread all over in characters of living light, blazing on all its ample folds, as they float over the sea and over the land, and in every wind under the whole heavens, that other sentiment, dear to every true American heart,—Liberty *and* Union, now and for ever, one and inseparable!

DANIEL WEBSTER, Speech on Foot's Resolution, 1830

G.

With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan—to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves, and with all nations.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN, Second Inaugural Address, 1865

H.

I wish to preach not the doctrine of ignoble ease but the doctrine of the strenuous life.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT, 1899

I.

We are accepting this challenge of hostile purpose because we know that in such a Government, following such methods, we can never have a friend; and that in the presence of its organized power, always lying in wait to accomplish we know not what purpose, there can be no assured security for the demo-

cratic Governments of the world. We are now about to accept gauge of battle with this natural foe of liberty and shall, if necessary, spend the whole force of the nation to check and nullify its pretensions and its power. We are glad, now that we see the facts with no veil of false pretense about them, to fight thus for the ultimate peace of the world and for the liberation of its peoples, the German peoples included: for the rights of nations great and small and the privilege of men everywhere to choose their way of life and of obedience. The world must be made safe for democracy.

WOODROW WILSON, Address for Declaration of War Against Germany, 1917

J.

I am certain that my fellow Americans expect that on my induction into the Presidency I will address them with a candor and a decision which the present situation of our Nation impels. This is preeminently the time to speak the truth, the whole truth, frankly and boldly. Nor need we shrink from honestly facing conditions in our country today. This great Nation will endure as it has endured, will revive and will prosper. So, first of all, let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself—nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance.

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT, First Inaugural Address, 1933

K.

If it had not been for these thing I might have live out my life talking at street corners to scorning men. I might have die, unmarked, unknown, a failure. Now we are not a failure. This is our career and our triumph. Never in our full life could we hope to do such work for tolerance, for justice, for man's understanding of man, as now we do by accident. Our words, our lives, our pains—nothing! The taking of our lives—lives of a good shoemaker and a poor fishpeddler—all! That last moment belongs to us—that agony is our triumph.

BARTOLOMEO VANZETTI, Last Speech to the Court, 1927

L.

You all know the reasons which have impelled me to renounce the Throne. But I want you to understand that in making up my mind I did not forget the country or the Empire which as Prince of Wales, and lately as King, I have for twenty-five

years tried to serve. But you must believe me when I tell you that I have found it impossible to carry the heavy burden of responsibility and to discharge my duties as King as I would wish to do without the help and support of the woman I love.

And I want you to know that the decision I have made has been mine and mine alone. This was a thing I had to judge entirely for myself. The other person most nearly concerned has tried up to the last to persuade me to take a different course. I have made this, the most serious decision of my life, only upon the single thought of what would in the end be best for all.

PRINCE EDWARD, Broadcast after his Abdication, 1936

M.

We shall go on to the end, we shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our Island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender, and even if, which I do not for a moment believe, this Island or a large part of it were subjugated and starving, then our Empire beyond the seas, armed and guarded by the British Fleet, would carry on the struggle, until, in God's good time, the New World, with all its power and might, steps forth to the rescue and the liberation of the old.

WINSTON CHURCHILL, Speech after Dunkirk, 1940

N.

The truth is rarely pure and never simple. Modern life would be very tedious if it were either, and modern literature a complete impossibility!

OSCAR WILDE, *The Importance of Being Earnest*

O.

Veni, vidi, vici. (I came, I saw, I conquered.)

P.

Liberté, égalité, fraternité.

Q.

Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

R.

United we stand, divided we fall.

S.
Sighted sub sank same.

T.
Blood, sweat, and tears.

U.
The land of the free and the home of the brave.

II. The following sentences contain many of the enemies of effective expression: padding, jargon, weak clauses, thoughtless repetition, clichés, undesirable euphemisms, inexact phrasing. Revise the sentences, expressing the ideas in concise and emphatic English.

1. One bad trait which he has is that he is of a selfish nature.
2. He announced himself to be in favor of terminating the employment of three sales representatives.
3. Because of the fact that I think that exercise is a necessary requisite to health, it is my habitual custom to take a walk every day.
4. It was over Labor Day that we made a trip in the car, driving to Lake Madison for the Labor Day week-end.
5. There are two ways in which our opinions differ in respect to this institution of higher learning; they are, namely, that John feels that the pursuit of knowledge is made secondary to social activities and I do not; furthermore, he also thinks that teachers of outstanding quality are few and far between whereas I, on the other hand, think that by and large my professors are literally excellent.
6. She went to bed in the wee small hours, tired but happy after her day of honest toil.
7. Dr. Black is one of the most outstanding lecturers I have ever heard lecture, I believe.
8. It was during the time that I was in the Army that I became a sadder and wiser man in regard to the less desirable attributes of human nature.
9. As a matter of fact, she anticipates participating in the next dramatic production which will be given by the Dramatic Club.
10. The trouble in regard to most voters is due to the fact that at present, under conditions existing today, they cannot

get accurate information in relation to the respective candidates for office.

11. He shuffled off this mortal coil on Tuesday and will be laid to rest at three o'clock this afternoon.
12. I recall the time in my past when the schoolhouse where I went to school was annihilated by fire.
13. The difficulty appeared to my simple mind to be of a magnitude so enormous that only with the utmost difficulty could I refrain from being in the depths of despair.
14. I am sure that I voice the sentiments of the entire class when I extend our heartfelt thanks to Mr. Wilson in connection with his generous financial contribution to the deficit in the class treasury.
15. My roommate has the power and ability to work with concentration on his work in spite of various and sundry influences which are in the nature of things distracting.
16. In the case of the game next Saturday, I am doubtful as to whether we will win it or lose it.
17. Wordsworth's "Michael" is highly indicative of the author's characteristics of literary production, namely in the fact that its subject matter deals with that of nature; it is a definitely pastoral poem in which Wordsworth has given us a visual picture of his complete love and enjoyment held in the simplicity of nature herself.
18. My counselor told me in a tone of warning that I must improve my grades soon, before the next marking period, which comes next month.

III. All of the following passages, taken from freshman themes, are weak in expression. Some of them are conspicuously faulty; others have rather subtle deficiencies in style. Name the weakness or weaknesses of each passage as exactly as you can, then suggest improvements.

1. My main difficulty in writing a theme is the fact that there is a definite barrier between myself and the gateway to a large vocabulary.
2. Although I always enjoyed reading, the more literary type of work was avoided.
3. The interfraternity council should stress the visitation of each fraternity house by the freshman before he decides to pledge.

4. A good vocabulary is useless if one cannot use his knowledge of words in grammatically good sentences.
5. The teachers there didn't seem to consider a knowledge of many words as being essential, or at any rate, they didn't bother to concentrate on word study to any great extent.
6. Starting with her school days in Poland, up through the discovery of radium and to her death, the book was put in a beautiful array of incidents which she encountered.
7. However, once having gained enough confidence to write in my own style and express my ideas in my own way and not to have a fear of what the reaction might be to what are my own ideas I think that I will have achieved in great measure the clear, concise, good informal use of English which is likely to be so essential in theme writing.
8. I did not have the correct beginning in grammar school. I did as little studying as possible in grammar school but still make the grade. I never thoroughly learned grammar in grammar school and therefore I have found it hard.
9. The American newspaper serves as a disintegrator of every form of knowledge as well as the guiding light of great masses of the populace.
10. By means of the aerial tramway, the trip, which is about three-fourths of a mile, is completed in ten minutes. The tramway car, which is about fifteen feet long and five feet wide, is supported and pulled by a cable which is only an inch and a half in diameter. This cable, however, can easily withstand a strain of over 100,000 pounds, which is several times more weight than the small car and its passenger capacity of twenty-two people will put on it. The cars have elaborate braking systems which rarely see use because trouble is so infrequent. Furthermore, around both ends of the cable there are huge springs which ease the car to a gradual halt.
11. In recent years there has been a tremendous increase in the relative importance placed upon the role played by athletics in the over all college picture by the majority of the more outstanding colleges and universities throughout the country.
12. I have never done much reading and I have not developed a reading background and this is a disadvantage and an obstacle to me.

13. St. Simon Zelotes was surnamed the Canaanite. He is believed to be a relative of Jesus. Nothing is recorded in the Scriptures of his life.
14. He was enrolled in the school of ancient and modern languages and devoted himself to Latin, Greek, French, Spanish and Italian and by the end of the term he had received first honors in Latin and French. He led a normal student's life and delighted in drinking and gambling, and by December of the same year had acquired very heavy gambling debts. He returned home at the close of the session and Mr. Allan paid part of the debt but refused to pay all of it and therefore would not allow Edgar to return to the university.
15. By writing this theme on the subject of being allowed greater freedom in choosing theme topics I do not seek to promulgate a decree calling for the revamping of the English teaching system, for I know that there are other matters which enter into the choice of subject topics. I also know that a great number of abuses incurred in secondary school training have been corrected in the English teaching systems of college but what I actually do seek is a means by which the student is allowed liberties to show his God-given talent and not a talent that is superimposed upon his nature and therefore discourages whatever literary genius may have been hidden deep within his inner self.
16. I had supposed college would be like service schools, a frantic effort merely to keep up. Surprisingly, it isn't that at all. Instead it's rather enjoyable. Unexpectedly, I found myself familiar with some subjects. Moreover, I discovered that a good instructor, and most of them are good, is sincerely fond of teaching his subject. Most thankfully, I found that I have a real desire to learn and to know. Consequently, I am becoming a more serious student than I once thought possible.
17. Having failed to apply my efforts sufficiently to matters primarily academic, I found myself at mid-years in some discomfort in regard to my courses. It is my present intention in the situation which now confronts me to turn over a new leaf.
18. The cost of constructing ads during these days of high cost of living is very expensive.

IV. Improve the following sentences by substituting an exact word or phrase for each of the italicized locutions.

1. The cabinet was pine with a *thin layer of walnut on top of the pine.*
2. The car *slid* over the ice *and then it went* into the fence.
3. His hair was *uncombed and standing up in various directions.*
4. He was teasing the dog by *stretching the rubber band and releasing it in the dog's face.*
5. He has to *make a list of the contents of his book in alphabetical order.*
6. She was not skillful in her drawing *in showing the relationship of things in regard to distance.*
7. He *penned a communication in which he gave his support to* the committee's action.
8. He had been a member of the club *ever since it was founded.*
9. He was a *man who was running* for *the office of* mayor.
10. His conversation was *full of witty thoughts tersely expressed.*

CHAPTER SIX

GOOD PARAGRAPHS

A PARAGRAPH IS A UNIT of composition. It indicates to the reader that between its indented beginning and its end, one stage of the writer's thinking, or one phase of the action he is describing is presented. A good paragraph is clearly related to the material that precedes it and the material that follows it. It has unity, coherence, and emphasis; and it usually attains these by developing a topic sentence or idea, by transitional devices to show relationships between sentences, and by skillful selection and arrangement of material in the paragraph.

To most high-school graduates the statements just made about paragraphs are familiar enough; yet good paragraphing in freshman compositions is so rare that the experienced instructor is surprised—and delighted—when he finds it. To write good paragraphs, one needs more than an ability to recite abstract statements about paragraphing, even though those statements are perfectly sound. One needs to understand the function of the paragraph; he needs a knowledge of methods of development; and he needs to analyze the work of skillful writers to see how they apply these methods. Also, of course, he needs to have something to say, and he needs to write and revise so that his knowledge of paragraphing will translate itself into skill in expression.

Perhaps the best way to understand the function of the paragraph is to consider the origin of the convention of organizing written matter into paragraphs. Although the fact is seldom mentioned, the indentation for a paragraph serves as a mark of punctuation, and paragraphing, like other devices for indicating pause, emphasis, or separation, became a convention of writing because it serves a purpose. Early manuscripts consisted of one unbroken page after another without punctuation, capitalization, or separation of words, and with no marking off of paragraphs. Such manuscripts put too much tax on the reader, for he was obliged to blunder along, trying to find where words ended, where the pauses were, which words were proper names, and where one block of thought or detail ended and another began.

During the early Middle Ages a series of devices was introduced to enable a writer to convey his meaning more efficiently, and to make reading less arduous. Division into paragraphs was one of these devices. At first such divisions were indicated not by indentation, as at present, but by the use of a mark much like our present symbol, ¶. Our word *paragraph* (*para,* beside and *grapho,* to write) grew out of this practice, although we now indent for new paragraphs instead of placing the symbol in the left-hand margin. Indentation for paragraphs in writing is paralleled in public speaking by a pause longer than the usual pause after a sentence, or by a gesture or movement indicating that the speaker has completed one small phase of his subject and is going on to another.

Anyone who understands how language works knows that communication is usually most effective when the receiver is given a general idea of the subject and then is supplied with organized small blocks of expression, each dealing with a phase of the subject and each clearly related to the preceding and succeeding blocks. In writing, paragraphs constitute such blocks. For good writing, therefore, good paragraphing is essential. If the paragraphs are poorly made or unsuccessfully

cemented together, the whole structure of the communication is unsound.

This chapter gives information about ways of forming good paragraphs, and examples of good paragraphs which illustrate the generalizations of the text. The student should examine these illustrative paragraphs carefully, observing how the techniques described in this chapter are applied by skillful writers.

I. UNITY IN PARAGRAPHS

For convenience in discussion, paragraphs are often divided into three types: expository paragraphs, which give information or explain a problem or a process; narrative paragraphs, which tell a story or part of a story; and descriptive paragraphs, which describe people, places, or experiences. Most unified expository paragraphs have a *topic sentence,* that is, a sentence which expresses the central idea of this block of the composition. The topic sentence usually stands at the beginning of the paragraph, as a clear introductory statement of the new phase of the subject about to be discussed; but sometimes it comes in the middle of the paragraph, and sometimes at the end. In narrative and descriptive paragraphs, the topic sentence is frequently implied rather than stated; for example, a writer may set down a number of details about wind, cold, bare trees, etc., which give a single impression of bleakness, without the explicit statement "It was a bleak day." Such paragraphs have a *topic idea* rather than a topic sentence. A paragraph of any type has unity when it develops only one topic sentence or topic idea, and when every statement in it contributes to the development of that topic sentence or idea.

The following paragraph illustrates failure in unity:

Many veterans have difficulty for a while in their courses in college. Having been out of school for three or four years, they

have lost the habit of study and the power to concentrate. Formulas in chemistry and mathematics, which are recited readily by students fresh from high school, are only dim memories to them. Their age and the greater sense of responsibility most veterans have is an advantage to them. Many of them held responsible positions in the Service, and now many of them have families dependent on them. Consequently, they are serious about getting an education.

[This paragraph has two topic ideas: (1) veterans have difficulty in their courses; (2) they have the advantage of age and a sense of responsibility. There are two possible remedies for this paragraph disunity: one is to introduce the paragraph with a topic sentence which covers both ideas—"Many veterans have both disadvantages and advantages in college"; a second, and better, remedy is to split the paragraph into two paragraphs, developing more fully each of the two ideas. The second is better because the ideas are underdeveloped as they stand.]

Another failure in unity is illustrated in the first paragraph of a theme on the X-ray:

Mass X-raying is the only method of stamping out tuberculosis. This method is a practical one: everyone in the armed forces was X-rayed, and on the civilian front the state has sent out mobile units which have covered many war plants. [The X-ray machine consists of a tube, a light-proof hood, a camera, a transformer, and a control panel.] Good X-ray technicians can check as many as four persons per minute for tuberculosis.

[The bracketed sentence is irrelevant here. It should be the topic sentence of a later paragraph describing the machine.]

Achieving unity in paragraphs is not difficult, but it does require effort and attention. Students should consciously build their paragraphs around topic sentences, and learn to examine the organization of the paragraphs as they revise their papers. Unity can be tested very simply by these two questions:

1. What is the topic sentence or topic idea?
2. Is every statement in the paragraph clearly relevant to this topic sentence or topic idea?

II. COHERENCE AND EMPHASIS IN PARAGRAPHS

The sentences in a paragraph, in addition to being relevant to a single topic sentence or idea, must be clearly related to each other. One sentence should lead into the next, one idea coherently follow another, so that the reader is carried forward without confusion. A logical connection between statements comes, first of all, from a logical mental arrangement of a sequence of ideas. The basis of this arrangement may be the *time-relationship* between the statements in the paragraph: actions are set down in the chronological order in which they occurred. Descriptive paragraphs are often built on the *space-relationship* of the parts of the scene described: a writer may, for example, record his observations as he looks from left to right, or from near to far, or from far to near; if he jumps about, he is likely to create a picture of mental agitation on the part of the observer rather than a clear picture of the scene. Statements in the paragraph may also be arranged in a pattern of *cause to effect; general statement to particular example; the whole problem or process to its separate parts; problem to solution; question to answer.* The kind of arrangement will depend, of course, on the nature of the material; but a paragraph, to be coherent, must have a basic arrangement which is logical and clear.

The following paragraph is ineffective because the writer, describing the process of firing a 240-millimeter howitzer, has failed to present separate actions in their proper time-sequence:

> Fire Direction Control receives the signal "Number One ready," and checks with the forward observer to see whether the round is still called for. The signal has been given by the gun-crew chief after he has checked to see that no one is in the way of the recoil mechanism. The operator at the gun position is instructed to "fire when ready." Of course, this is true only if conditions still call for artillery fire. The chief of the gun section gives the order "Fire," and the round is on the way. Before this,

the breechblock man has released the safety mechanism, and the lanyard man has yanked the cord.

[The coherent, logical order of events is:

1. The gun crew chief checks to see that no one is in the way.
2. He then gives the signal "Number One ready."
3. This signal is received by Fire Direction control, which checks with the forward observer.
4. If the round is still called for, the operator is instructed to "fire when ready."
5. The chief of the gun crew then gives the order "Fire."
6. The breechblock man releases the safety mechanism; the lanyard man yanks the cord. The round is on its way.]

A second way of achieving coherence is by the use of effective transitions. In addition to arranging his ideas in logical order, the writer must take care that the connections between his statements are made entirely clear to the reader. The most common ways of establishing the relationships between sentences in a paragraph are:

1. Using sentence connectives such as *therefore, however, on the other hand, at the same time, meanwhile, afterward, then.*

2. Repeating a key word that has occurred in the preceding sentence.

3. Using a clear pronoun reference to a word or idea in the preceding sentence.

4. Putting parallel thoughts in parallel constructions to show the relationship between them.

5. Using subordination and subordinating conjunctions to show the relationship between important and less important ideas.

The writer of the following confusing paragraph probably had arranged his ideas in logical sequence, but, in writing, he omitted so many connectives and subordinated so poorly that it is difficult to follow his thought:

I have decided one thing. The principal reason for enrolling in an educational institution is to obtain an education from books. Extra-curricular activities teach much. I am eager to par-

ticipate while in college. The problem of my poor high-school preparation is too large to be solved in a short time. My grades are low. I will not participate in extra-curricular activities until I have found an answer.

Improved in coherence:

I have decided one thing: the principal reason for enrolling in an educational institution is to obtain an education from books. Although extra-curricular activities teach much and I am eager to participate in them before I finish college, I have an immediate problem of low grades because of my poor high-school preparation. Until I have solved this problem I will not participate in extra-curricular activities.

The paragraphs below illustrate clear connections between statements. In the first, an excerpt from a student theme, the writer shows the simple time-relationship between his statements by the expressions *in the weeks and months, at first, gradually, finally:*

In the weeks and months that followed I tried to understand and accept Dad's death. At first I had a thousand daydreams of his return. Always he was tired from a long, long trip, but alive and well. Gradually, though, my fantasies and hopes died away. I stopped listening for his voice; I stopped searching for his face in crowds. Finally I knew in my heart that he never would return. The god of my childhood was gone, and there was nothing.

The following paragraph, an eminent scientist's definition of science, shows a more complex relating of ideas. The paragraph is related to the preceding paragraph by an introductory transitional phrase, and its sentences are bound together by the repetition of key words (*concepts, fruitful, experiments and observations, quality*), and by clear pronoun references. We have italicized the principal connective devices:

As a first approximation, we may say that science emerges from the other progressive activities of man to the extent that *new concepts* arise from *experiments and observations,* and the *new concepts in turn* lead to further *experiments and observations.* The case histories drawn from the last three hundred years show examples of *fruitful* and *fruitless concepts.* The texture of mod-

ern science is the result of the interweaving of the *fruitful concepts.* The test of a *new* idea is *therefore not only* its success in correlating the then-known facts *but much more* its success or failure in stimulating further *experimentation or observation* which *in turn* is *fruitful. This dynamic quality* of science viewed not as a practical undertaking but as development of *conceptual* schemes seems to me to be close to the heart of the best definition. It is *this quality* which can be demonstrated only by the historical approach, or else learned by direct professional experience.

JAMES B. CONANT, *On Understanding Science*

We have said earlier, in the discussion of emphasis, that good paragraphs, like good sentences, should begin and end strongly. If a paragraph has unity, if it is a necessary block in the paper, and if its sentences are arranged in coherent order, the matter of emphasis usually takes care of itself. A paragraph which builds logically to a climax, with its topic sentence at the end, is naturally emphatic. A paragraph which begins with its topic sentence may, however, be in some danger of tapering off at the end unless the writer has clearly in mind the importance of the end position. A paragraph beginning with its topic sentence may end emphatically with a restatement or enlargement of the topic idea, or it may invite the reader to go on to the next paragraph.

The following paragraph, from the student theme previously quoted, enlarges, in its last sentence, the topic idea stated in its first sentence:

There was nothing that Dad couldn't do. He could put a squirming brown worm on a hook, dive from the highest tower into the deep water below, or take our automobile apart and fix it. Once, when our old Hudson was back together again, there was a small square part left over; but the car ran just the same. I knew it would, because Father was an engineer. He built bridges, big buildings, a tunnel for my electric train, and a pen for the quivering gray rabbit that he brought home in his coat pocket. Dad could even play the piano and sing "Columbia the Gem of the Ocean." Sometimes I felt sorry for all the other boys in the world whose fathers were such ordinary men.

The paragraph below, from another student theme, develops one phase of the experience related in the paper, and leads the reader, in its last sentence, into the next phase:

Today, as I gaze over a gauze mask, my body wrapped in white and my hands in rubber, the operating room seems strangely unreal. Yesterday it was a room full of excitement and things to learn. Now its white walls seem to hold something far different. I can hardly convince myself that I am here not as an observer but as an instrument nurse. Suddenly I feel that I have no right to hold this position. Many doctors have told me of my responsibility. Mine is almost as great as theirs, they maintain, for if I mix the wrong drugs, have the wrong instruments ready, or have improperly sterilized equipment, the operation will be as much a failure as if the surgeon's scalpel slipped. The patient's life is in my hands, and I can't be too careful. I have checked everything twice, suction apparatus, sterile gauze, sterile sheets, sutures, needles . . . . Now the doctor is coming; the operation will begin.

III. TRANSITIONS BETWEEN PARAGRAPHS

Much of what has been said about making clear connections between sentences within the paragraph applies to connections between paragraphs in a well-organized paper. Paragraphs, like the sentences which compose them, must have an arrangement which is basically logical and effective; they must also be linked in such a way that the reader is led easily from one of these units of composition into the next. Each paragraph, developing its single topic idea, at the same time is, and must clearly be, a part of an unbroken chain. In long papers, short transitional paragraphs which summarize briefly the preceding ideas and relate them to the idea following are often used to join long paragraphs or sections of the paper. In short papers, the common transitional devices are these:

1. Concluding a paragraph with a sentence which introduces the next phase of the action. The last paragraph quoted in the previous section is an example, with its concluding sen-

tence, "Now the doctor is coming; the operation will begin."

2. Using in the first sentence of a paragraph a connective or a transitional word or phrase: *furthermore, therefore, as a result, in addition, on the contrary.*

3. Beginning a paragraph with a sentence which refers clearly to a statement at the end of the preceding paragraph or to its topic idea.

The following paragraph beginnings illustrate some of the common ways of linking paragraphs:

The *second* difficulty is overcrowded classrooms. [The first difficulty has been discussed in the paragraph before.]

Such objections can be answered easily. [*Such objections* refers clearly to the material in the preceding paragraph.]

Many high schools, then, are not giving the preparation the student needs. Should this fact be ignored by the colleges, or accepted as a real problem? [The first sentence summarizes the ideas of the preceding paragraph. The question introduces the topic idea of this paragraph.]

A week later, the merchants of the town decided to take action.

The increased cost of living, *however,* has invalidated *these gains.*

Besides using these questionable methods, salesmen are expected to make actual misrepresentations about the superior quality of expensive goods.

Pedestrians, *as well as drivers,* would benefit by *this change* in traffic regulations.

Obvious connections like *Now let us look at the other side of the question* should be avoided as much as possible; they are preferable to no connections at all, but they are mechanical and labored.

Good transitions between paragraphs are an inconspicuous but essential part of a good composition. They keep the organization of the paper clear; they prevent the reader's falling into a gulf between paragraphs, or having to leap from one thought to another; they give him a sense of continuity and progress, from the beginning of the paper to the end.

IV. THE LENGTH OF PARAGRAPHS

It is impossible to lay down hard-and-fast rules about the length of paragraphs, because paragraph development and length differ widely with the importance of the idea being discussed, the nature of the composition, and the intention of the writer. Convention demands the use of a new paragraph for each new speech in written dialogue, however brief or fragmentary that speech is. In advertising, as we have noted earlier, short paragraphs are used to facilitate reading and to give separate emphasis to each idea. For the same reasons, paragraphs in newspapers and in business letters are usually short. Even in formal writing, one occasionally finds a one-sentence paragraph which is used for sharp emphasis, or which makes a transition between long paragraphs. In narrative writing, where a new paragraph is used for each new phase of the action of the story, some paragraphs may be long because certain phases of the action need full presentation; others may be very short because the action is minor or brief. The proper length of paragraphs cannot, then, be established dogmatically, but must be determined by the complexity of the material and the purpose of the author. We can only suggest here a general method of deciding how long paragraphs should be.

In the next section, on the development of paragraphs, we are quoting as examples seventeen paragraphs, nearly all of them from contemporary writing, and most of them expository—intended primarily to inform or to explain rather than to tell part of a story or to communicate experience. The shortest of these paragraphs is 105 words, the longest 336 words; the average length of the seventeen paragraphs is about 185 words. The average paragraph in this fairly typical selection, then, would occupy something like two-thirds of a double-spaced typed page. We offer this calculation, obviously not as a rule, but as a rough guide to the student in judging the length of his own paragraphs: in expository writing, his

paragraphs should rarely exceed 300 words, and rarely fall below 100. Three or more paragraphs on a single page should, therefore, be a signal to him to re-examine his paragraphs; the length may be suitable to his subject, but the short paragraphs suggest that his material is not adequately developed. Also, the writer should look again at paragraphs which are longer than a manuscript page; they may be justified, but their unusual length suggests that two phases of the idea or the action have been thoughtlessly run together.

V. THE FULL DEVELOPMENT OF PARAGRAPHS

Although short paragraphs are not necessarily faulty, inadequately developed paragraphs are. A common weakness in student writing is the sketchy paragraph which, though it deals with an important phase of the subject, consists only of a topic sentence with a qualifying statement or two. Such skeleton paragraphs, lacking flesh, thought, vitality and color, convey little or no meaning to the reader. They give the impression of mental malnutrition—usually a correct impression. They are likely, too, to lead to another failure: the writer, seeing, as he looks at his manuscript, that his paragraphing is choppy, often tries to improve the appearance of his paper by combining paragraphs, with the result that he throws into one disunified paragraph two or more underdeveloped topic ideas. His realization that undeveloped paragraphs are a weakness in writing is, of course, commendable. The treatment for these starved paragraphs, however, is not to swell them by the addition of inappropriate bones, but to develop the flesh and substance which they should have.

If a topic sentence or topic idea is worth including in a paper, it is worth sufficient development to make it meaningful and interesting to the reader. In the following pages we shall discuss and illustrate four of the most useful methods of developing paragraphs. These methods are closely related; they are all ways of making material more concrete; and they

are often used in combination. For convenience we shall discuss them separately under the headings *particularization, illustration, contrast and comparison,* and *definition.*

A. Particularization

Particularization means making a general statement clear by a series of concrete details or particular instances of the thing named in the general statement. In a paragraph developed by particularization, the topic sentence usually stands at the beginning, followed by details which elaborate or support it.

The following paragraph on Hollywood, beginning with a statement about the influence of Hollywood, is developed with particular instances of that influence:

> The long arm of Hollywood can be seen in any home or department store, or by glancing into the nearest mirror. Indirect lighting, modern furniture, and resplendent bathrooms, those landmarks of man's ascent from barbarism, owe much to the silver screen. The off-the-face hat, invented to keep shadows off the faces of movie Lorelei who are paid for their unshadowed features, swept the feminine world in the past decade and reestablished a style which is two thousand years old. The movies helped to undermine the taboos which fought off a cosmeticized world. The short-vamp shoe, the decline of the American custom of eating peas with a knife, elegant feminine underthings, the popularity of Scotch and soda, and smoking by adolescents and women—all may be traced in some measure to Hollywood's persuasive power.
>
> LEO C. ROSTEN, *Hollywood: The Movie Colony—the Movie Makers*

The topic sentence of the paragraph below, "Kit liked it all," is followed by six incomplete sentences which particularize *all;* that is, they give a series of concrete pictures of what Kit liked. The last sentence of the paragraph pulls the details together and restates the topic idea:

> Kit liked it all. The whitewashed, crumbling, flat-roofed, one-story *adobe* houses, with their mica windows guarded by iron

bars or painted wooden shutters. The narrow, unpaved, winding lanes and alleys leading to the plaza and its naked cottonwoods. The long, shadowy, echoing *portales,* the rigid *vigas* thrusting their ends out through the walls, the heavy sagging gates of the hidden *patios.* The irrigated gardens, the fields, and the twin red-brown communal houses of the Indian pueblo up the stream. The soft gloom of the quiet interiors with their queer modeled fireplaces, their strings of red peppers, their gay Indian rugs, stacked along the walls for seats by day and beds by night, their Pueblo pottery and baskets, their silver-mounted saddles hung on pegs, their *santos* and grotesque holy pictures. Outside, their chimneys made of broken pots, their beehive ovens, and the white, white bread that was baked in them. Mountain, and meadow, and *'dobe* wall, Kit liked them all.

STANLEY VESTAL, *Kit Carson*

B. Illustration

Closely related to particularization, illustration means just what the word says—giving specific illustrations or examples to show the reader the exact meaning or application of a general statement. The examples may be brief clarifications, or they may be rather long illustrative anecdotes or experiences. Sometimes they are introduced by an expression like *for example* or *let us look at the case of Mr. X.;* usually their position, immediately following the general statement they illustrate, makes the mechanical introduction unnecessary. Illustration is one of the best methods of paragraph development because well-chosen examples are concrete, easy to understand, and always interesting.

Walter Lippmann, in the paragraph below, uses a long illustration to clarify his topic idea that people react, not to objective events, but to their often distorted mental images of those events:

The only feeling that anyone can have about an event he does not experience is the feeling aroused by his mental image of that event. That is why until we know what others think they know, we cannot truly understand their acts. I have seen a young girl, brought up in a Pennsylvania mining town, plunged suddenly from entire cheerfulness into a paroxysm of grief when a gust

of wind cracked the kitchen window-pane. For hours she was inconsolable, and to me incomprehensible. But when she was able to talk, it transpired that if a window-pane broke it meant that a close relative had died. She was, therefore, mourning for her father, who had frightened her into running away from home. The father was, of course, quite thoroughly alive as a telegraphic inquiry soon proved. But until the telegram came, the cracked glass was an authentic message to that girl. Why it was authentic only a prolonged investigation by a skilled psychiatrist could show. But even the most casual observer could see that the girl, enormously upset by her family troubles, had hallucinated a complete fiction out of one external fact, a remembered superstition, and a turmoil of remorse, and fear and love for her father.

WALTER LIPPMANN, *Public Opinion*

Dr. Liebman uses two brief illustrations in the paragraph below to clarify the nature of neurotic fear:

The best illustration of the difference between normal and neurotic fear was given by Sigmund Freud himself. A person in an African jungle, he said, may quite properly be afraid of snakes. That is normal and self-protective. But if a friend of ours suddenly begins to fear that snakes are under the carpet of his city apartment, then we know that his fear is neurotic, abnormal. In attempting to estimate our own fears we may profitably apply Freud's serviceable yardstick. It would be quite normal for a Polish mother to fear that her children might die of starvation, but when a wealthy American mother comes into my study and tells me that her children are dying of slow malnutrition, I suspect that her fear is a morbid and neurotic shadow, based on her own feelings of guilt, fear, and hatred.[1]

JOSHUA LOTH LIEBMAN, *Peace of Mind*

Aldous Huxley combines several methods of development in the following paragraph. At the beginning he gives brief concrete examples to show that ordinarily we do not consider men equal; in the middle of the paragraph he restates the point his examples have made clear, and relates it to his topic

[1] Reprinted from *Peace of Mind* by permission of Simon and Schuster, Inc. Copyright, 1946, by Joshua Loth Liebman.

idea; toward the end of the paragraph he uses a comparison to emphasize the topic idea, the inconsistency in our thinking about equality. (Worth noting in this paragraph, too, is the way the sentences and ideas are related: by parallel sentences; by repetition of key words; by the sentence connectives *and; at ordinary times, then; but when; or at any rate; similarly.*)

That all men are created equal is a proposition to which, at ordinary times, no sane human being has ever given his assent. A man who has to undergo a dangerous operation does not act on the assumption that one doctor is just as good as another. Editors do not print every contribution that reaches them. And when they require civil servants, even the most democratic governments make a careful selection among their theoretically equal subjects. At ordinary times, then, we are perfectly certain that men are not equal. But when, in a democratic country, we think or act politically, we are no less certain that men are equal. Or at any rate—which comes to the same thing in practice —we behave as though we were certain of men's equality. Similarly, the pious medieval nobleman who, in church, believed in forgiving enemies and turning the other cheek was ready, as soon as he had emerged again into the light of day, to draw his sword at the slightest provocation. The human mind has an almost infinite capacity for being inconsistent.

ALDOUS HUXLEY, "The Idea of Equality," *Proper Studies*

C. Contrast and Comparison

The paragraph just above illustrates a use of brief comparison for clarity and emphasis. In a paragraph developed entirely by contrast or comparison or by both, the writer sets side by side two people, things, or situations, and demonstrates in detail the similarities, or differences, or similarities and differences between them. Like particularization and illustration, contrast and comparison develop a general idea by making it detailed and concrete.

Frederick Lewis Allen, in the paragraph preceding the one quoted below, has made the point that the Republican "bosses" in 1920 had decided to choose a Presidential nominee who was a complete contrast to Woodrow Wilson. In this

paragraph he explains the choice of Harding by a detailed contrasting of the two men:

Consider how perfectly Harding met the requirements. Wilson was a visionary who liked to identify himself with "forward-looking men"; Harding, as Mr. Lowry put it, was as old-fashioned as those wooden Indians which used to stand in front of cigar stores, "a flower of the period before safety razors." Harding believed that statesmanship had come to its apogee in the days of McKinley and Foraker. Wilson was cold; Harding was an affable small-town man, at ease with "folks"; an ideal companion, as one of his friends expressed it, "to play poker with all Saturday night." Wilson had always been difficult of access; Harding was accessible to the last degree. Wilson favored labor, distrusted business men as a class, and talked of "industrial democracy"; Harding looked back with longing eyes to the good old days when the government didn't bother business men with unnecessary regulations, but provided them with fat tariffs and instructed the Department of Justice not to have them on its mind. Wilson was at loggerheads with Congress, and particularly with the Senate; Harding was not only a Senator, but a highly amenable Senator. Wilson had been adept at making enemies; Harding hadn't an enemy in the world. He was genuinely genial. "He had no knobs, he was the same size and smoothness all the way round," wrote Charles Willis Thompson. Wilson thought in terms of the whole world; Harding was for America first. And finally, whereas Wilson wanted America to exert itself nobly, Harding wanted to give it a rest. At Boston, a few weeks before the Convention, he had correctly expressed the growing desire of the people of the country and at the same time had unwittingly added a new word to the language, when he said, "America's present need is not for heroics but healing; not nostrums but normalcy; not revolution but restoration; . . . not surgery but serenity." Here was a man whom a country wearied of moral obligations and the hope of the world could take to its heart.

FREDERICK LEWIS ALLEN, *Only Yesterday*

Comparison is particularly effective if something complex or unfamiliar can be clarified by comparing it with something simple or familiar. Edward Bellamy, in *Looking Backward,* writes from the point of view of one who has awakened

in the year 2000 and is looking back at the undesirable social structure of his own day; in the following paragraph he explains this complex social and economic structure of the 1880's by comparing it to a simple thing—a stagecoach. A comparison like this of two ideas or situations is called an analogy.

By way of attempting to give the reader some general impression of the way people lived together in those days, and especially of the relations of the rich and poor to one another, perhaps I cannot do better than to compare society as it then was to a prodigious coach which the masses of humanity were harnessed to and dragged toilsomely along a very hilly and sandy road. The driver was hunger, and permitted no lagging, though the pace was necessarily very slow. Despite the difficulty of drawing the coach at all along so hard a road, the top was covered with passengers who never got down, even at the steepest ascents. These seats on top were very breezy and comfortable. Well up out of the dust, their occupants could enjoy the scenery at their leisure, or critically discuss the merits of the straining team. Naturally such places were in great demand and the competition for them was keen, every one seeking as the first end in life to secure a seat on the coach for himself and to leave it to his child after him. By the rule of the coach a man could leave his seat to whom he wished, but on the other hand there were many accidents by which it might at any time be wholly lost. For all that they were so easy, the seats were very insecure, and at every sudden jolt of the coach persons were slipping out of them and falling to the ground, where they were instantly compelled to take hold of the rope and help drag the coach on which they had before ridden so pleasantly. It was naturally regarded as a terrible misfortune to lose one's seat, and the apprehension that this might happen to them or their friends was a constant cloud upon the happiness of those who rode.

Stuart Chase, describing the Grand Coulee Dam, sees in it an achievement comparable to, and greater than, the construction of the Great Pyramid six thousand years ago. In the following paragraph he uses both comparison and contrast to convey his ideas about the dam, and to build to his topic sentence at the end of the paragraph:

One of these masses is built of cut stone, the other of poured concrete. One took 50,000 men twenty years to build, the other will take 5,000 men six years, in a task not only three times greater but vastly more complex and dangerous. Both structures relied on the labor of those who would otherwise have been unemployed. Egyptian peasants in the off season built Cheops; American workingmen and engineers shelved by a great depression are building Grand Coulee. Pyramids were houses for the dead. Dams are centers of energy for the living. It is better, I think, to live in the age of the Great Dams than in the age of the Great Pyramids.

STUART CHASE, *Idle Money Idle Men*

The two paragraphs below, from a modern novel, characterize and contrast two women through a description of their rooms. (Within the paragraphs, particularization is used to give a detailed picture of the rooms, and to set up the total contrast.)

As I watched her [Miss Pride], taking in with admiration each detail of her immaculate attire and her proud carriage, I heard, from the adjoining room, embedded in a yawn, the waking squeal of Mrs. McKenzie, a garrulous and motherly old woman whom I had always disliked. Her room was no pleasure to clean: her bed was strewn with corsets and short-sleeved nightdresses, and on her bedside table, I often found drying apple cores which I removed gingerly, having in my mind an image of her with her sparse hair unpinned sitting up in bed cropping with her large false teeth. Upon the bureau, amongst sticky bottles of vile black syrups and tonics and jars of fetid salve, there lay her bunion plasters and her ropes of brown hair which she sometimes arranged in a lofty cone on top of her head. Usually she was in the room when I entered and she saluted me with disgusting moonshine as "mother's little helper" or asked me if my "beauteous mamma" was sick.

Now in Miss Pride's room, there was never anything amiss. Perhaps once or twice a summer, I found a bottle of imported wine or whiskey on her writing desk; this was the only medicine she took and she took it regularly in small quantities. On the bureau, the china hair receiver did not receive a wisp of hair, and there were neither spots nor foreign objects upon the white linen runner. A hat-pin holder, sprouting long, knobbed

needles, two cut-glass cologne bottles, and a black glove box, shaped like a small casket, were reflected in the clear swinging mirror. Though I should have loved to dearly, I had not the courage to investigate the drawers which were always neatly shut, but I was sure that they were in scrupulous order. The other old ladies, almost without exception, allowed the feet of stockings and the straps of camisoles to stream from each gaping tier like so many dispirited banners.

JEAN STAFFORD, *Boston Adventure*

D. Definition

Definition as a method of paragraph development means, not quoting a dictionary definition, but discussing fully and specifically the meaning of a word or a term so that the reader understands exactly what it stands for in the context of this piece of writing. Definition of this sort is particularly necessary when the author is using abstract terms which have different meanings for different people, when he is limiting his subject more than it usually is limited, or when he is writing on a topic likely to be unfamiliar to his readers. Full and exact definition paragraphs are often the most important part of a paper; without them the composition may be obscure or misleading.

Clear definition may be accomplished by one or more of these methods: by *analysis* (breaking a complex term or concept into its various parts); by *negation* or *exclusion* (showing what the term does *not* mean); by *restatement* (repetition in different words of the core of the definition); and by the methods of paragraph development already discussed, especially illustration and contrast and comparison. The paragraphs below will illustrate these methods.

Bertrand Russell, to make clear what he means by the abstract word *patriotism,* defines it by analysis; that is, he breaks the complex idea of patriotism into its component parts: love of home, liking for compatriots, pride, etc. The paragraph illustrates climactic arrangement of ideas as well as full definition.

Patriotism is a very complex feeling, built up out of primitive instincts and highly intellectual convictions. There is love of home and family and friends, making us peculiarly anxious to preserve our own country from invasion. There is the mild instinctive liking for compatriots as against foreigners. There is pride, which is bound up with the success of the community to which we feel that we belong. There is a belief, suggested by pride but reinforced by history, that one's own nation represents a great tradition and stands for ideals that are important to the human race. But besides all these, there is another element, at once nobler and more open to attack, an element of worship, of willing sacrifice, of joyful merging of the individual life in the life of the nation. This religious element in patriotism is essential to the strength of the State, since it enlists the best that is in most men on the side of national sacrifice.[2]

BERTRAND RUSSELL, *Why Men Fight*

The following paragraph illustrates definition by negation or exclusion. In this transitional paragraph, James Harvey Robinson defines "creative thought" by first telling his readers that it is not like the three types of thinking he has discussed before:

This brings us to another kind of thought which can fairly easily be distinguished from the three kinds described above. It has not the usual qualities of the reverie, for it does not hover about our personal complacencies and humiliations. It is not made up of the homely decisions forced on us by everyday needs, when we review our little stock of existing information, consult our conventional preferences and obligations, and make a choice of action. It is not the defense of our own cherished beliefs and prejudices just because they are our own—mere plausible excuses for remaining of the same mind. On the contrary, it is that peculiar species of thought which leads us to *change* our mind.

JAMES HARVEY ROBINSON, *The Mind in the Making*

The writer of the article on socialism in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* begins his discussion by defining the term and by indicating, as part of his definition, what the term does *not* mean in this discussion:

[2] From *Why Men Fight* by Bertrand Russell, Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc. Copyright, 1917. Used by permission of the publishers.

Socialism is the name given both to a widespread body of doctrines and to a world-wide movement taking many different forms. It has a long history behind it; and the word has been used in shifting senses as the ideas behind it have developed and the situations facing it changed. A short and comprehensive definition is therefore impossible. We can only say that Socialism is essentially a doctrine and a movement aiming at the collective organization of the community in the interests of the mass of the people by means of the common ownership and collective control of the means of production and exchange.

It is well to begin by ruling altogether out from the scope of this article certain popular uses of the term "Socialism" which were current, especially during the past generation. The well-known phrase "We are all Socialists now," and the constant references to "socialistic legislation," only serve to obscure the real meaning of the word. "We are all Socialists now" only means that everybody in these days, whatever his politics, is ready to agree to a greater amount of Government intervention both in industry and in the affairs of society generally than most people even conceived as possible a generation ago. And "socialistic legislation" is, as a rule, only a phrase indicating disapproval of any measure which increases this collective intervention or seeks in any way to promote a more equal distribution of income among the members of the community.

G. D. H. COLE, "Socialism," *Encyclopædia Britannica,* 14th edition

Definition by restatement is shown in the following paragraph. The author defines the field of anthropology by repeating, in different terms, the idea that anthropology is concerned with all cultures and not solely with our own:

The distinguishing mark of anthropology among the social sciences is that it includes for serious study other societies than our own. For its purposes any social regulation of mating and reproduction is as significant as our own, though it may be that of the Sea Dyaks, and have no possible historical relation to that of our civilization. To the anthropologist, our customs and those of a New Guinea tribe are two possible social schemes for dealing with a common problem, and in so far as he remains an anthropologist he is bound to avoid any weighing of one in favor of the other. He is interested in human behavior, not as it is

shaped by one tradition, our own, but as it has been shaped by any tradition whatsoever. He is interested in the great gamut of custom that is found in various cultures, and his object is to understand the way in which these cultures change and differentiate, the different forms through which they express themselves, and the manner in which the customs of any peoples function in the lives of the individuals who compose them.

RUTH BENEDICT, *Patterns of Culture*

The term *loaded words* (the words we have called *charged*) is defined by a series of examples in this paragraph from S. I. Hayakawa's *Language in Action:*

In short, the process of reporting is the process of keeping one's personal feelings out. In order to do this, one must be constantly on guard against "loaded" words that reveal or arouse feelings. Instead of "sneaked in," one should say "entered quietly"; instead of "politicians," "congressmen" or "aldermen"; instead of "officeholder," "public official"; instead of "tramp," "homeless unemployed"; instead of "Chinaman," "Chinese"; instead of "dictatorial set-up," "centralized authority"; instead of "crack pots," "holders of uncommon views." A newspaper reporter, for example, is not permitted to write, "A bunch of fools who are suckers enough to fall for Senator Smith's ideas met last evening in the rickety firetrap that disfigures the south edge of town." Instead he says, "Between seventy-five and a hundred people were present last evening to hear an address by Senator Smith at the Evergreen Gardens near the South Side city limits."

A combination of analogy and contrast is used by Max Eastman in the first paragraph of *Enjoyment of Poetry* to define the term *poetic people:*

A simple experiment will distinguish two types of human nature. Gather a throng of people and pour them into a ferry-boat. By the time the boat has swung into the river you will find that a certain proportion have taken the trouble to climb upstairs, in order to be out on deck and see what is to be seen as they cross over. The rest have settled indoors, to think what they will do upon reaching the other side, or perhaps lose themselves in apathy or tobacco smoke. But leaving out those apathetic, or

addicted to a single enjoyment, we may divide all the alert passengers on the boat into two classes—those who are interested in crossing the river, and those who are merely interested in getting across. And we may divide all the people on the earth, or all the moods of people, in the same way. Some of them are chiefly occupied with attaining ends, and some with receiving experiences. The distinction of the two will be more marked when we name the first kind practical, and the second poetic, for common knowledge recognizes that a person poetic or in a poetic mood is impractical, and a practical person is intolerant of poetry.

Many paragraphs, as we have said, are developed by a combination of these methods of particularization, illustration, contrast and comparison, and definition. The method or methods used will depend on the nature of the writer's material. How fully he develops particular paragraphs will depend, too, on his material and on the importance of these paragraphs in the whole paper.

What we have said about paragraph development is chiefly applicable to expository paragraphs. Descriptive and narrative paragraphs are so varied in their purposes that meaningful comment on them is almost impossible. Descriptive paragraphs are usually developed by a form of particularization: the writer, by means of a number of well-selected details, makes a person or a scene real to the reader. (The paragraphs above from *Kit Carson* and *Boston Adventure* are examples.) Descriptive paragraphs, as we have said earlier, often have instead of a topic sentence a topic idea which lies in the total impression the reader receives from all the details he is given. Narrative paragraphs are even harder to generalize about. Since they present one phase in the action of the story, their length and composition depend entirely on the emphasis the writer wishes to give that part of his narrative.

The division of paragraphs into three types—expository, descriptive, narrative—is convenient, because paragraphs with different purposes are developed differently. But this division should not mislead the student into thinking that writing falls into separate and exclusive categories, with exposi-

tion using only expository paragraphs, description made up of descriptive paragraphs, and narration of a chain of narrative paragraphs. Any sharp distinction of this sort between types of writing is, in fact, an artificial one; at best it is merely a convenient device for describing the primary intention of different pieces of writing. Actually, writing mainly concerned with informing or convincing often contains narrative and descriptive paragraphs; the writer, realizing that he will be most successful in his exposition if he makes his reader see and feel as well as know, may vividly describe scenes or situations, or may tell a story to make a point concrete and clear. Short stories and novels, of course, are likely to have numerous descriptive paragraphs. Frequently, too, they contain expository paragraphs, in which the writer informs the reader (either directly or through the speech of a character) about something the reader needs to know in order to understand the story. The three types of paragraphs are not uncommonly used in the same piece of writing.

A paragraph of any type is well developed when the topic idea is sufficiently expanded to be clear, concrete, and interesting to the reader, and when the length of development accords with the weight that this phase of the subject, or the action, should have in the balanced development of the whole composition.

VI. FIRST AND LAST PARAGRAPHS

Because beginning and concluding paragraphs occupy the positions of greatest emphasis in a composition, they deserve special attention.

The primary purpose of a beginning paragraph is to launch the subject and to interest the reader in it. Too often college writers have the idea that a first paragraph should "lead up to the subject." As a result, they often waste the important beginning of a paper in dull, laborious introductory remarks like "I intend to discuss three reasons. . . ." or

"In this paper I hope to prove. . . ." Instead of wasting words, they should start at once to discuss or to prove, with a directness and vigor that immediately attract the reader. These tedious leading-up-to-the-subject paragraphs can often simply be struck out in the process of revision; the second paragraph, which actually gets into the subject, is likely to be a more effective beginning. Even worse than a merely dull and wasted beginning paragraph is the apologetic introduction: "Interior decorating is a very complicated business which I don't know much about, but I did work for a month last summer. . . ." The reader, unless he is unhappily obliged to grade the paper, is at once discouraged from reading further. Good beginning paragraphs are direct and sure and interesting. An episode or a snatch of conversation focused on the subject, a vivid presentation of a situation or scene, an emphatic statement of an opinion, a clear definition of the topic to be discussed—these make effective beginnings because they awaken curiosity or interest.

The last paragraph of a paper should emphasize the idea the writer wishes to leave with the reader, and should give the reader a sense of finality and completion. The concluding paragraph is particularly important because, since it is last, it is likely to fix the reader's impression of the whole paper. That impression will be poor if the writer ends apologetically: "Of course I haven't been able to do justice to this subject." And the impression will be clouded if the writer concludes his paper with a collection of afterthoughts and incidental details which he feels should be mentioned, but for which he has not found room in the body of the composition. Such details should be either omitted or incorporated earlier, for placed at the end they scatter the reader's thoughts, and divert his attention from the main ideas. A final paragraph must be sharply focused.

A common type of conclusion is the summary, which briefly reviews the principal points covered in the paper. In a long paper, which has dealt with complex material, the summary

ending is often desirable, even necessary. In a short informal paper, however, it is usually not desirable, because it seems mechanical and completely unnecessary; a reader of any intelligence does not need, and does not care, to be told what he has read within the last two minutes.

A thoughtful arrangement of the material in a paper in climactic order often automatically solves the problem of achieving an emphatic ending. If the writer is presenting four reasons for a belief he holds, or three or four arguments in favor of a course of action, and if he puts his most important point last, the development of that paramount reason or that particularly telling argument will serve as an emphatic conclusion.

Good closing paragraphs sometimes suggest a solution for a problem described in the paper. They may call on the reader to take some definite action. They may stimulate action or thought by posing a question: "The citizens of America have the power to demand better radio programs. When will they exercise that power?" They may give an illustration of how the advocated plan or idea has operated. They may restate, emphatically and in different terms, the topic idea of the paper. These last paragraphs should be carefully constructed, and carefully phrased, to give the exact emphasis and impression which the writer hopes the reader will carry away.

CHAPTER REVIEW

If your reading of the chapter has been adequate, you should be able to answer the following questions:

1. What is the function of the paragraph?
2. How can paragraph unity be tested?
3. What is meant by coherence? By what two methods is it attained?
4. What are the common ways of making transitions or connections between paragraphs?

5. Why is it impossible to lay down hard-and-fast rules about the length of paragraphs?
6. What advice is given to the student as a guide in determining the proper length of his paragraphs?
7. Explain clearly how paragraphs are developed by

   particularization
   illustration
   contrast and comparison
   definition

8. What are the important things to keep in mind about first paragraphs? About last paragraphs?

EXERCISES

I. The following paragraphs, all from modern writing, illustrate various kinds of paragraph development. Students may find it useful to apply these questions to each paragraph:

1. What is the topic sentence or topic idea?
2. By what method or methods is the paragraph developed?
3. Does the paragraph end strongly? If so, how has the writer accomplished the emphatic ending?
4. If two successive paragraphs from the same source are printed, why has the writer broken the passage into two paragraphs?
5. By what means does the writer tie together the sentences of his paragraph?

A.

We carry, then, the burden of our childhood expectations into maturity. No wonder that we grow afraid, become anxious, feel inferior. No wonder that we develop ulcers, hypertension, and heart conditions out of our restless and haunted compulsion to achieve the absolute. Yet, we will obtain inner peace only when we have declared a truce and made an armistice with the army of our childhood expectations. No one of us escapes limitations. We sometimes are angry, petty, lazy, callous, but we also are kindly, generous, creative. Some people are gifted with their hands, some people are gifted in the realm of art or music, some people are gifted in the realm of abstract ideas. Almost no one

is gifted in all three realms. We are all limited, and we must accept ourselves with our limitations, recognizing that we can do what others cannot do, that we can contribute where others cannot contribute.[3]

JOSHUA LOTH LIEBMAN, *Peace of Mind*

B.

Leeuwenhoek's day of days had come. Alexander had gone to India and discovered huge elephants that no Greek had ever seen before—but those elephants were as commonplace to Hindus as horses were to Alexander. Caesar had gone to England and come upon savages that opened his eyes with wonder—but these Britons were as ordinary to each other as Roman centurions were to Caesar. Balboa? What were his proud feelings as he looked for the first time at the Pacific? Just the same, that Ocean was as ordinary to a Central American Indian as the Mediterranean was to Balboa. But Leeuwenhoek? This janitor of Delft had stolen upon and peeped into a fantastic sub-visible world of little things, creatures that had lived, had bred, had battled, had died, completely hidden from and unknown to all men from the beginning of time. Beasts these were of a kind that ravaged and annihilated whole races of men ten million times larger than they were themselves. Beings these were, more terrible than fire-spitting dragons or hydra-headed monsters. They were silent assassins that murdered babes in warm cradles and kings in sheltered palaces. It was this invisible, insignificant, but implacable—and sometimes friendly—world that Leeuwenhoek had looked into for the first time of all men of all countries.

This was Leeuwenhoek's day of days. . . .

PAUL DE KRUIF, *Microbe Hunters*

C.

The warm kitchen air was like a stupor. This was the steady heart of the house. Ghostly moonlight might wash up to the sill, fragile fancies pervade other rooms: here strong central life went calmly on. In the range red coals slept deep, covered and nourished for the long night. The tall boiler, its silvery paint flaked and dulled, gave off drowsy heat. Under the table the cat Virginia, who was not to be shocked, lay solidly upright with her paws tucked in, sated with scraps and vibrating a strong stupid purr. The high grimed ceiling was speckled with mo-

[3] Reprinted from *Peace of Mind* by permission of Simon and Schuster, Inc. Copyright, 1946, by Joshua Loth Liebman.

tionless flies, roosting there after a hard day. Packages of groceries, series of yellow bowls and platters, were ranged on the shelves in comfortable order. This was not a modern kitchen, shiny, white and sterile, like a hospital. It was old, ugly, inconvenient, strong with the memory of meals arduously prepared; meals of long ago, for people now vanished.[4]

CHRISTOPHER MORLEY, *Thunder on the Left*

D.

There are two philosophies of medicine: the primitive or superstitious, and the modern or rational. They are in complete opposition to one another. The former involves the belief that disease is caused by supernatural forces. Such a doctrine associates disease with sin; it is an aspect of religion which conceives diseases as due to certain forms of evil and attempts to control them by ceremonial and superstitious measures or to drive them away by wishful thinking. On the other hand, rational medicine is based on the conception that disease arises from natural causes; it associates sickness with ignorance. Civilized man tries to control the forces causing disease by material, not spiritualistic, means; he does not view disease as supernatural or the outcome of sin against moral laws, but rather as resulting from the violation of sanitary laws. He recognizes that knowledge is the sole means of preventing it. The measures he relies upon both to prevent and cure disease are those which have resulted from scientific investigation and which have been proved to be effective by experience.

HOWARD HAGGARD, *Devils, Drugs and Doctors*

E.

I (to quit hiding behind the generalization of "the male") hate women because they almost never get anything exactly right. They say, "I have been faithful to thee, Cynara, after my fashion" instead of "in my fashion." They will bet you that Alfred Smith's middle name is Aloysius, instead of Emanuel. They will tell you to take the 2:57 train, on a day that the 2:57 does not run, or, if it does run, does not stop at the station where you are supposed to get off. Many men, separated from a woman by this particular form of imprecision, have never showed up in her life again. Nothing so embitters a man as to end up in Bridgeport when he was supposed to get off at Westport.

JAMES THURBER, *Let Your Mind Alone*

[4] From *Thunder on the Left*. Copyright, 1925, by Christopher Morley Published by J. B. Lippincott Company.

F.

When we use a word (or combination of words) either in speaking or in writing, our most obvious purpose is to indicate some thing, or some relation, or some property. What the word is used to indicate is sometimes called its "meaning." For example, suppose that you and I are standing on the shore of Sligo Bay and suddenly we see a large white bird flying overhead. I say to you, "That's a swan." I thereby indicate to you that the object we are looking at is a member of the class of birds called swans. The word "swan" as I used it has a plain, straightforward meaning. This meaning is non-personal, or, as it will be more convenient to say, "objective." Since the primary purpose of the usage of language in any scientific inquiry necessitates that the words used should be non-personal or objective, we may call such a use of language scientific. Sometimes we use words with the deliberate intention of evoking emotional attitudes in our hearers; we want them to respond in a certain way to what is said. Language thus used may be said to be emotive. A word used in this emotive manner can be said to be emotionally toned. If we speak for the sake of arousing emotional attitudes, then the use of emotionally toned words is good for the purpose. When, however, our purpose is to give a straightforward account of what we believe to be the case, emotionally toned language is bad language. In poetry and in oratory the use of emotionally toned language may be essential for the purpose the speaker wishes to achieve. It is, then, good language, for it is fitted to its purpose. If, however, we want to think something out, then we are hindered in our purpose by using emotionally toned language. Such language may be an insuperable obstacle to thinking effectively. This is a point of such importance that it is worth while to spend some trouble over it.

L. SUSAN STEBBING, *Thinking to Some Purpose*

G.

A speaker uses irony when he deliberately says something he doesn't mean, but indicates at the same time by tone or gesture what he does mean. When a person says, "Oh, yeah," in a certain tone, we know that he means quite the contrary of what he says. In a poem on the Jubilee celebration of Queen Victoria the poet Housman addresses the soldiers who have fought all over the world for the British Empire. He tells them that God will save the Queen:

Oh, God will save her, fear you not;
Be you the men you've been,
Get you the sons your fathers got,
And God will save the Queen.

But the stanza is ironical, because he is saying more than the usual patriotic statement that God will save the Queen. He is really saying that God will save the Queen only if English manhood remains as strong as before and is as freely sacrificed. Understatement has an ironical quality. . . . But there are other types of irony. Irony always implies a kind of contrast. In Hardy's poem, "The Convergence of the Twain," the contrast between the hopes and intentions of the men who built the *Titanic* and the fate that destroyed the ship is treated ironically by the poet.

C. BROOKS, J. T. PURSER, R. P. WARREN,
An Approach to Literature

H.

Every student who attends an American college needs three types of education; general education, liberal education, and specialized education. By general education I mean that education which is required to become an effective member of the human race; it provides us with the means of communication with one another, with an understanding of the relationships between human beings and the institutions which they establish, with an analytical approach toward the physical universe of which we are all a part, and with a concept of the position which we hold in the stream of time and history. By liberal education I mean the education that frees us from the confines of the group, the patterns, and conventions, and enables us to become truly an individual; it is therefore the education which discovers our greatest abilities and interests and then develops them to the highest capacities which we can achieve. By specialized education I mean the education which will enable us to make a living in a competitive economic world; especially in America there is very little leisure class, and every educated person is expected to have some place in which he can render a valuable service to his fellow men.

CARTER DAVIDSON, "What I Expect of English Teachers"

I.

"There will always be prejudice, and there is nothing anyone can do about it, so why try?" This pronouncement, made

with an air of hearty and complacent cynicism, is usually regarded by its owners as an example of fine Olympian detachment. And so it is, although fine Olympian detachment about things which are not personally inconvenient is a state easily attained by babies on leading strings and puppies in a basket. The assertion that nothing can be done about prejudice is suspicious in character, but it is certainly true that prejudice will always exist. So will sickness and disease, but that scarcely seems sufficient reason for telling our medical scientists to put on their hats, close up their laboratories, and give the spirochetes, bacilli and viruses a free hand.[5]

MARGARET HALSEY, *Color Blind*

J.

The Post-war Decade was a great sporting era. More men were playing golf than ever before—playing it in baggy plus-fours, with tassels at the knee and checked stockings. There were five thousand golf-courses in the United States, there were said to be two million players, and it was estimated that half a billion dollars was spent annually on the game. The ability to play it had become a part of the almost essential equipment of the aspiring business executive. The country club had become the focus of social life in hundreds of communities. But it was an even greater era for watching sports than for taking part in them. Promoters, chambers of commerce, newspaper-owners, sports writers, press agents, radio broadcasters, all found profit in exploiting the public's mania for sporting shows and its willingness to be persuaded that the great athletes of the day were supermen. Never before had such a blinding light of publicity been turned upon the gridiron, the diamond, and the prize ring.

FREDERICK LEWIS ALLEN, *Only Yesterday*

K.

There are five ways to get wealth—to make it, to buy it, to find it, to have it given to you, and to steal it. Finding and giving are matters of chance or personal whim, and do not occur in any regular way. Stealing is frequently similar, and even when carefully organized on a large scale it is not recognized by society as a proper activity. Consequently, the science which deals with wealth limits itself to making and buying. This science is called economics.

[5] Reprinted from *Color Blind* by permission of Simon and Schuster, Inc. Copyright, 1946, by Margaret Halsey.

The word "wealth" is used in the preceding paragraph, and all through this book, in a definite, scientific sense. In its broadest sense it may be considered to mean all material things that are, or by any possibility may be, useful to human beings, except their own bodies. It is customary, however, among students of economics to limit the definition of wealth to things that are owned by human beings, and this is logical because only things that are owned create economic problems. Let us, therefore, for the purposes of this book associate our definition of wealth invariably with the idea of ownership.

HENRY PRATT FAIRCHILD, *Economics for the Millions*

L.

The tractors came over the roads and into the fields, great crawlers moving like insects, having the incredible strength of insects. They crawled over the ground, laying the track and rolling on it and picking it up. Diesel tractors, puttering while they stood idle; they thundered when they moved, and then settled down to a droning roar. Snub-nosed monsters, raising the dust and sticking their snouts into it, straight down the country, across the country, through fences, through dooryards, in and out of gullies in straight lines. They did not run on the ground, but on their own roadbeds. They ignored hills and gulches, water courses, fences, houses.

The man sitting in the iron seat did not look like a man; gloved, goggled, rubber dust mask over nose and mouth, he was a part of the monster, a robot in the seat. The thunder of the cylinders sounded through the country, became one with the air and the earth, so that earth and air muttered in sympathetic vibration. The driver could not control it—straight across country it went, cutting through a dozen farms and straight back. A twitch at the controls could swerve the cat', but the driver's hands could not twitch because the monster that built the tractor, the monster that sent the tractor out, had somehow got into the driver's hands, into his brain and muscle, had goggled him and muzzled him—goggled his mind, muzzled his speech, goggled his perception, muzzled his protest. He could not see the land as it was, he could not smell the land as it smelled; his feet did not stamp the clods or feel the warmth and power of the earth. He sat in an iron seat and stepped on iron pedals. He could not cheer or beat or curse or encourage the extension of his power, and because of this he could not cheer or whip or curse or encourage himself. He did not know or own or trust or

CHAPTER SEVEN

LANGUAGE IN ACTION

THUS FAR IN THIS BOOK we have been concerned first with a broad general view of language, second with an examination of details about the conventions and use of English. Both the broad panoramic view and the detailed microscopic views are necessary preliminaries to a study of the motion picture of language, the complex drama in which choice of words, choice of detail, concrete or abstract expression, sentence structure, sentence length, paragraph development, plain sense, and attitude work together to achieve the writer's intention. This chapter presents an example of the whole play —of language in action.

On the left-hand pages in the chapter we are printing "The Luxury of Integrity," an essay by Stuart Chase. The student should read the essay straight through, seeing the plan of development, responding to the effect that the whole essay produces, and ignoring the comments printed on the opposite pages. After his first reading, when he is ready to analyze the essay, he should examine it again, paragraph by paragraph, this time considering the comments and questions on the right-hand pages.

Mr. Chase is a well-known writer on social and economic subjects who has also written *The Tyranny of Words,* a popular book on language. "The Luxury of Integrity" appeared

in *The Nemesis of American Business,* published in 1931. The student needs to keep in mind, as he reads the essay, its historical context: a number of brief allusions to events and situations current in 1931 are no longer timely. The essay is not dated, however, in its basic theme or its style. Perhaps the most distinctive quality of Mr. Chase as a writer is his ability to present a complicated and abstract subject in a clear and interesting way to a general audience. Such writing calls for a lively style and skill in the use of informal English. "The Luxury of Integrity" is not intended to serve as a model for all kinds of writing; but it is a good example of lively, vigorous, concrete language aimed at a general audience, and it illustrates a number of the principles of effective expression.

THE LUXURY OF INTEGRITY

THE LUXURY OF INTEGRITY[1]

by STUART CHASE

[1] Once upon a time I worked for the United States Government. In the course of my official duties I was directed to make a rather particular and painstaking analysis of the profits of certain mammoth corporations. The welcome of the mammoth corporations, needless to say, was not warm.

[2] One of my subordinates in the investigation was continually getting into trouble. He was a likeable fellow, a good routine worker, always ready to do odd jobs after hours. I took a personal interest in his troubles; I loaned him money, patched up a quarrel between himself and his wife, gave him books to read, tried to help him slide a little more easily along his white-collar groove. That he was grateful, that he really respected and liked me, I do not doubt to this day. Yet here is what he did after two years of friendly association:

[3] He ransacked my private files and turned over any evidence showing liberal political tendencies on my part to the aforesaid mammoth corporations. He came into my office late one evening—fortified by a drink or two—and said, "Chase, I'm a Bolshevik. I'm fed up with the whole damned capitalist system. I'd like to help kick it over. I'd like to join something. You know about these socialists and I.W.W.'s. I see you reading pieces about them. Tell me all about it, shoot the works, tell me what I ought to join. I'll pay the dues."

[4] At first I thought the poor boy had really come to the end of his rope; that this was a last desperate gesture before the white-collar routine doomed him altogether. Then I began to realize that he was lying; that he was hoping to pick up some information from me which could be twisted in such

[1] From Stuart Chase, *The Nemesis of American Business*. Copyright, 1931, by the Macmillan Company and used with their permission.

[1] This is not a particularly good beginning, but it does supply facts that the reader will need later. The last sentence is an example of understatement.

[2] In this paragraph Mr. Chase begins to give an example of the luxury of integrity. He gives the reader enough concrete information to show that his subordinate had good reason to consider Mr. Chase his friend. The last sentence leads into the next paragraph. The next-to-last sentence shows parallel structure in the two *that* clauses. By making the sentence periodic, Mr. Chase gives the main clause greater emphasis and also changes from the subject-predicate movement of the earlier sentences.

[3] The dialogue adds concreteness and interest. It gives the reader the sense of being present.

[4] Note the transitions—*at first, then.* The word *No* is given emphasis because *I said* follows it instead of coming at the beginning or the end of the sentence.

a way as to discredit my work in the investigation. (Not that I had much to offer.) I went on with my columns of figures, and gradually his receptive attitude waned. "Aren't you going to tell me anything?" he whined. "No," I said. "And I guess you had better go."

[5] He took his hat and went and, as the door closed behind him, I knew that the man I had befriended could not afford the luxury of integrity. Someone was paying him to act as a spy. His government salary was little enough, while his wife had definite ideas about her proper position in the world. He had been bought. (I doubt if the vendee got his money's worth.) I was bitter at the time, but today that bitterness is tinged with pity. He is only one among many Americans who increasingly cannot afford the luxury of integrity. His case is more dramatic perhaps, but essentially on all fours with the plight of nearly every man you meet upon the street. They, like him, have betrayed their personal sense of decency and honor because forces are loose, too powerful for ordinary clay to oppose.

[6] In the custody and handling of transferable property Americans grow ever more dependable; but in that more subtle definition of integrity which bids a man play fair with his own soul, never, it seems to me, has the Republic sunk to lower levels. As the machine breeds increased specialization, increased technological unemployment, as mergers spread their threat to white-collar jobs, the case grows worse. The greater one's economic insecurity, the greater the tendency to sacrifice spiritual independence and to chant in dreary unison the simple credo of the yes man. It is my contention that for uncounted millions of Americans the price of integrity is more than they can afford. Nor should I be surprised if the ratio of growth in the process bore more than a casual relationship to the growth in urban as against rural population.

[7] Even as the interlocking technical structure of industry makes for an increasing tenuousness in the condition of the

[5] Now Mr. Chase introduces a phrase that contains his title, and he goes on to state the point of his example: that his subordinate, like many other Americans, was unable to afford the luxury of integrity. The short sentences *Someone had been paying him to act as a spy* and *He had been bought* break up the pattern set by the longer sentences to provide variety and emphasis. The paragraph is given coherence from sentence to sentence by the pronouns *he, his, him.* The last sentence emphatically expresses the topic idea of the paragraph.

[6] The first sentence is related to the previous paragraph by the repetition of key words—*American, integrity;* and it helps to define the abstract word *integrity* by distinguishing between it and dependability in handling transferable property In both sentence 1 and sentence 2, Mr. Chase places subordinate ideas first and saves the emphatic final position for the most important ideas. The expressions *play fair with his own soul* and *never* receive special emphasis because each is followed by a pause. The whole paragraph repeats and elaborates the idea stated in paragraph 5. The last sentence leads the reader into paragraph 7.

[7] This paragraph develops more fully the idea mentioned in the last sentence of paragraph 6; it explains why integrity

live nerves of transport, power, and communication which provide city dwellers with physical necessities, so the psychological condition of the inhabitants of Megalopolis grows more precarious. Living in a crowd, it has become highly important to *fit in*. There are fewer square holes for square pegs; to make the close-locked wheels of industry turn, an employee must be as round as a ballbearing. This smooth and oily quality that eases the friction of the highly organized machine is in a way more vital than professional training, ability, or energy. One man may be genial and tactful by nature, while nine have to achieve tact and geniality by effort. For the milk of human kindness the most obvious substitute is soft soap.

II

[8] The yes man had no place in the pioneer tradition. The pioneer had his faults and virtues. The faults included a prodigal wastefulness, a disposition to befoul one nest and move on to the next, a certain laxity in respect to the social amenities. The virtues included a sturdy independence, and the compulsion, if need arose, to look every man level in the eye and tell him to go to hell. Reasonably secure in the fruits of his own labor and thus economically independent, he could express in any company his honest opinions as forcibly as he pleased, and, subject to the local *mores*—the base line from which all human behavior must stem—he could translate his beliefs into tangible performance. He could vote for candidates he respected, agitate for reforms he believed in, refuse to do jobs which galled his sense of decency or craftsmanship, come and go as the seasons dictated, but not at the bidding of any overlord. His opinions may have been frequently deplorable, his acts often crude and peremptory, but he was free to be true to the best that he knew—and so, by the Eternal! a man, and not a rubber stamp.

decreases as the proportion of people living in cities increases. In this paragraph Mr. Chase has used expressions which could be trite, but has given them an original twist that makes them effective for his purpose. The figurative last sentence ends the paragraph emphatically with the witty play on *milk* and *soft soap*. In the first section of the essay Mr. Chase has aroused the reader's interest by a striking concrete example and has stated his thesis that in modern society a decreasing number of men can afford the luxury of integrity.

[8] The first sentence serves as the topic sentence for paragraph 8 and also states the topic idea for the whole of Section II. The locution *yes man* echoes back to the *credo of the yes man* in paragraph 6. Paragraph 8 contains a particularly interesting combination of levels of language. Which expressions in it are slang or at least clearly informal? Which are formal? Do you think that the variety of levels is intentional and serves some purpose? Also noteworthy are the ways of achieving variety in sentence structure. The last sentence is a good example of emphasis. Why, and how is the emphasis obtained?

[9] His was not the gentleman's code of honor, but one less punctilious, more democratic, more human, and probably in the long run superior. The gentleman had a divided responsibility; he must not only seek to be true to himself, but he must maintain a wide margin between himself and the herd. The pioneer was of the herd and proud of it, and could thus devote himself single-mindedly to the one responsibility. Compare, let us say, a thousand assorted pioneers of the Berkshire Hills in Massachusetts in 1800, with a thousand assorted New York bank clerks in 1930, and, unless the monumental history of the Berkshires which I have lately ingested is a tissue of falsehoods, you will find about as many no men in the former area, as you will find yes men in the latter. The ratios, I should guess, have reversed themselves in one hundred and thirty years. With the no men will lie character, courage, individuality, saltiness. With the yes men will lie radios, automobiles, bath-tubs, and a complete paralysis of the will to act in accordance with their fundamental inclinations. That Berkshire babies were compounded of better stuff than bank-clerk babies, I absolutely deny. Opinion for opinion and belief for belief, it is probable that the New York thousand have a more civilized outlook, a better stock of human values in their heads, than had the Pittsfield thousand. But for the latter integrity was cheap and abundant, while for the former it is very dear. Like all luxuries, it can be bought, but few dare to pay the price. For the price may be the job, and the job means life or death.

[10] If you object that most men and women are without a sense of honor, then call it early conditioning. From the cultural mulch in which we are reared—compounded of the influence of parents, school, church, folkways, literature—our personalities are formed. We take and we reject; we give lip service to much that our hearts do not subscribe to. But certain principles we make our own. Integrity consists in living up to them. I am not here concerned with those broad principles of morality which now as in the days of David and

[9] The first sentence, the topic sentence, linked to the preceding paragraph by the pronoun *his,* serves to introduce a paragraph developed by contrast and comparison. Variety in sentence length and sentence structure are outstanding characteristics of this paragraph. In the table below are given the *number* of words in each sentence and also the *opening words* of each sentence. A glance at the table will show the variety in sentence length and sentence beginning and will also make more conspicuous some of the transitional devices.

23 His was not the gentleman's code . . . .
28 The gentleman had a divided responsibility . . . .
21 The pioneer was of the herd . . . .
65 Compare, let us say, a thousand assorted pioneers . . . .
14 The ratios, I should guess, have reversed . . . .
10 With the no men will lie character . . . .
26 With the yes men will lie radios . . . .
15 That the Berkshire babies were compounded . . . .
34 Opinion for opinion and belief for belief . . . .
16 But for the latter integrity was cheap . . . .
14 Like all luxuries, it can be bought . . . .
14 For the price may be the job . . . .

[10] Sentence 2 illustrates the effective use of parallelism and of periodic-sentence structure. In most of this paragraph, Mr. Chase is still defining integrity. What means of definition does he use? What is the relationship between the second sentence and the last sentence in this paragraph?

Solomon move more or less *in vacuo,* but rather with a far more concrete and personal standard. I ask only if your behavior squares with your conception of what honest behavior should be, and care not twopence how lofty or low the original conception. A stream can rise no higher than its source.

[11] The point is not that we traduce our honor to climb up —such behavior has affected a fixed fraction of the race since the Cro-Magnon man—but that most of us today are forced to traduce our honor to cling to what we've got; aye, to exist at all. It would be easier if life were simpler, but the perspiring super-salesmen take excellent care that life shall never simplify. No more have we won to a standard of living held respectable by our fellows, than presto! a new and higher standard confronts us—two-cars-per-family, college-for-all-the-children, annual models in furniture, country club memberships—and this we must attain on pain of social disapprobation. There is no level, but a steadily ascending curve which tolerates little margin of saving, no dependable economic security. While jobs grow more uncertain, desires, built in by the high-pressure fraternity, grow more clamorous. In this compound-pressure pump, the wayfaring man finds it almost impossible to be true to his innermost nature.

III

[12] Consider initially the simple and widespread practice of yesing the boss—to use the current phrase. The man with the strong jaw sits at the head of the conference table, his confreres gathered around him, each with pad and sharpened pencil. From the strong jaw comes the announcement of a certain policy—perhaps a wage reduction, perhaps a wage increase, perhaps a universal system of time clocks. He looks about him. The policy may be utterly repugnant to his staff, but, "I check with you, chief," "check," "check," "check,"—the little threadbare word runs round the table. Not always, to be sure, but frequently enough to make our

[11] Notice that the topic idea of the paragraph is stated in the first sentence and in the last, and that each statement gains effectiveness from the use of figures of speech—*climb up . . . cling to what we've got* in the first sentence, and *compound pressure pump* in the last sentence. Throughout the paragraph Mr. Chase uses figures of speech and concrete details to make a large and abstract idea concrete and interesting. The last sentence of paragraph 11 leads directly into paragraph 12; it states the generalization for which Mr. Chase is now going on to supply a number of particulars.

[12] The first sentence (also the topic sentence) of paragraph 12 makes it clear that Mr. Chase is giving an example, and the word *initially* in that sentence leads the reader to expect other examples to follow. A transition has been effected not only from paragraph 11 to paragraph 12, but from Section II to Section III. By now the larger organization of the essay begins to emerge. In Section I Mr. Chase gives a concrete example of the luxury of integrity and comments on his example; in Section II he is dealing more generally with the luxury of integrity, defining it and explaining how it has come about that integrity is less easy to practice than it was in the day of the pioneer. Now in Section III he begins by examples to *show* that today many people cannot, or do not, live up to their own standards of honesty.

case. On any given business day, the number of such checks and yeses must be astronomical in magnitude. It would be interesting to chart their yearly curve superimposed upon a curve exhibiting the growth of mergers.

[13] The psychological effect of continually pretending to agree with that with which one does not agree is disastrous. An internal conflict is set up which tends to polarize work into neutrality. Initiative, concentration, straight thinking evaporate, leaving only purposeless activity. Probably less damage is suffered by the individual who knows in advance the fire he must pass through and deliberately makes up his mind to prostitute his talents. He is tragic enough, but a less unhappy exhibit on the whole than the hordes who fool themselves into thinking that they are doing honest work, unaware of the conflict beneath the surface. In business offices there is usually one of the former to ten of the latter.

[14] Next let us consider that very considerable fraction of the population engaged in making commodities which the maker knows to be evil, shoddy, adulterated, and a rank imposition upon the public. He may whistle cheerfully enough, say, "What the hell?" and believe that the plight of the public troubles him hardly at all. But deep down inside the continued outrage to his instinct of workmanship troubles him considerably. It is contrary to the whole history of mankind to waste good hours of labor on worthless or evil products.

[15] Not long ago I delivered an address on the Russian economic experiment. I told of the method whereby an oil pool was developed as a single geological unit without competitive drilling and its appalling waste. After the lecture an engineer came up to me. He seemed deeply stirred. "My God," he said, "do you suppose I could get a job in Russia? I'm sick of drilling wells in competitive fields, watching most of my work run to waste. I know how a pool ought to be organized, but with all this offset drilling we aren't allowed to organize it." In his excitement, it was only too plain that

[13] This paragraph comments on the practice of *yesing the boss* which was described in paragraph 12. The two paragraphs could have been combined and the topic sentence of paragraph 12 would then have served for both. Has Mr. Chase gained anything by the two separate paragraphs?

[14, 15, 16] In paragraph 14, *Next let us consider* serves to introduce another type of violation of integrity and to bring to an end the discussion of yesing the boss. Paragraphs 15 and 16 continue the discussion introduced in 14. More specifically, paragraph 14 introduces the subject of those who make shoddy or evil products, paragraph 15 illustrates how men feel who thus consciously violate their own standards of workmanship, and paragraph 16 suggests concretely how widespread such violation is. Again Mr. Chase has cut into several paragraphs material that is closely enough related to be combined into one. Has he gained or lost by so doing?

there was a tragic breach between his standard of workmanship and the work that he had to do.

[16] Of the ten million factory employees in America today, the two million in the building trades, and the two hundred thousand engineers, how many can hold up their hands and say that they take pride in what they make? Many of them, of course, are operating processes so specialized that they have no idea of what they are helping to produce, but the majority are probably still aware of it. The show of hands is not impressive. When one considers the weighted silks, the bulk of the patent-medicine traffic, jerry-built bungalows on Garden Crest developments (I have talked to the carpenters working on them), shoes that dissolve into their essential paper, rickety furniture brave in varnish—commodity after commodity, process after process, the reason is sufficiently clear.

[17] Leaving the factory, we come out upon the marketplace. Here we find a group almost as numerous as the producers, pushing goods which they know to be inferior or useless. A salesman has no canons of workmanship to be outraged, but if he has to sell an inferior product, and knows it, his case is not much happier than that of his fellow in the shop. He has to lie blatantly, loudly and continually. He has to tell the world that bad products are good. He becomes used to it, of course; he may even take a little pride in his sales charts. But that does not mean that somewhere behind the table-pounding, door-bell ringing, and copy-writing there is not a *man,* who, in the darkness of the night after an ill-advised dinner, does not sometimes wish to God he could earn his living doing something he believed in.

[18] We now come to one of the saddest exhibits on the list. There may be more deplorable human behavior than the violation of hospitality practiced daily by uncounted thousands of house-to-house canvassers, but I am at a loss to know what it is. Since time out of mind it has been the kindly human custom to welcome the stranger at the gate. The reaction is doubtless tied up with a dim fear that, some day,

[16] Compare the following version with the paragraph of Mr. Chase, and observe his use of subordination: There are ten million factory employees in America today. There are two million in the building trades. There are two hundred thousand engineers. Few of them can take pride in what they make. How many of them can hold up their hands and say that they take pride in it? Many of them are operating specialized processes. They don't know what they are helping to produce. The majority are probably still aware of it. The show of hands is not impressive. Consider the weighted silks. Consider the bulk of patent-medicine traffic. Consider the jerry-built bungalows. I have talked to the carpenters working on them. Consider shoes that dissolve into their essential paper. Consider rickety furniture. It is brave in varnish. Consider commodity after commodity. Consider process after process. One will see why the show of hands is not impressive. The reason is sufficiently clear.

[17] Like paragraph 14 this paragraph begins with a topic sentence introduced by a transitional phrase. Also like 14, this paragraph introduces a series of closely related paragraphs (17, 18, 19, 20, 21), in this case a unified block of thought that deals with violations of integrity in salesmanship. By now it is evident that Mr. Chase, like most skillful writers, is presenting his thought according to a logical plan. His sections mark off the major divisions. Within these sections there are sometimes subdivisions that consist of more than a single paragraph, and each paragraph is then a small but unified part of the subdivision to which it belongs. Also worthy of attention is the emphatic way Mr. Chase ends his paragraphs. See the last sentence of each of the paragraphs in the present subdivision (paragraphs 17–21).

[18] *We now come* is a transitional phrase introducing one subdivision in the block of paragraphs on salesmanship. Note in this paragraph Mr. Chase's use of charged words to convey his feelings about the ideal of hospitality and about the canvassers who presume upon hospitality to sell their wares. Which words or expressions carry a particularly heavy charge?

you too may be a-wandering and need rest and welcome. On this ancient custom the up-and-coming canvasser is forced to trade. In company schools he is deliberately coached in ways and means for capitalizing the instinct of hospitality, for gaining admission, a chair, a respectful audience—only to outrage it in the end.

[19] Here, to quote an actual case, is a woman canvasser who announces herself as a member of the local school committee —only she is not a member of the school committee but recites a name which induces the lady of the house to think that she is. The "committee," it appears, recommends a certain book to aid the children's education. The visitor mentions the children by name, their ages, their bright looks. The lady of the house is pleased. The cost of the book is five dollars. Her face falls. She cannot afford five dollars. Haltingly, ashamedly, she confesses it. The canvasser turns on her with the sure-fire line, "Mrs. Green, don't you care enough about the future of your children to pay five dollars?" What mother can resist such an accusation? Company statistics coldly demonstrate that seven times out of ten it consummates a sale. Yet what troubles me is not the plight of Mrs. Green with a worthless volume on the parlor table, but the utter abandonment of self-respect on the part of the lady canvasser. Had she hit Mrs. Green with a blackjack as she stood defenseless and welcoming on her own doorstep, the loss of personal integrity could hardly have been greater. Hospitality is a particularly precious custom in a civilization which drifts so rapidly to cities and apartment houses. By ruthless violation the canvassers have all but killed it.

[20] Not content with the assault in person, enterprising vendors of commodities, particularly of certain types of securities, are lately using the telephone to effect a sale. In one day at my office I was called to the telephone five times by total strangers giving a Wall Street address, succulently outlining the profit to be made by an immediate purchase of American Consolidated International Class B. To the first

[19] This paragraph, like paragraph 9, supplies an example of variety of sentence length and of skillful adaptation of sentence length to the impression that the writer wishes to produce. Notice particularly the effectiveness of the short sentences. That Mr. Chase varies sentence length to suit different subject matters is made evident when we compare the length of sentences in the present paragraph with the length of sentences in paragraph 9.

Length of sentences in paragraph 9 (average, twenty-five words): 23, 28, 21, 65, 14, 10, 26, 15, 34, 16, 14, 14.

Length of sentences in paragraph 19 (average, fifteen words): 48, 13, 12, 7, 9, 3, 5, 5, 20, 7, 14, 33, 28, 18, 10.

[20] The phrase, *Not content with the assault in person,* refers, of course, to house-to-house canvassing. By using it Mr. Chase is able to lead the reader without break to another kind of *assault,* the use of the telephone to effect a sale.

man I tried to be polite, to the second I was curt, for the other three I simply hung up the receiver. But the day was ruined by a feeling of baffled rage, partly at my assailants, and partly at myself for having to crush the habit of years of being courteous to those who had taken the trouble to call me on the telephone.

[21] Yet canvassers, like the rest of us, must eat. I remember when I lived in Chicago a neighbor in the woolen business dropped in upon us one evening. We welcomed him into the living room and were somewhat surprised to find that he had a large box under his arm. His face was set. He opened the box and disclosed some excellent woolen sweaters and hose, male and female. We admired everything—the admiration of friends. Would we buy some? We were thunderstruck, but kept our faces straight, and bought. Obviously, our guest had struck a vein of bad luck and been reduced to capitalizing his acquaintanceships. Always afterwards he avoided us. Our friendship had come to an end. How many friends did that hard winter cost him?

IV

[22] This brings us to that growing army of "publicity men" and women who sometimes do not—but frequently do—give the best of their years and their vitality to pushing causes in which they have no faith, and to booming personalities whom privately they designate as stuffed shirts. There are people among them whose shingle is out for any propaganda however worthless, and for any publicity seeker however shameless. As in the textile industry, there is overproduction in the publicity game, and a client is a client. How many nationalists at heart are writing purple copy for peace societies; how many socialists at heart lauding the benign activities of the power companies; how many intelligent judges of human character stirring the tom-toms for men they despise?

[21] What is the attitude of Mr. Chase toward the man and toward the man's actions, and what expressions convey attitude? Does Mr. Chase appear to blame the man? If not, where would he place the blame? How is suspense produced in this paragraph? Does Mr. Chase present his example abstractly or concretely?

[22] The transition between Section III and Section IV is one of Mr. Chase's least effective transitions. The reference of *this,* the first word in paragraph 22, is not very clear, and there is no evident reason for beginning another section here except that to continue Section III would make that section seem disproportionately long. It looks as though Section IV is merely a continuation of Section III and as if Mr. Chase just thought that III was getting too long. The section heading does break up the page and it does emphasize the final question of Section III, *How many friends did that hard winter cost him?* It seems unwise, however, to give such emphasis to the idea of loss of friends when Mr. Chase's main concern still seems to be the loss of integrity. Paragraph 22, though, is well written. What examples do you find in it of parallelism? Of balance? Of effective repetition?

[23] In this connection, the testimonial writer demands a note. If he—or she—really likes the product, well and good. In many cases he or she has never tried it. A thumping lie is exchanged for a bag of gold. The flight of Lindbergh from America to France was a fine and stirring achievement. But even finer to my mind is the fact that he has never sold his honor to a manufacturer.

[24] Consider the activities of the ghost writer. According to the rules of this flourishing new profession, he writes the speech for somebody else to deliver or the article or book for somebody else to sign. In certain cases he endeavors to put into words the somebody else's general thoughts, but in other cases the somebody else has no general thoughts, and it is his function to supply them. Thus he foists on the public an entirely false picture of his client; he puts brains—his brains—into a man of straw; and far worse, he abuses the craft of letters which the Lord has given him by writing words in which he places no credence while neatly dodging responsibility by placing his client's name above them. As a writer I have frequently been invited to "ghost" under such circumstances and once or twice have been sorely tempted by the size of the fee. Fortunately my economic circumstances at the time were such that I could afford to refuse. Heaven knows when, unfortunately, they will be such that I cannot afford to refuse. But when I fall, I shall know that my position as a responsible professional man—voicing his own thoughts and signing his own stuff—has come to an end.

[25] I know a writer of newspaper editorials. Himself a liberal, he has to grind out a thousand words daily which reflect the ultra-conservative policy of the paper for which he works. He keeps a record like a batting average chart, noting the editorials to which he can subscribe against those to which he cannot. When he last showed it to me he was scoring about .150—say one out of seven.

[26] Pot boiling is no new phenomenon. Many of the Humanists' greatest heroes were known to stoop to the practice

[23] *In this connection*—does *this* have a clear antecedent? Is this short paragraph all right as it stands, or should it, rather, be expanded or joined to another paragraph? In the last two sentences Mr. Chase repeats the sound *fine* (*fine, finer*). Is this good or bad repetition?

[24] The relationship between this paragraph and the material that precedes it is certainly clear. Is it made clear by logical order or by transitions or by both? In short, why is it easy for the reader to follow Mr. Chase's thought here? Why is *somebody else* repeated in sentences 2 and 3? The expression *ghost writer* and the verb *ghost* are not listed in *Webster's Collegiate Dictionary,* Fifth Edition. The *American College Dictionary* lists *ghost writer* and tags it colloquial but does not list a verb *ghost.* In your opinion is Mr. Chase justified in using these expressions in the present piece of writing? Characterize the "attitude" of Mr. Chase in his remarks about his own refusal to do "ghost-writing." Does he seem complacent and superior, for example? Is his tone appropriate to his general purpose here and elsewhere when he draws examples from his own experience? What expressions here communicate his attitude?

[25] What would the essay gain or lose if this paragraph were omitted? How is this paragraph related to the preceding paragraph? To the whole essay of which it is a part? Is a more explicit transition needed or would it be superfluous?

[26] What use has Mr. Chase made of the first sentence and the last sentence of the paragraph? What is the topic sentence

from time to time. It may be defined as doing, for a cash consideration, work markedly below the level of the artist's best. In the past, stark necessity was its chief inspiration. Today as I go about among novelists, poets, playwrights, painters, I find a new motive widely voiced. We will, they say, "ghost-write" success stories, produce canned editorials and advertising copy, concoct synthetic drama (a new type of laboratory research), illustrate magnificent brochures, or what you will, in order that we may lay aside a cash reserve, and *then* watch us burn up Olympus. I am still watching. The formula in most cases is spurious. A continued and calculated flow of second-rate work is more than liable to poison the original spring. One can cite names—a number of very promising names—but it would be too painful. Enough that American art and literature have lost some distinguished ornaments because integrity comes too high.

[27] Lastly we shall consider a usage almost as widespread as yesing the boss, one indeed that may be said to be an integral part of the folkways of a pecuniary civilization. I refer to the art of backslapping in the interest of a profitable sale. Under the canons of this culture complex it is incumbent upon the vendor to welcome the prospective vendee with all the warmth and sympathy hitherto reserved for dear and chosen friends. He must be dined and wined (Mr. Jesse R. Sprague has admirably described the latter ceremony in a recent article in *Harper's*), his most infantile pronouncements must be received with the highest respect, one's home must be thrown open to him, his lightest fancy instantly satisfied. The fact that the company pays the bills is entirely beside the point. The point is that the whole procedure, like the canvasser's behavior, makes a mockery of natural human intercourse. Friendship is one of the few compensations for a complex life. To shower upon strangers and upon people who never could be one's friends, all the earnests of comradeship is to debase rare metal. The dismal panorama passes before us: Manufacturers' agents departing with suitcases of gin to

or topic idea? The last sentence is incomplete. Is it a justifiable incomplete sentence? In the next-to-last sentence Mr. Chase shifts to the use of *One,* though he has written the rest of the paragraph in the first person. Is this an undesirable shift, or is there some justification for it?

[27] The first sentence is worth examination. What is the effect of *lastly?* Of the reference to *yesing the boss?* Neither *Webster's Collegiate* nor the *American College Dictionary* lists *backslapping.* Is Mr. Chase justified in using the word (sentence 2)?

(The passage from *The dismal panorama* to the end of the paragraph is grammatically a single sentence, though Mr. Chase has

dentists' conventions. . . . Rotary club luncheons with members roaring songs, embracing one another. . . . "Jim" calling to "Joe" (and Jim hates Joe)—all in the hope of more business. . . . The hearty dinner at home to the chief buyer for the National Widget Corporation with one's wife in a new and alluring frock, and carefully coached in the art of drawing out Mr. Blatterfein on his favorite topic—the postage stamps of the Hawaiian Islands. . . . The high and costly strategy employed by publisher B in weaning an author away from publisher A—the agent preferably to be an old college friend. . . . "Contact men" in dinner coats at weekend parties.

[28] Backslapping may not always be for business reasons, but it is usually for pecuniary reasons. I recall participating in a dinner to a man who was as stupid as he was rich. The basic idea of the dinner was to obtain money from him in order that a certain charity might make up its deficit. At the close of the banquet our guest arose and delivered himself of as monumental a series of banalities as it has ever been my ill fortune to hear. When he seated himself, amid vast applause, we, the hosts, arose one by one, and respectfully asked questions and were grateful for answers that we knew to be absurd. Finally we gave our guest a rousing vote of thanks for a most instructive evening. Later, because his publicity man had used my name, I wrote him a letter—a slimy, unctuous letter —recalling his brilliant address and the needs of the charity in question. I was never so pleased in my life as when he kicked us all downstairs, and never gave a penny. In some dim way it restored my self-respect. Charities are worthy—some of them—but are they worth such abasement?

V

[29] We have but touched the surface of the phenomenon, but already most of us are in it up to the waist, if not indeed completely mired. Certain groups are less involved than

chosen to set off the parallel elements by capitalizing each and by placing ellipses after each. In this long sentence Mr. Chase is illustrating the principle of concreteness-by-expansion; each of the parallel elements is a concrete part of the "dismal panorama" mentioned at the beginning of the sentence.)

[28] The first sentence is a good example of transition by repetition of a key word. In what levels of language do the following locutions belong: *backslapping, banalities, unctuous, kicked us all down stairs, abasement?* What difference do you see between the way Mr. Chase mixes levels of language and the undesirable mixture in the following sentence: "The King, after dining and interviewing ambassadors, decided to take a short snooze, but the Queen remonstrated and he knew she wasn't kidding." Why, in your opinion, did Mr. Chase place the paragraph on backslapping for charity in its present position? In the first sentence Mr. Chase uses the word *pecuniary*. Could a person unfamiliar with the word grasp its meaning by studying it in its present context? If so, how? What is the difference between *business reasons* and *pecuniary reasons?*

[29, 30] Paragraph 29 is an example of a transitional paragraph. It serves to show the relationship between what has gone before and the whole section it introduces; also it sets up a figure of speech—*mired . . . saturation*—which Mr. Chase will use effec-

others, and a rough appraisal of relative saturation might prove instructive.

[30] The independent farmer, standing closest to the pioneer tradition, *leads the list.*[2] Despite the steady encroachments of business motives upon his way of life—for agriculture is far more a way of life than a pecuniary pursuit—he still has the best chance among all classes of Americans to call his soul his own. Perhaps the independent storekeeper, surviving in those few remote neighborhoods where chain stores and full-line forcing have not rendered his life a burden, *takes second place.* I know a few still functioning in the White Mountains of New Hampshire. They are the sort of men who will not send a bill when the neighbor who owes it is ill or out of luck.

[31] *Next in line* we might place the housewife. More remote from the commercial front than her spouse, she still frequently reserves the right to speak her mind freely, "to stand right up in meeting," as we New Englanders say. I recall the case of a brilliant young accountant who, shortly after winning his C.P.A., was given an opportunity to make a million dollars, more or less, in a few months' time. All he had to do was to approach certain corporations with an offer to split whatever rebates he might earn for them in their filed income tax returns. His share in turn was to be split with a government examiner who supplied the names of such corporations as had legitimate claims for rebates in past tax payments. He told his mother of the glittering opportunity. "Jim," she said, "you know when I come to wake you in the morning I shake you hard, and you don't stir?" "Yes," he said. "And then I shake you even harder, and you give a little moan?" "Yes." "And finally I shake as hard as I can, and you open one sleepy eye?" "Yes." "I'd hate to come in morning after morning and find you awake." He turned down the job and has been sleeping soundly ever since.

[2] The italics in Section V are not Mr. Chase's but ours. Their purpose will be made clear by the accompanying comment.

tively later. Notice that in Section V he is using logical order in that he goes from those groups which have most integrity to those which have least and that he is using numerous transitions to keep clear the relationship between groups. We have italicized the chief transitional expressions in this section. A study of these italicized expressions will help the reader to see how to use transitions effectively. What would paragraph 30 lose if the last sentence were omitted?

[31] This paragraph gains concreteness from the use of anecdote or example. Does it seem that Mr. Chase is departing from his topic idea of the housewife when he begins to talk about the young accountant? If so, when does the connection become clear? Is there justification for this apparent lack of coherence?

(How would this dialogue be paragraphed if Mr. Chase had followed convention? Has he gained anything by going contrary to convention? Is the last sentence of the paragraph to be considered literally true? What is its purpose?)

[32] *Reasonably high in the comparative scale* would come the skilled manual worker affiliated with a strong trade union. One does not find an unduly grave percentage of yes men among locomotive engineers, machinists, or building trades workers. In the main they are utterly dependent on their jobs, but their jobs are objective and technical, while the backing of the union—sometimes with its benefit clause—stiffens their independence and self-respect.

[33] *Next we might place* independent manufacturers and entrepreneurs. The great corporations are fast undermining them, financially and spiritually; but many sturdily maintain the Forsyte tradition, refuse to grow maudlin about Service, honestly admit they are in business for profit and not for public welfare, and take pride in producing a sound article, honestly sold. *Below them would stand* professional men and women, with physicians at the head of the group and lawyers at the bottom. There was a time when this class topped the whole list, but that was before competition became so keen; before the days of split fees, ambulance chasing, and yesing the president of the University. Professors, like canvassers, must eat. If the gentle reader is of a professional persuasion, he is doubtless an exception, but as a journeyman member of his class, I know that all too frequently I am not an exception.

[34] *On a level with professional people* would come the unskilled manual workers, with farm laborers at their head. They are largely a beaten lot, but many of them lose their jobs so often they get used to it, and accumulate, if not independence, at least a certain stoicism, a bitter crust against a bitter world. *Not far below them* we find the servant class—some two millions of them in America. Here we note a peculiar phenomenon. Servants are protected to a degree by their time-honored professional status. Nobody expects their work-a-day manners to reflect their real personalities, and thus they are enabled to preserve some semblance of integrity behind and remote from the frozen smiles and conventional obsequiousness of their trade.

[32] Which expression is more abstract, *skilled manual worker affiliated with a strong trade union* (sentence 1) or *locomotive engineers* (sentence 2)? What would be lost if sentences 1 and 2 were transposed? What does the word *objective* (sentence 3) mean in its present context?

[33] The reference to the Forsyte tradition (second sentence) is an example of literary allusion. Mr. Chase is referring to the practices of the Forsyte family, particularly of old Jolyon, in the novels of John Galsworthy. Has Mr. Chase taken into account that some of his readers may not have read the novels? Would such readers still see his point? In paragraph 39 there is another reference to old Jolyon and the Forsyte tradition. What is the value of these two allusions in creating the total effect that Mr. Chase is seeking?

[34] In what sense are unskilled manual workers *on a level with* professional people (sentence 1)? Would this sentence have a different meaning if it were taken out of context? How is the meaning made clear by the present context?

[35] *From servants it is a long drop downward* to the salesman, though here again we note, or are beginning to note, a loss of human dignity which is freezing into a convention. It is the salesman's business to be hypocritical if necessary, just as it is the servant's business to be servile. We do not expect much from a salesman or a blurb-writer save words, and presently he may be able to save his soul by taking, in his business hours, some such conventionalized and definite status as the butler or the waiter takes.

[36] Salesmen are low in the scale of integrity, but at least they are alive. They have even been known to tell the boss what they thought of him and throw the job in his face. Clerks and office workers, being all but dead, must *stand still lower.* They are the saddest group of yes men on the whole list.

[37] *As we feel for the bottom,* we encounter in the murky gloom a large round object. Dragging it with some reluctance toward the light, we discover it to be a politician. To expect integrity from an elected public servant is almost to expect a miracle. When Mr. Dwight Morrow, running for senator in New Jersey, actually and honestly spoke his mind about prohibition the shock was almost too great for the country to bear. Editorial writers lost their heads completely at the wonder of it. The politician leads a harrowing economic life, granted; there are often sound reasons for his debasement, but this incident would seem to make it plain that it is not always good business, or good publicity, to flounder so persistently in the lower depths. Once and again the poor fellow might come up for air.

[38] *We would seem to have touched the bottom. Not quite. We have yet to deal* with certain types of corporation executives. As a class executives may be arranged up and down the scale, but enough of them at least to be identified as a subspecies are the least enviable exhibit in the whole national category, firmly anchored to the ocean floor. Their case is the more deplorable in that they have less excuse than most of us for being untrue to themselves. They have more economic se-

[35] Mr. Chase has already written in detail about violations of integrity in salesmanship (paragraphs 17–21) and in writing publicity (paragraphs 22–23). Why then does he mention salesmen or "blurb-writers" again in this section of the essay?

[36] What does *alive* (sentence 1) mean in its present context?

[37, 38] These paragraphs gain force from their place in the climactic order of Section V and also from the use of the figure of speech (*mired . . . saturation*) which was introduced in paragraph 29. The transitional expressions, *As we feel for the bottom* (paragraph 37) and *We would seem to have touched the bottom* (paragraph 38), keep the figure in the mind of the reader and also contribute much to the attitudinal meaning. It is worth noting that Mr. Chase is writing with particularly strong feeling in these two paragraphs and that he is using charged language. Analyze the techniques of charged language used. Can you justify Mr. Chase's use of it? Is Mr. Chase prejudiced against all corporation executives? Does he offer satisfying reasons for the disapproval that he states?

[38] This paragraph is a good example of transition and coherence by means of parallelism and repetition of a pronoun (in this case *they*). Read the paragraph aloud to see how it moves.

curity than all the rest of us combined. Instead of quaking for their jobs, they need quake only for their balance sheets. They have sold themselves, not to inexorable terms of livelihood, but to a legal abstraction, an almost mythical monster, in whose bowels is nothing more than a certificate of incorporation. (Some anthropologist should do a sound monograph on the totem worship and animism involved in the modern conception of a corporation.) They dare not open their mouths in public, put pen to paper, pronounce judgment on any social question, attend a banquet—almost take a bath—without first securing the received policy of the company for which they work. They move in a world of juggernauts and spooks which pass under the name of unfavorable publicity. They cower before the dire warnings of counsels on public relations. Instead of honestly admitting they are in business for profit, they squirt atomizers filled with the rank perfumes of "service," "good will," "public duty" in all directions, until the atmosphere of the nation bids fair to be choked with alien gases. They wriggle, this subspecies, into schools, universities, women's clubs, churches. They teach the teacher to teach the little children to wash their little hands with their little cakes of Banana Oil Soap. It is difficult to walk a block in Washington without bumping into one of their legislative agents. Even as the Russians substitute Communism for God, these gentlemen substitute their Corporation. It can do no wrong. Once I was walking the streets of Boston with the vice-president of a great financial institution. We came to a little decayed brick building near the docks. He stopped, with reverence in his every gesture, and all but took off his hat. "This," he said, "is where our Company first began to do business." We might have been visiting the birthplace of a saint.

[39] I should like to see old Jolyon Forsyte at a few American directors' tables; I should like to hear him express his mind freely at a conference of Junior Executives. Here was a man who ransacked the world for tea, sold you only the finest, and took a good round profit on the transaction. He

(The sentence beginning *Some anthropologist* contains several words likely to be unfamiliar to most readers. Was the meaning of the sentence clear to you as you read the essay for the first time? If it was not, see the definitions below and then try to restate Chase's idea in your own words.

anthropologist—one who studies the science of man and his works

monograph—a treatise on a particular subject

totem—an object that stands as an emblem of a class, family, or related group

animism—a belief that all natural objects possess a soul)

(If, instead of the sentence in the text beginning *They teach* Mr. Chase had written "They cause the teachers to train children to wash their hands with soap," what different plain-sense meaning would the sentence have? What different attitudinal meaning?)

[39] Has Mr. Chase violated unity in including this paragraph about Jolyon Forsyte? If not, how is the paragraph relevant and how has Mr. Chase made its relevance obvious? Consider especially the last sentence.

did not cower before sticks of type, cared not a damn about "unfavorable publicity," had no animistic corporate god to serve, and could call his soul his own.

[40] I have been perhaps unduly harsh with that fraction of corporation executives who have forsworn all canons of personal integrity to serve a paper monster. But I should like them to know how their activities impress the outside public; and I would point out, furthermore, that the lesson taught the politicians by Mr. Morrow is equally applicable in their case. They could afford to substitute facts for propaganda far more frequently than they do. The type of publicity put out by the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad may serve as an example of winning real good will by honest methods as against the tricky and spurious variety.

[41] If you think that I have been passing moral judgments, I have completely failed in writing this article. Questionable morals as reflected in graft, peculation, and legal crime lie quite outside the discussion. Such behavior is to be found in every civilization since Mesopotamia; whether the ratio is worse in modern America I do not know, and for the moment do not care. Owing to the colossal temptations for graft inspired by prohibition, it may well be worse at the present writing; but this, we trust, is a temporary phenomenon. All I have tried to say is that you and I, and Americans generally, have each a personal standard of honorable conduct. Under prevailing conditions, largely economic, it is frequently impossible to live within striking distance of that standard. Dr. Paul S. Achilles of Columbia, professor of vocational psychology, estimates that over fifty per cent of Americans are not happy in their work. (The suicide rate per thousand has jumped fivefold in seventy years.) I am but pointing out a major reason for that unhappiness. There is better stuff in us than we are permitted to express, and callous as routine may have made us, the failure of self-expression still hurts. In the end nothing but a greater margin of economic security—the rock which stiffened the backbone of the pioneer—can bring release.

[40] What obvious and less obvious reasons can you give for Mr. Chase's praise of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad?

[41] It is generally said that the last paragraph is the place of greatest emphasis. Has Mr. Chase used it to emphasize the idea that is most important to him? If so, what is the idea and how has he emphasized it?

EXERCISES

I. Make a detailed topic outline of "The Luxury of Integrity." [3]

II. In 300 to 500 words, write a concise summary of "The Luxury of Integrity," which follows the organization of the essay and includes all of its main points.

III. The following list of words, taken from the Chase essay, should be part of the college student's vocabulary. Look up in the dictionary any words which you cannot accurately define.[4] Then turn to the passage in the essay in which the words occur (the accompanying numbers are paragraph numbers), and see how they are used and what they mean in context.

credo [6]
tenuousness [7]
precarious [7]
prodigal [8]
amenities [8]
compulsion [8]
mores [8]
tangible [8]
peremptory [8]
punctilious [9]
disapprobation [11]
repugnant [12]
blatantly [17]
consummates [19]
ruthless [19]
succulently [20]
benign [22]
credence [24]
spurious [26]
pecuniary [27]
incumbent [27]
banalities [28]
unctuous [28]
abasement [28]
affiliated [32]
unduly [32]
maudlin [33]
stoicism [34]
inexorable [38]
anthropologist [38]
totem [38]
animism [38]

[3] For information about outline form, see Appendix A.
[4] It may be desirable to read Appendix B: Using the Dictionary.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE INFORMAL THEME

THE INFORMAL THEME is the short paper which grows out of the writer's own knowledge and experience. It usually contains between five hundred and six hundred words. Such short themes are assigned frequently in freshman English courses, to develop ease in expression and the ability to handle larger writing projects. There is no doubt that this practice in writing is valuable: at the end of a term of composition, students almost without exception express themselves more competently and more easily than they did at the beginning, largely as a result of writing and receiving criticism on their short compositions. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the method, the step-by-step process, of writing substantial, well-organized, clear, and interesting themes.

Before we discuss the writing process, however, it is wise to consider briefly some of the general problems of theme writing. For, although writing themes is valuable, and although it is satisfying to a number of students, to many students it is arduous and even painful. Obstacles, some imagined, some real, block them in their approach to a writing assignment.

One problem is produced by the student's feeling that writing themes is forced communication. Instead of waiting until he is ready and eager to express his ideas, he is obliged

to communicate at a certain time, at a prescribed length, usually in a designated form (expository, narrative, descriptive), and sometimes on one of a list of topics assigned. This regulated, unspontaneous writing seems to many students unnatural and difficult; very common is the protest, "I have to be in the mood before I can write; I couldn't write anything good this week because I wasn't in the mood."

The student who takes this attitude gives himself a mental handicap. If he will examine communication in general, he will find that forced communication is by no means peculiar to freshman English. In the business of living, the report is due tomorrow; the speech is set for Tuesday; the thesis must be finished before the established date for the awarding of degrees; the editor expects the article in time for the January issue; the class will assemble to hear the lecture at nine; the letter must be answered today. Communication is often forced, often prescribed in length and subject and form; and the meeting of responsibilities leaves little time for concern about one's mood. One may not be in the mood to study physics, or to prepare for an examination, or to write the examination; but he gets into the mood, or rather, he forgets about his mood, by getting to work. The business of writing a theme should be handled in the same way. Worry about a lack of freedom, spontaneity, and "inspiration" is simply a form of procrastination. So, indeed, is any sort of worry about a writing assignment. The remedy is systematic work.

A second, more genuine problem in theme writing is the problem of the reader, the audience for whom the paper is written. We have said earlier that the receiver is an important factor in successful communication: material, language, and attitude must, to some extent at least, be adjusted to him. But freshman themes are written in an unusual sort of vacuum; there is no definite receiver at whom to aim; the paper which amuses the writer's roommate may not amuse his instructor; the paper praised by his sister who is a senior at Blank Uni-

versity may be returned with a low grade. Faced with this varied reader-response, the student often just writes, in a baffled desperation, hoping the composition will turn out well, but having no clear idea of how appropriate his subject is, how fully he needs to explain an activity or process, how much knowledge he can take for granted on the part of the unknown reader, what standards, other than the standard of technical correctness, he is expected to meet.

The most obvious receiver of the communication in a freshman theme is, of course, the instructor. He reads the papers; on his reaction depends the student's grade. And yet writing for the teacher is not wholly satisfactory. In the first place, the communicator, to be effective, should have a reasonably accurate knowledge of his audience; to many students, teachers are alien, remote, and incomprehensible. Furthermore, writing for the teacher may inhibit honest expression: as the student comes to know (or to think he knows) his reader, he may feel that certain ideas would be unpleasant to this reader, that certain experiences would be misunderstood, that he will get a better grade if he caters to the opinions which he believes his instructor holds instead of forthrightly expressing his own ideas. He may feel, in short, that he cannot afford "the luxury of integrity," and he may be blocked in the writing he would like to do, if he regards the teacher as his audience.

Another possibility is writing for the class. If themes are read aloud in class, the class is, in a very real sense, the audience. But writing for the class is not wholly satisfactory either, for this reason: members of a class in freshman English are not static; they are constantly learning, gaining new information, maturing in knowledge and judgment—if education has any meaning at all. Therefore, the student who writes for the class as the class is now aims too low. He should be learning now to write for the audience he will be addressing in the future; for the class, not as it is, but as it will be.

We suggest, therefore, as a partial solution to this problem of the reader, that students aim their themes at a hypothetical audience of college graduates, people of above-average intelligence, who have a general background of information but not, necessarily, specialized knowledge in any field. This audience can be assumed to have some information about scientific developments, literature, music, geography, history, and current affairs. (For example, such an audience could identify Shostakovitch, would know something about the Taft-Hartley law, and would not need to be told that Paris is on the Seine.) The writer should, however, explain clearly any technical or specialized terms which he may know from special work or reading he has done, but which the average educated person would be unlikely to know. This hypothetical audience would expect good informal usage, would understand formal words, would recognize triteness, and would expect the writer to have something worth-while to say. If the student can aim his themes at this kind of adult audience, even though his aim is not perfect he will be practicing the kind of writing which, in the future as well as the present, he should be able to do.

A third problem, finding something to write about, will be considered in the next section, where we begin to discuss the writing process. Though choosing a subject is an initial problem for many students, it is also the first of five stages in planning and writing a theme. These stages or steps in composition are:

1. Choosing the subject
2. Making an informal outline
3. Writing the first draft (or drafts)
4. Revising
5. Making the final copy

The most important single point for the student writer to keep in mind is that writing a theme should be thought of, and executed, *as a series of steps.* The early steps may overlap; for example, by the time the writer has fixed on a subject, he

often has in mind a rough outline of his projected paper. But no step should be omitted, and no step should be hurried. Good themes are built gradually; and they are built by systematic procedure, thought, and care.

I. SOMETHING TO SAY

A good theme has substance. It gives the impression of a mind at work, observing, thinking, and communicating its observation and thought to a reader. Such thoughtful and substantial communication is certainly not beyond the power of any college student. Anyone who has lived for seventeen years or more has much to say that is worth saying. And yet the thin, trivial theme, not worth the time consumed in writing or the time wasted in reading it, is all too common; and the lament, "I can't think of anything to write" is all too familiar to teachers of freshman English.

Often the student who says that he can't "think" of anything to write about has done no actual thinking. He has for five days waited passively for an idea to strike, and on the sixth day has begun to worry. Neither waiting nor worry is likely to produce good results. If he has thought actively about a subject for his theme, he has usually made the mistake of thinking abstractly and beyond his own experience. He has thought of such topics as world peace, race relations, life in America, education, the two-party system; and he is naturally baffled. These topics are too vague and large, and his knowledge of them is too vague and small. But in specific events he has witnessed, people he has actually known, opinions he has formed, concrete information he has acquired, he has hundreds of subjects for papers. About these things which he knows, he has something to say.

Suppose the assignment is to write an informal narrative theme which presents a vivid personal experience. "I can't think of anything to write," a student may say. "Nothing interesting has ever happened to me." This is absurd. He prob-

ably means that he was not on Okinawa, that he has never been run over by a truck and never been the victim of a holdup. Perhaps not; but if he had been, he would still be at a loss for a theme subject, because a habit of mind makes him glance over his own experience and dismiss it as worthless. He should examine it closely. Every human life is full of experiences and events, not necessarily dramatic or sensational, but important at the time, and representing true segments of the experience of living. The student to whom nothing interesting has happened has run home from school every day for months in fear of the gang waiting around the corner; he has wondered about death and God at his grandfather's funeral; on a camping trip he has been lost in the woods; he has watched a large building burn; his mind has gone blank after the first sentence of his oration at eighth-grade graduation; he has learned that his girl is going to a party with his friend; he has felt lost and strange on his first day at college. These are only a few of the dozens of possible subjects he has for his narrative paper.

Suppose the assignment is to write a theme which gives information about something which the writer knows from first-hand experience; the theme is to be impersonal, focused on giving objective information about some business, or process, or specialized activity. The student, a girl this time, has never worked in a factory or a grocery store; she knows nothing about building model planes; she cannot set a lobster trap; she does not collect stamps; she has never sold shoes. She is in despair. But she has been a swimming instructor at a summer camp; she has collected money for the Red Cross in various sections of her town; she has been assistant editor of her high-school paper; she has built stage sets and managed lighting for high-school plays. About these things and many others she has special, first-hand information.

With the right kind of thinking about what he actually knows, the student has the problem not of finding something to write about, but of choosing the best subject from the

many which are available. The best subject will usually be the one most real and interesting to him, about which he has the most exact knowledge, the most vivid impressions. Anything can be made real and interesting to a reader—literally anything, from shoe polish to an experiment with hypnosis, from an autopsy to a walk along a country road—if the writer knows about it, if he is himself interested in it, and if he communicates it concretely. A paper cannot be porous and thin and trivial if it is packed with definite statements, exact particulars, specific examples, concrete details, images, and sensations. Close observation of one's own experience, reflection on that experience, and accurate, detailed recording are the essentials of something to say.

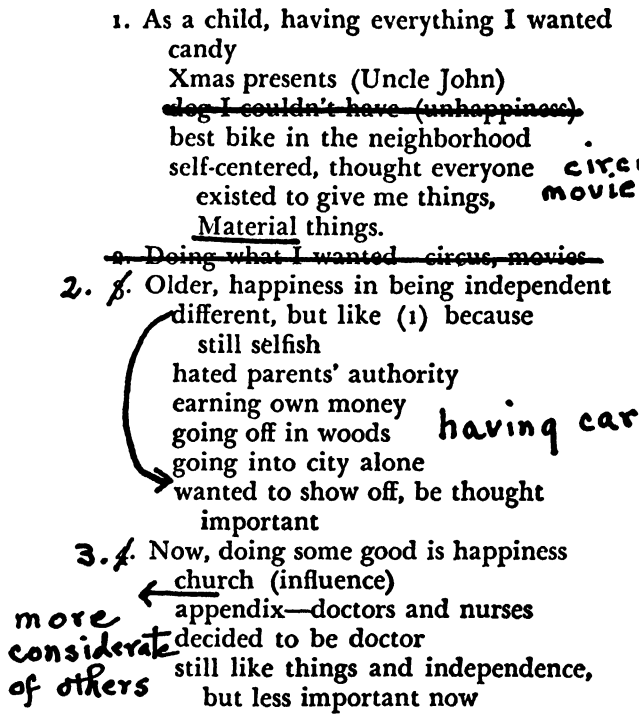
II. PLANNING AND WRITING THE FIRST DRAFT

Some planning of the paper has already been done by the time the subject has been selected. That is, the writer has necessarily thought through the topic sufficiently to see that it can be developed; he probably has in mind three or four points he can make, and perhaps an illustration or two. But he is seldom mentally prepared to sit down at once and write the theme. More systematic planning is needed.

Most students find it useful, as a step toward writing, to jot down a rough outline of their early ideas about the subject, and, as their thinking and planning proceed, to work with that outline, adding new ideas as they come, deleting others, rearranging the material. A formal outline is unnecessary for a short informal paper; it may, indeed, be an actual hazard in writing because, looking logical and finished, it may bind the writer to a plan which is not the best for his material. The rough outline, however, is a convenient way of keeping track of ideas and seeing the relationship between them; and it has the virtue of being highly flexible.

Below is a copy of a rather full rough outline for a theme on the writer's changing ideas of happiness; the outline had

been enlarged and amended during several days of intermittent thinking about the theme:



The kind of planning represented by an outline like this pays dividends; and, for most writers, the planning should be on paper, not simply in the mind. Since the written plan can be viewed more wholly and clearly, the writer can apply to it, more easily than to a mental plan, certain fundamental questions about the content and organization of the theme. The questions which should be asked about any projected paper are:

1. *Is the subject too large for a short theme?*

(Sometimes the writer has tried, initially, to handle too much in five or six hundred words. The development of so much material will necessarily be sketchy. He needs to select

only one phase of his subject—one division in his outline—and develop it fully for his theme.)

2. *Is any of the material irrelevant?*

(In the outline above, the point about the unhappiness of not having a dog appears irrelevant to the discussion of what constituted happiness at that time. Wisely, the writer struck it out.)

3. *Should any overlapping main points be combined?*

(This has been done with points 1 and 2 in the outline quoted above.)

4. *Is the arrangement of material good?*

(The writer of the outline above rearranged certain subtopics, but the chronological arrangement of his main points was inevitable. Often, however, the main points need to be shuffled, for better continuity or better building to a climax.)

These questions can also, of course, be applied to a first draft of a paper; and some writers prefer to start with a rough draft instead of an outline, with the intention of drastically revising and reorganizing the rough draft, and probably writing three or four drafts before the paper is in final form. In other words, they partially merge steps 2 and 3 (making an outline, writing the first draft) in the writing process. It is, however, harder to eliminate sections of a paper than it is to strike out jottings in an outline, and harder to change the order of material which is written out with some fullness and continuity. For this reason the outline as a step preliminary to writing is likely to produce a better focused and better organized theme. A first draft based on a well-planned outline may need considerable revision, but the basic arrangement of material will probably be good; the writer can, therefore, give his attention to other problems of form and development.

It is generally wise, particularly if one is working from a good outline, to write the first draft in one sitting and at a fairly steady pace, without pausing long or worrying much over mechanical difficulties and small details. This does not

mean that the student should write carelessly, even in a first draft. On the contrary, it is most desirable for him to learn to write reasonably clean and competent first drafts—he is often judged, on examinations, for example, by his ability to do this. But stopping in the process of writing the draft of a theme to look up the spelling of a word or the use of a comma, or to work over an awkward sentence, may break the writer's train of thought and interfere with the forward movement of the composition. Since it is possible for him to revise his work —since, indeed, he is expected to do so—he can defer nicety of expression for the sake of getting down on paper his unbroken sequence of ideas. Thoughtful planning, then uninterrupted first writing, and finally careful revision usually produce the best results.

III. REVISION

Revision is the stage of writing which students most often neglect, sometimes because they write their papers too late to have much time for revision, sometimes because they have understandable difficulty in seeing weaknesses in their own work, sometimes because they are lazy. And yet, revision is very important; and working over a composition can be the most rewarding part of the whole writing process. Polishing a sentence, eliminating a useless phrase, finding the word which says exactly what one means, changing a routine beginning to an arresting one, joining two disconnected paragraphs with a neat transition, adding one or two details which bring a hazy picture into sharp focus—such changes make the difference between mediocrity and excellence; and they give the writer the sense of craftsmanship, of deep satisfaction and sometimes excitement, which comes from knowing that a thing is as perfect as one can make it. Teachers of English know that when a student with an average or below average record has once written a good paper, he is likely to write more good papers. The reason for this phenomenon is

complex; but one element in it is that the student, having once had the experience of craftsmanship, having once stretched himself to do his best work, is no longer content with half-hearted imperfection.

Very occasionally, when a student is immersed in a subject or an experience (and when he is well trained and fluent in expression), he can write a first draft which requires no revision: the development of the idea is complete and clear; the details, long present in his mind, are set down vividly for the reader; no word needs to be changed. But, nearly always, such perfect or near-perfect expression comes from thoughtful and painstaking revision.

Revision, to be effective, should be done, not as soon as the first draft is finished, but at least twenty-four hours, preferably three or four days, later. (This means, obviously, that writing a theme should not be postponed until the night before the paper is due.) The completion of the first draft sometimes leaves the writer in a state of exhausted discouragement, sometimes in a glow of pride in achievement. Both states are frequently unjustified; but both blind him to the actual merits and defects of what he has written. He is never so incompetent to judge his theme as he is at this time. Even if he has no distinct feeling of discouragement or sense of accomplishment, he is not an able critic just after his paper is written because he knows so well what he *intended* to say. Two or three days later, looking at the draft which has grown somewhat strange, he will be able to see what he failed to say. He may even—it has happened—be uncertain about what he meant. He will, certainly, look at the paper with a view closer to that of the alien reader who will ultimately see and judge it; and he is therefore, at this later time, able to make effective revision.

A part of the process of revision should be reading the paper aloud. Awkward phrasing, thoughtless repetition of words, repeated sentence patterns, and wordiness are more striking to the ear than to the fast-moving eye. Also, since

reading aloud is slower than glancing over the page, small details of spelling and punctuation will receive more attention. The author should do this reading aloud, let us repeat, not when the theme is fresh and meaningful in his mind, but after an interval. He can hear then, if he listens, what the paper is, without the overtones of what he intended it to be.

The critical examination and revision of the paper, like the whole writing process, should be systematic. The writer should examine closely his paragraphs: do they have topic sentences? are they well developed? are the transitions between paragraphs smooth and clear? His sentences: are they grammatically correct? are they sufficiently varied? His words: is he sure of their meanings? are all of them necessary? could one exact word be substituted for the five he has used? are their connotations right for his purpose? are they correctly spelled? And his punctuation: does it indicate accurately the pauses, and the strength of the pauses which the reader needs for immediate understanding? The student should scrutinize his paper particularly, of course, for errors or weaknesses which have been called to his attention before. The student who makes numerous blunders in composition will profit from reading his paper several times, looking for one type of fault in each reading, instead of trying to correct everything at one time. Systematically reading once for paragraph development, a second time for punctuation, and a third time for exact use of words will produce better results than trying to concentrate simultaneously on three very different problems.

Much more elusive than punctuation or paragraph development, and harder for the student to check in his own writing, is the clarity of thought and expression in the theme. There is sometimes, in the work of inexperienced writers, a kind of fogginess, whether basically in thinking or in expression it is often difficult to say. Reading a composition which has this quality, one has the feeling that somehow the wheels

have slipped; there is a gap in thought, or between thought and expression; the sense is blurred. It is impossible to define this fogginess precisely, because there are so many varieties of it. The following short passages, taken from freshman themes, will illustrate:

The most important use of hypnotism is as an anesthetic. This use can be second only to the cure of neuroses. [Awkwardly phrased; but the basic fault is in the writer's failure to think through the idea. If the use as an anesthetic can be second to another use, then logically it is not "the most important use."]

It is impossible to determine how old leprosy is, for we cannot tell whether the leprosy recorded in 1500 B.C. was the same as that which now scourges man as it has for more than 3000 years. [Another example of foggy thinking. Having said that the leprosy recorded in 1500 B.C. is not necessarily the same leprosy that we know now, the writer assumes at the end of the sentence that it is the same.]

The trance stage of hypnotism is such a deep state that many people have been mistaken for dead while in it. The fact that bodies have often been found in caskets shows that people have been pronounced dead while being in trance. [This absurd statement is an example of a gap in expression, possibly in thinking too, although it is hard to believe that the point that the bodies had moved after they were enclosed in the caskets was absent from the writer's mind. Something was absent from his mind, however, when he failed to put that essential point on paper.]

My love of literature will occupy an outstanding niche on my ladder of success. [An example of a fuzzy, imperfectly visualized figure of speech. Niches are, by their nature, recessed, not outstanding; and it would be a most extraordinary ladder which had a niche. The value of figurative language is that it calls to mind a vivid concrete image. When the image called up is a niche outstanding on a ladder, one questions the writer's good sense. At best, he was not thinking about what he was saying.]

The loss of working hours must be increased if the company is to meet its production goal. [An example of foggy expression. The working hours, of course, not the loss of them, must be increased; or the loss must be decreased.]

My earliest recollection of first going to school occurred when I was five years old. [Another example of blurred expression. Going to school, not the recollection of it, occurred when the writer was five years old.]

Writing sentences like these in a first draft is understandable; failing to improve them before the paper is turned in is hardly excusable.

In revising his papers, the student should examine the clarity of his thinking and his expression, asking himself these three questions: Have I thought the ideas through, logically and carefully? Have I said exactly what I mean? Have I put on paper every link in my chain of thought, every detail which the reader needs to know? Clarity in thought and expression is particularly hard to judge immediately after the first writing of the paper. After an interval, gaps in communication and inexactness in wording are often so conspicuous that the writer wonders how he could have thought that he had made his meaning clear.

Finally, before he makes the last copy of his theme, the writer should examine, as thoroughly and critically as he can, the texture of the whole composition. A good theme is like a good piece of cloth, tightly woven, substantial, consistent in its quality. Mechanical errors—in spelling, punctuation, grammar—are tears in the cloth. Choppy sentences and disconnected paragraphs make breaks in the weave. Padding, jargon, and undue triteness are shoddy places. Lack of subordination, inexact or roundabout phrasing, and, above all, lack of detail produce a thin, sleazy fabric. Removing actual errors is only part of the process of revision. It is basic, of course; but a more important part is working for the tight structure, the precise and finished phrasing, the packed, concrete expression which make the good theme.

IV. FINAL FORM

Preparing the final copy of the paper is the easy step in the process of writing. One needs only to keep in mind a few

simple requirements, designed to facilitate the handling, grading, and filing of large numbers of themes.

A typewritten paper should be double-spaced, on standard 8½ by 11-inch paper. A theme in longhand should be written on lined paper of the same size (8½ by 11) with widely spaced lines (about ½ inch apart) so that the lines of writing will not be illegibly intermingled. Longhand papers are written neatly and clearly, in dark ink. In both typewritten and handwritten manuscripts, only one side of the paper is used. The title is centered near the top of the first page, with a double space between it and the text below. Substantial margins are left on both sides of the page. The pages are arranged in order and are numbered. The paper is folded and endorsed according to the form established by the institution or the department. Most instructors in freshman English want themes folded lengthwise, with the student's name, course and section number, instructor's name, subject of the theme, and the date the theme is due written or typed on the outside, at the top of the folded manuscript.

Although the final copy of a paper should be finished and clean, most teachers have no objection to a few minor revisions in the completed manuscript, provided it remains neat and legible. Words to be changed, if they cannot be erased, should have a line drawn through them, with the correct word written above the word struck out. (Unwanted words put in parentheses are confusing to a reader; the parentheses are used incorrectly and misleadingly when they enclose words not meant to be read.) If words are to be inserted, they too should be written between the lines, with a caret (∧) inserted to show where they should be read. The paragraph symbol (¶) should be used in the margin to show that a paragraph break, overlooked in typing, is intended here.

The completed manuscript should be read carefully to pick up any mechanical slips. An instructor reading great numbers of papers cannot make distinctions between errors of carelessness and errors of ignorance. An error is, necessarily,

an error. "The girl who typed this for me made some mistakes" is not a valid excuse for mechanical deficiencies in a theme. The writer is obligated to check his typist as well as himself. His final copy should in all respects represent the best work he is able to do.

CHAPTER REVIEW

Below is a summary of the main ideas in the chapter. If your reading has been adequate, you should be able to supply the particulars necessary to develop these summary statements.

1. The communication in theme writing is no more forced than the communication necessary on many occasions in everyday living.
2. The student can simplify the problem of what audience to write for by aiming his informal themes at a hypothetical audience of college graduates, with general, but not necessarily specialized, information.
3. In choosing subjects, the student should avoid large abstract topics, and should draw on his own experience, observation, information, and thought.
4. It is advisable to make an informal outline, and to work out the organization of the paper by revising that outline, before starting to write the first draft.
5. The student should allow himself ample time for revision, a very important part of the writing process.
6. Revision is most effective if it is done at least twenty-four hours after the first writing of the paper.
7. The good theme, in addition to being mechanically correct, has substance, good organization, effective transitions between sentences and paragraphs, concrete development, clear thought, and apt, precise expression.

EXERCISES

Read carefully, criticize, and grade the student themes below. The assignment was to write a theme of at least 500 words which would interest the reader and give him clear information about something which the writer knew from first-hand experience. The theme was to be impersonal, focused on the process or activity rather than on the writer's own experience with it.

In criticizing each theme, consider its technical correctness (spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, etc.), its focus and organization, paragraph development, style and choice of words, and the clarity and interest of the whole paper.

1. BEHIND THE FOOTLIGHTS

The curtain rises. A hush spreads over the darkened theatre and from over the footlights come the first chords of the piano. This is a high school musical. A spectacle of luscious colors and co-ordinated rythm greets each member of the audience, but behind the scenes of this finished production, lie weeks of continuous rehearsals and hard work.

Two months before the first performance, work begins. The first skeleton plans are drawn up which include settings, dance routines, and music. General ideas about the predominant theme are gathered from the students and faculty, whether it is to be a show of individual sets and comic acts, or whether it is to have a slight story which will bind together the various routines. One is chosen and the first step has been taken. The show is underway.

Appointed talent scouts are let loose, who round up all the students with one iota of ability. No one escapes their clutches. Tryouts begin, which last three or four days, during which time the difficult task of thinning out the students to the required number takes place. Each day less are told to return, until finally enough talent has been collected, and actual work begins. There are many disappointed faces as the final list of the cast is posted, but there are also many smiling ones.

The dance routines during this time, have been laid out in detail, the music gathered, and production staff acquired. Prop men, make-up artists, costume and scenery designers, pub-

licity agents, prompters, stage hands and an assistant director are added to the list of participants in this show, each one an important spoke in the churning wheel of production.

"Haven't got an old brand new maple couch laying around unused, have you?" questions the prop men while from all sides come requests for old clothes, hats, shoes, cardboard, brushes, wooden boxes, and ticket purchases. The sellers chase you around until you're cornered and have to give in. "Never give up" is their motto.

"One, two, three," counts the director with an expression of fatigue and futility since the chorus lines reminds him of a scrambled alphabet in Campbell soup. After tearing out gobs of hair, he focuses his attention back again, heaving a forlorn sigh. Over and over, afternoon after afternoon, morning, noon, and night the show goes on.

Scissors, sewing machines, and needles rally to the cry, each working at top speed to do his part. Houses are raided, Parents see their furniture pass through the front door and into waiting cars. Each and every able bodied student is drafted into collecting props. The smells of paints drift up from the machine shop where huge canvas-covered frames are being transformed into moonlit nights and foreign lands.

The costumes and scenery are finally finished. The props are stowed away and make-up men and stage hands stand ready for the big nights.

Dress rehearsal finally comes. There are always those few who arrive late, looking very sheepish and apologetic. The orchestra begins, house lights are dimmed, but the curtain fails to rise. One of the cast is still in the dressing room, pulling on his costume. More delay, but at last it begins. Dress rehearsals always go poorly. Someone forgets a step or dashes madly across the stage, forgetting that he was in this number. There's a hurried cutting of numbers and then the rehearsal is over. All are sent home with instructions to hope for the best.

The next night the show goes smoothly; the curtain falls, and a group of tired but happy individuals receive a deserved reward as they are greeted by thunderous applause across the footlights.

2. WAR DEPARTMENT OBSERVATION

In the minds of most civilians during the war, a War Department Observer was a multi-starred general sent to a battle front directly from Washington to examine the situation. To the

skeptical G.I. at the front who had never seen or known one, an observer was a shady gestapo-like individual—usually a second Lieutenant—whose aim in life was to report conditions which would result in future discomfort for enlisted men. Both conceptions were far from the actual truth.

Every branch of the Army—the Ground Forces, the Air Forces, and the Service Forces—had its own particular system of observation, but at this time we shall discuss only the method used by the Ground Forces. Observers are either officers or enlisted men with previous combat experience. In addition to this requirement the observer must have a native average intelligence as determined by the General Mental Classification Test taken at the time of induction, and plenty of good luck. If he feels that he is unable to fulfill the obligations of the assignment, he may decline the appointment. Thus the selection of an observer is on a semi-voluntary basis.

The new observer is given three weeks of schooling and drill after which he is attached to an assault unit composed mostly of men fresh from training camps in the U. S. with no battle experience. This is a deliberate procedure, for in the more seasoned organization every man is battle-wise enough to report any unusual enemy activity. The duty of the observer is to report all the activities of the enemy on his front, their fortifications, their general behavior. He works in close harmony with the Intelligence Corps, and all information is interchangeable. Notes are never taken except in extremely important instances when the observer cannot rely on his memory. In such particular cases the notes are sent back to the unit Command post with an explanation of their contents to the Intelligence Officer who holds them for the observer. It is necessary to follow this procedure to prevent the loss of vital information if the observer is either killed or captured.

Whenever he feels that he has enough information, the observer may retire to a rear area without a given order. He merely informs the commanding officer of the unit to which he is attached and withdraws to make his report. The report is written as briefly as possible, yet it covers every bit of movement no matter how insignificant it may seem. From the forward command post it is sent to area headquarters where it is typed and filed until all the reports from all of the observers of the particular campaign have been received. This accumulated information, plus the overall campaign report of the commanding

general in charge of operations, is sent to the War Department in Washington where it is studied and filed for future reference.

The Japanese were defeated by their errors and blunders. To the men engaged in close combat with the enemy these strategic errors were not immediately discernible, but they were noted by the strategists in Washington and future campaigns planned accordingly. It was through the efforts of the War Department Observer that these mistakes were recorded. Yet throughout each campaign the observer was not merely a sight-seer. He fought and killed and was killed; by virtue of his experience he often found himself commanding large groups of men. At all times he was a soldier first.

3. DRAPES, DOORKNOBS AND DAIQUIRIS

Striped wallpaper, deep rose-colored chairs, huge crystal ash trays, thick gray rugs, the kind you sink into, huge white lamps, vases of fresh green leaves, glamourous women, handsome men, and plenty of cocktails. Glamourous? Yes, but the reception room of an interior decorator's office is a front behind which an industrious crew is at work.

It is a business that is *très chic* but entails numerous headaches. Everyone from the president down to the office boy suffers from them. All the jobs are done on a time limit, and not only is it the responsibility of the decorators to design the interior of the home or office, but they must also contact painters, carpenters, cabinet makers, electricians and plumbers and see that each completes his part of the job by the appointed day. Telephones jangle constantly, and the various tradesmen are continually appearing in the office with new excuses for delay. The artists and draftsmen sometimes work on through this confusion, long into the night.

Temperamental artists are unheard of in the designer's office. There is no time for moodiness. Everyone has to be ready to turn on the charm at a moment's notice. Clients roam in at all hours, eager to hear the glowing reports of how their shabby little shacks are going to emerge. These people are always escorted through the drafting rooms, where they demand the attention of busy workers. Most of them know little about art or design, but they perch themselves on stools, whip out their cigarette holders, and "go over" the plans with harried craftsmen. Naturally, all ragged tempers have to be hidden behind toothy

grins and soft voices. Personality is nine-tenths of the battle with customers.

The atmosphere of the drafting room is very different from that of the reception room. Scraps of wallpaper and fabric swatches are strewn on the floor, paint brushes are balanced on every flat ledge, T-squares and drafting tools are scattered about, jars of smelly paint stand around uncovered, ash trays are overflowing, and sketches are tacked everywhere. Visitors usually exclaim that it is too, too arty and proceed to disrupt everything by dipping their fingers in red paint. When you are working against time, it is extremely difficult to be sweet to these people, but the glamourous charm of the business must be fostered. You just grin and bear it.

Though working in this maze is often maddening, there is something about it that is very satisfying. When all the sketches and detail work on a job are finished and the decorators prepare to venture forth for the presentation, the whole office force usually gathers together to breathe their sighs of relief. Then everyone realizes how much fun it really has been, and the difficulties are laughed at and forgotten. You have to have iron nerves, and you have to be a hypocrite, but I doubt if there is any other work more fascinating.

4. LIBRARY WORK

Working in a library is both educational and interesting because the books provide not only knowledge when working with them but loads of fun and money on the side. To apply for a job the frightened applicant asks at the main desk and, then, at the librarian's request, goes to her office. She asks many irrelevant questions but she will usually hire the applicant providing there is room and her scholastic standing is high enough. Of course, she wouldn't have applied in the first place if books were apt to be a bore. The librarian gives her a piece of paper with the long, complicated "Dewey Decimal System" which, is the system of classifying non-fiction, such as: 100 Philosophy, 200 Religion, 700 Fine Arts, 800 Literature, 900 History, etc. This is to be learned by, for instance, the next Tuesday. She agrees to work from three to six on Tuesdays and Fridays @ twenty-five cents an hour.

With the "Dewey Decimal System" learned from a to z, the future librarian reports at the library at 2:50 P.M. Tuesday afternoon. She is instructed in the minor things such as: where

to hang her coat, where to mark down her hours, etc. For the first hour she is set to work putting away fiction, of course, she is kicking herself for being so consciensious about the "Dewey Decimal System." At the end of the first hour the poor sufferer is bored stiff but thinks of the twenty-five cents she has already earned. Just as she is getting to be automatic in finding the alphabet and the work is becoming easier, the dear old "boss" yanks her into the backroom where there are a "few books to paste up." The completely disillusioned employee is ready to drop when she sees stacks and stacks waiting patiently to be mended and pasted.

Pasting books is really a skillful job, plates go on non-fiction and stamps on fiction, the card pocket has to fit perfectly in the corner and the date due slip has to be pasted in the middle and exactly even with the top of the page. This continues for the rest of the afternoon. At six, the librarian page, as she is called, drags herself down the steps and home with the joyous thought of seventy-five cents to her credit.

Friday starts with putting away fiction and gradually goes into non-fiction which requires the "Dewey Decimal System" but this has been quite helpfully forgotten by now. Because the library is small, the 700's are upstairs but she doesn't always remember this so there are countless fruitless trips upstairs to find where the book belongs. Pasting is the schedule for the rest of the day. By now she has learned that payday is once a month which, of course, is rather difficult on the pocket book.

The next week is the same except she has learned to dust shelves and to remove whole sections because one book is out of place. By now, she dares to browse through books while she is putting them away. She is given a sample of library printing which she is supposed to copy. If this is mastered, she will be able to write reference cards, book cards, and authors names in books. She is also informed that her services will be needed at the "Children's Hour" Saturday morning. By this time, she has a friend who works the same times as she does and therefore, she, too, is needed Saturday morning. They can hardly restrain themselves from laughing during the story hour but other then this, it is a lot better than straightening shelves.

The rest of the weeks roll by in the same way except now they have learned to toss books from row to row to save time. This is done only when the librarian has a day off.

At last, the long awaited day arrives when the employee with

twelve dollars to her credit is taught to work at the desk. This is done with great care and everyone treating her as a perfect imbecile. Being a little too self-reliant, she doesn't listen too thoroughly when explanations are given so the first few books checked in and out are rather confusedly done. Pretty soon all the desk work is learned and now she can go back to dusting shelves.

She can work sometimes in the Junior Library which is a lot of fun for one afternoon but not for a steady diet. With the raise to thirty cents an hour, our ex-sufferer has a very benevolent feeling toward the library and will feel very sorry when she has to give up working there.

Library work is really very easy because the work is done sitting down except for putting away books which is interesting enough to remove fatigue. Everyone can be interested in library work because there is at least one kind of literature which everyone likes and since the work is all books, that type of book is seen quite often. It is part clerical work, teaching (Children's Hour), and manual labor thus giving the worker a well-rounded education which she will treasure all through school and college.

5. GETTING A GOVERNMENT JOB

As summer approaches, the minds of many college students are turning toward the thought of summer jobs. To many of them, working during the long vacation is just something to while away the time, but to others, a position, even for a few months, means the difference between being able to continue at school or having to abandon all thoughts of higher education because of financial stress. It is to these people that civil service offers an opportunity to earn a good wage while doing work that is fairly interesting.

The usual reaction to the mention of government service is one of hopelessness. Visions of endless examinations and long waiting lists serve to discourage many, but there is no need for this. Getting a government job depends mainly on the initiative of the person seeking it.

The first step in the process is to go to any office of the United States Employment Service and find out where civil service examinations are being given. You will, in most cases, be told that there are no positions open in any department. This is a standard remark designed to stave off applicants. Pay no attention to it,

but insist on taking the test. Every American citizen has the right to apply for a position with his government. Most college students will take the Clerk, Grade II exam. It is, in reality, an intelligence test, similar to those given upon entering college. It consists of reading comprehension, spelling, alphabetizing, and simple arithmetic. One hour is allowed for one hundred and fifty questions.

The tests are given in the morning and notices of rating are distributed in the afternoon of the same day, followed by an interview by some member of the staff who has attained the lofty position of Clerk, Grade III. The interview consists of greeting the interviewer with a bright smile, and then sitting quietly by his side while he makes several copies of your application. He will then inform you that your name will be placed on a waiting list and you will be notified in the event of an opening in some office.

If you are content to sit back and wait, years may pass before you hear of an opening. The next thing to do is to look up the address of all the government agencies in your city and make the rounds of their personnel offices. You should make it clear to the head of personnel that you are interested in a short term appointment (civil service appointments run for three months, six months, or a year, at the end of which they must be renewed by the head of department), and that you fully intend to return to school at the end of it. Personnel administrators are wary of people who enter an office on short term appointments and manage to stay for years. During the summer all offices are short-handed because most workers take their vacations during July and August. Almost every agency has three or four extra workers to fill the gaps made by employees on summer leave.

If you present your case well and there is any opening at all, red tape will be cut quickly and efficiently, and you will be put to work doing filing or other simple clerical work that is restricted to grade two clerks. The base pay of civil service workers has been raised, and with overtime pay, you should average about forty-two dollars a week from which taxes and old-age pension will be deducted. Most of this money will be refunded at the end of your appointment.

If you are serious about a summer job and refuse to be intimidated by hard-hearted officials, there is no reason why you can't be the one to get that summer job in a government office.

Apply as early as possible and keep trying. Someone is going to get it. It might just as well be you.

6. CAPE ANN: VACATION LAND WITH A HISTORY

As far back in my past as I remember, from two to twenty two, my life has been interwoven with the grandeur of the ocean, historic Gloucester and picturesque Rockport. Having spent at least three out of every twelve months of the years on beautiful Long Beach, is it any wonder that I should feel so much at home in this section of our great country? Gloucester is shrouded in a history all and uniquely it's own, a separate and unique setting for the important part it has played in the personality of New England. Next to Boston, Gloucester and it's summer resorts stands out in our minds and hearts for its individuality. What other seaport of it's comparitive small size is as significant and well known as this one? The city could in no way be described as pretty, but it has tradition and personality, however, which more than surpasses the newness and prettyness of small cities scattered all over the territory of New England.

The adequate and picturesque harbor which Gloucester has boasted of for centuries has been portrayed somewhat successfully by the many brilliant students of art, from all points of the compass, each eager to catch the spirit and living warmth that lies in it's tradition.

Of the many beaches that the North and South shores boast, there is one that seems to me, and to those who go there as well, the best, that is namely Long Beach. Situated half way between Gloucester and Rockport on the east side of Cape Ann, this magnificent expanse of white sandy beach runs for a full mile in a shape similar to the shape of a cresant moon. On either end of the beach are huge promintories of rocks jutting out into the great Atlantic ocean that help break up the huge waves which Long Beach receives when Northeast storms are in full swing.

From the beach can be seen Thatcher's Island which was the last of the seven twin lights to be eliminated all of which had been on the Atlantic Coast. After purchasing the island in 1771 from the family and heirs of Anthony Thatcher who had been shipwrecked there in the great hurricane of 1635 the first lighthouse was built. This served as a welcome sight to all mariners at sea until 1860 when two lighthouse towers were erected each of them one hundred and twenty four feet in height, then in

1932 the Northern Thatcher's Island Light was discontinued and a motor driven flash controller was installed in the south-eastern tower. The new system was a group of five white flashes every twenty seconds with a candle power of 160,000.

Also from Long Beach can be seen another island. Milk Island, as it is called. It was owned formerly by a family named Knight. For years it was a fisherman's haven until it's only house was burned down completely by a grass fire. In 1925 the Knight's gave the island to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts with the provision that it be made a sanctuary for birds, trespassing is strictly forbidden for the sea gulls build their nests and raise their young their.

Long Beach itself is a fairly new and recent summer resort, the first cottages being built between 1895 and 1900, and today it is full to overflowing with two rows of cottages numbering between 150 and 175 cottages. Although only a few of the original founding families are left, Long Beach is carried on in it's high ideals and good neighbor policy by the sons and daughters of the founding fathers.

Long Beach boasts proudly of having the most beach parties, bonfires and sport activities of any of the resorts of the entire North Shore, also it has a soft ball team that knows not defeat. Since most of the boys were back again this past summer seemed like a reunion. Many good times were enjoyed. Every Saturday and Sunday soft ball games were held between the Veterans and the teen agers or Father and Son games. Fishing contests, tennis matches, horse shoes and even foot ball in the soft sand is a weekly occurence in which everyone takes a very interested part in these activities. Often in the evenings frankfurt roasts and song fests around a huge and blazing bonfire climax the ideal vacation day.

7. BASS FISHING

From Maine to California all states have one temperamental and tough citizen in common, so gather up your plugs and get your fishing tackle in order for you are it seems going to catch a bass for dinner.

Catching bass sounds easy, but unless the bass strikes the lure and holds on, the job is a hard rather than an easy one. Since the bass is a fussy fish, it is necessary to use the trial and error method. One day he may prefer a small frog, another day, a grass hopper, an angle worm, or even the looks of a plug. One

thing, however, can be relied on, that is, that the bass will not strike unless the bait is alive or unless it appears to be alive.

First, cast a surface plug and reel it back in short jerks or any other motion that will make the bait appear alive to the fish. Usually a bass prefers a slow plug. It all depends on the bass and his mood. If the bass does not strike after a few tries with a slow surface plug, try a fast surface plug or an underwater plug. Fishing for bass takes patience as well as skill, but the pleasure would soon cease if strikes come to often.

Now try the fat angle worm, a tempting snack to any fish. More bass are caught on angle worms than with any other live bait since it is the most widely and commonly used. The advantage of the live bait is that the fish will swallow it; instead of spitting it out as he would a plug. Cast again and let the line lie motionless. If a bass is in the vicinity, he will be attracted by the splash of the bait and will come to investigate. After a few seconds give the line a slight jerk. He cannot resist the lure any longer and the fight is on. The chance has come to test your skill against a bass fighting for his life. A mistake cannot be made now. Every move must be made at exactly the right second, no more and no less. Tighten the line just a little to set the hooks in deeper. Then the bass takes to the air and tries to throw the hook. Try to counteract this by taking the pressure off the line and letting him have his way. A tight line out of the water gives a bass something to work against; and more often than not, he will throw the hook. Under water a tight line that will make him work and tire him out should be used. It is necessary to be careful, though, as too much pressure will tear the hook from his mouth, only experience will tell how tight the line should be.

The battle is short but hard and furious. It does not take very long to land a bass, but it does take skill. Everything happens so fast that on this account it is hard to remain calm. The tendency is to pull steadily and get the fish into the boat as soon as is possible, but to do this might mean the according loss of the fish. The inexperienced man gets excited and will not let the line out when the fish goes into the air, he feels that the more line he lets out the further away the fish gets. This is true as far as distance is concerned; but if he does not let up on the pressure, the fish will throw the line and be completly away. Play smart, be careful, and be calm if you want fresh bass on the dinner table.

8. GLAMOUR FOR SALE

It isn't very big when you look at it from the street, squeezed in between a Bell Shop on one side and a restaurant, refuge for teen-agers, on the other. The big red neon sign, however, proudly proclaims to the shoppers the whereabouts of Carroll's Cosmetic Shoppe with two "p's" and an "e". The show windows on either side of the entrance give tempting promises of the treasures to be found within. Very rarely does a woman stop to glance over the display and then pass on to another store. Some magnetic force seems to draw her in, for no woman is immune to beauty.

Inside there are innumerable things to interest the prospective buyer. On the right are men's shaving sets, designed for Christmas gifts, shampoos, razor blades, and other necessary articles. Further down, still on the right, is a display of perfumed soaps in all shapes, sizes, and colors. At the extreme end comes an entire section devoted to bath powder, talc, and cologne. The names alone are enough to make any one want to try them—Black Magic, Shangri-La, Taboo, Mountain Heather, Tweed, Kiss and Tell. Each promises an allure far beyond the wildest hopes. At the other side of the store is the perfume and the make-up bar. At the perfume bar tiny dram bottles are filled from larger, more elaborate ones, each reflected several times in mirrors effectively placed. Most of the customers would gasp if they knew that this small section of the store itself is worth several thousand dollars. At the make-up bar anything and everything is sold to "make Madame beautiful." Lipsticks come in any brand and color with nail polish to match. Beauty creams, powder, rouge, astringents, wrinkle-removers, false eyelashes, hair tints and endless preparations gaze placidly down from their shelves.

From nine to five-thirty every day the store is in a constant turmoil but always with perfect propriety—never rowdy or out-of-hand. The girls, each a walking advertisement of her business, never allow themselves to become ruffled or impatient. If the store, because of shortages of metals, boxes and other products is not able to comply with the customer's desires for metal lipstick tubes, boxed Christmas gifts, or certain blends of perfumes, immediately something similar is suggested in an effort to satisfy. Confronted with a good salesperson the poor customer never has a chance. She never before suspected that

she was without so many necessities. In fact she begins to wonder how she was able to exist.

After five-thirty the scene changes abruptly. Everyone relaxes and becomes human again. Laughter peals out as the girls get ready to go home. The manager beams down on everyone and urges her to try a dash of that new perfume for her date tonight. At last the store is dark and quiet except for the mice racing overhead in the stockroom. How do I know all these things? I spent the Christmas season there as "a walking advertisement" myself.

9. TONGUE IN HIS CHEEK

The familiar NBC chimes, the words "this is WBZ, Boston," then the magic charm of a convincing commercial.[1]

This is radio's favorite son, the announcer, the soft-voiced rascal who says your hands can have that Ivory look in just five days. The same friendly fellow who's nice enough to make sure there's a Ford in your future and at least two pairs of pants with your next suit. The man who on Monday relates the cleaning virtues of "new, wonderful Dreft—not a soap, ladies." The Tuesday household hint artist who extols the glories of the good old bar of soap. The man who charms you into buying both on Wednesday. The persuasive friend who does all your marketing and then is nice enough to let you think you did it all by yourself.

His is an atomic tongue, if such a tongue is to be had. But behind this tongue is more than talk; behind this tongue are years of experience, years of taught technique, years of glamourless, rugged work. These are the years of tongues in training.

The long, busy climb, the crowded climb, usually begins at a small 250-watt station, far from metropolitan civilization. Here the aspiring announcer voices everything from kiddies' comic condensations early Sunday mornings to juke box late Saturday nights. Here he tries his tongue at anything from agricultural advising to food forums. Here he is experience's pupil alone.

Here too, happy by compulsion, he begins his day at six o'clock, wearing a friendly verbal smile while playing records for people who invariably forget to get up to hear them. His later disc shows, however, require more than pleasant patter. Their tunes must be timed, their continuity written, their com-

[1] Intentional fragment, here, and in the second and last paragraphs.

mercial copy well rehearsed. And the odds are ten to one that the spieler does it all.

Perhaps he tries his tongue on a fifteen-minute newscast. In small stations of this size the announcer is his own news editor and must compile copy from the wire services, edit it, check its pronunciation. In short, he must perform single-handed the functions of a newspaper's city desk and infinitely more. His other shows, sidewalk interviews, sports descriptives and the like, require the same behind-the-scenes labor.

But all this time, slowly and slyly, his atomic tongue begins to take shape. It learns how soft softness is, how hard hardness is, how clear clearness is. It learns that "slow" is "s-l-o-w" and "quick" much quicker. It learns to convince by simplicity of speech and when it has learned all the 250-watter has to teach, it moves up the crowded climb.

His decals are "this is WFEA, Manchester," "this is WCSH, Portland," "this is WBZ, Boston," "this is WHN, New York." And he has more time for words now; he doesn't have to write his own continuity any more or time his music or edit his news. His convincing, soft, but forceful style has earned him this position. His hours are shorter now and his duties less varied. But he still wants to move up.

And then the break comes—the big time invites him into its fold. No names in lights, no playbills, no critics' crafty praise or condemnation. Just the homes of millions of people—homes to invade with a soft, gentle tongue, a convincing tongue, a persuasive, cunning tongue disguised in simplicity. A helping tongue, a soothing tongue, an experienced tongue. A tongue that has been trained in a technique of which it never talks but by which it earns its bread, butter and bed "with a Ford in its future—your Ford."

And it's all done with a tongue in his cheek.

CHAPTER NINE

THE RESEARCH PAPER

THE RESEARCH PAPER is the long paper which, unlike the informal theme, is based on the student's reading and study, and on data systematically assembled for this paper. It is usually at least 2000 words long. The purpose of assigning it in freshman English courses is to give students training in using the library, in gathering material, in taking efficient notes, in using footnotes, and especially in organizing and writing a composition of some length. Writing a long paper is different from writing several short ones which total the same number of words. Since the material is more complex, the long paper presents greater problems of organization, logical arrangement of material, transition between sections, and clear presentation. A source paper rather than an informal essay is usually assigned to give practice in handling long papers, because the substance is supplied by the sources—students need not create it—and because the training in using the sources and giving credit to them in footnotes may be as valuable as the training in writing. All in all, work on the research paper teaches skills which students will need when they write term papers in college, and which many of them will use later when they prepare reports, graduate papers and theses, articles, and even speeches.

To students unfamiliar with the technique of research,

some of the methods outlined in this chapter, particularly methods of taking and labeling notes, may seem unnecessarily laborious and involved. Students who have had experience with investigative papers realize, however, that these methods are used because they are efficient; they simplify the organization and writing of the paper, and insure its accuracy. To those who may not see, as they begin work on the research project, the value of following the instructions given in this chapter, we can only say that the methods recommended here are tested methods, and that the reasons for using them will become apparent as work on the paper proceeds.

Requirements for the completed research paper differ slightly in different institutions, but most instructors expect it to have these parts:

A title page, that is, a page blank except for the title of the paper and the usual endorsement.

A preface which states precisely the purpose and scope of the paper, makes any necessary acknowledgments of help or advice received, and comments on the type of reader for whom the paper is written. In general, the research paper should be written for the intelligent layman who has no special knowledge about the subject of the paper; if the writer needs to assume some special knowledge, he should make this clear. The preface may be only a paragraph, or it may be several pages long. The research paper itself will be impersonal, but the preface may be personal; it may, if the writer wishes, tell his reasons for investigating this subject. If he has been forced to limit his topic in some unusual way, or to omit some phase of it which a reader might expect to find included, the limitation or omission should be explained in the preface. Since the preface is, for the instructor, one standard by which to judge the paper, the student should take particular care to state precisely the purpose and scope of his work.

An outline which represents fully and accurately the contents of the paper. This is a formal outline. Correct outline form is discussed in Appendix A.

The text of the paper, typed, with numbered pages, and footnotes in correct form. The paper is written in the appropriate level, which for nearly all research subjects is formal English.

A bibliography, in which all books and articles used in writing the paper are listed alphabetically, according to the author's last name.

An appendix, if the paper needs one. The appendix is the place for long quotations, tables of statistics, maps, and drawings, which are useful for reference but too bulky to include in the text of the paper.

It will be apparent that the research paper is a large project —total work time may amount to sixty hours or more; and the actual writing is only one of the final stages. The work preliminary to writing—choosing the subject, assembling a bibliography, taking notes, and organizing the notes—will occupy something like three-fourths of the time allotted to the whole paper.

I. CHOOSING THE SUBJECT

In choosing a subject, the student should be guided first by his own interest and curiosity. The research paper is, as we have said, a large project; it involves a great deal of work; it is important, therefore, that the student investigate a subject which will be genuinely interesting to him.

Choosing a topic about which one already has considerable information is usually unwise. Since the research paper must be carefully documented—that is, since the sources of information must be given in footnotes—the student who writes on a subject he already knows must go through the boring procedure of reading and taking notes on material already familiar to him, to be sure of accurate detail and of adequate documentation. More important, he will miss the satisfaction of acquiring new information, of exploring a new field of knowledge. The wise student, therefore, chooses a

field beyond the bounds or on the fringes of his present knowledge: some subject he has run across in his reading, or has heard mentioned in one of his courses; of which he has thought "I'd like to know more about that sometime"; but which he might not find time to investigate without the stimulus of this assignment.

With his subject tentatively selected, or with two or three interesting topics in mind, the writer should at once take the second step in choosing his subject: he should look in the card catalogue in the library, in reference books, and in the various magazine indexes to be sure there is enough printed material available for a substantial research paper. He should not be easily discouraged; material can be found on almost any topic if one looks hard enough and long enough. But the material is not always available in the library or libraries to which the student has access. He should be *sure* that he will be able to find the sources of information he needs *before* he begins intensive work on the paper.

A third step in choosing the subject is limiting it to a topic which can be adequately handled in 2000 or 3000 words. Topics like The Negro Problem, Russia, The History of Medicine, the Napoleonic Wars, The Modern Novel, are obviously not appropriate for a student paper; a volume or volumes would be needed to treat any one of them adequately. Good papers can, however, be written on certain phases of these immense subjects. The Economic Status of Negroes in the South since World War II, The Background of the Russian Revolution, Early Surgery, The Battle of Waterloo, The Novels of Ernest Hemingway—these are only a few of the suitably limited subjects which might be chosen from the broader fields. Frequently a student needs to read one or two general accounts (in encyclopedias, for example) before he decides what phase of a broad subject would be most interesting to him and most appropriate for a paper of this length. He should make his limitation as soon as possible,

before he wastes valuable time in taking notes on material which will be outside the scope of his final topic.

Some subjects on which successful research papers have been written are listed below. They represent a variety of interests, and may suggest topics of interest to the reader. Most of them illustrate, too, a reasonable limitation of a wide field.

Religious Rites of the Inca Indians
Pagan Influences on Christianity
The Teachings of Buddha
The Teachings of Confucius
West Indian Voodoo
Myths of the American Indians
The Theory and Practice of Emperor Worship
Symbolism in Oriental Rugs
The Early History of Stained Glass
Cro-Magnon Man
The Early History of Jazz
The Music of Shostakovitch
Socialized Medicine
City Manager Government: Plan E
The Cooperative Movement in Great Britain
The Novels of Thomas Wolfe
Attitudes Toward War in Novels of World War I and World War II
Fashions as a Reflection of Social Conditions
Recent Developments in Plastic Surgery and Prosthetics
The Early History of Anesthesia
Pentothal Sodium as a General Anesthesia
Hypnosis in Medicine
Viking Explorations on American Shores
Sherman's March through Georgia
The Salem Witchcraft Trials
The Sacco-Vanzetti Case
The Scopes Trial
Jet Propulsion
The Development of Television
The History of the Ku Klux Klan since World War I
The Life of the Troubadours

II. MAKING THE BIBLIOGRAPHY

The work of making the bibliography, that is, the formal list of books and articles on which the paper is based, begins before the subject of the paper is finally selected, and continues, as the writer discovers new sources, until the paper is completed. A substantial working bibliography should, however, be assembled *before* the student begins to take notes. Some of the items in this preliminary bibliography may prove disappointing when he examines them; some of them he may not be able to find; but his bibliography will give him an initial survey of the field and of the work before him. The bibliography should be kept in standard form on 3 by 5-inch bibliography cards; a separate card should be used for each book or article.

This system of bibliography cards has been adopted because it is convenient. In the finished bibliography at the end of the research paper, all sources used in writing the paper are listed alphabetically according to the last name of the author (or, if no author is mentioned, according to the first important word in the title); author, work, and place and date of publication are given in this form:

Hayakawa, S. I., Language in Action, New York, 1941.

Lee, Irving J., "General Semantics and Public Speaking," Quarterly Journal of Speech, XXVI (December, 1940), 594-601.

Periods instead of commas may be used to separate the three main parts of the entry. Also the name of the publisher is often given between the place of publication and the date of publication:

Hayakawa, S. I., Language in Action, New York, Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1941.

[*Or*]

Hayakawa, S. I. Language in Action. New York, Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1941.

Except for these small variations, the bibliographical form is standardized; the student will save time, therefore, if, from the beginning, he records his bibliographical entries in this standard form. Each of his bibliography cards should give, in this order:

1. The author's name, with his last name first.
2. The title of the work. (Names of books, magazines and newspapers are underlined to represent italics; names of articles are put in quotation marks.)
3. The facts of publication. (For a book, place and date of publication, sometimes publisher, are given; for an article, the magazine, year, volume, and pages covered by this article.)
4. The library call number (for ease in locating the book later).

Notes to be used in the actual writing of the research paper are not taken on bibliography cards. It is often useful, however, as work on the paper proceeds, to make on these cards brief notations on the availability of the book or on its value.

When the time comes to make the final bibliography for his paper, the student who has taken pains with his bibliography cards will be well paid for his effort. He can easily alphabetize his cards according to the first word on each one; all the necessary data will be there, and in the correct form and order; his bibliography can simply be typed from his cards.

A bibliography is gathered from three principal sources: (1) the card catalogue in the library; (2) periodical indexes; (3) encyclopedias and reference books.

1. The card catalogue is an alphabetical file which lists all books in the library by author, by title, and by subject. It also gives information about the date, the place of publica-

tion, and the size of the book; indicates the content; and supplies the library call number which enables the user of the library to locate the book on the shelves. Ordinarily the student starting work on a research paper will not know the authors and titles of books which might be useful to him. He will, therefore, look up in the card catalogue the subject of his paper, and related subjects, and take down on his own cards information about the books he finds listed.

A subject card in the library card catalogue has a heading like this:

HV 6080 .A3 PSYCHOLOGY, PATHOLOGICAL

Abrahamsen, David, 1903—

Crime and the human mind, by David Abrahamsen . . . New York, Columbia university press, 1944

The heading, PSYCHOLOGY, PATHOLOGICAL, it should be noted, is not the title of the book, but the subject which the book is about. The student making his own card for the book will omit some of the data given on the library card, and record only what he needs for his own final bibliography and for his convenience in locating the book. His bibliography card for this book should be in this form:

Abrahamsen, David, Crime and the Human Mind, New York, Columbia University Press, 1944

HV
6080
.A3

The author, title, and facts of publication appear exactly as they will appear in the finished bibliography at the end of his paper. The library call number is recorded so that he can later find the book without again consulting the card catalogue. If he is using more than one library, he should write the name of the library beside the call number, also to save trouble when, sometime later, he wants to locate the book.

2. The periodical indexes list, usually by author and subject, in one alphabet, the contents of current journals and magazines. They are an excellent source for bibliography, particularly for up-to-date material. The most generally useful index is *The Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature,* which indexes most of the important American periodicals and some foreign publications. It is published twice a month (except in July and August), and is cumulated in large volumes. Abbreviations used in the entries are explained at the beginning of each issue; and a check-list of the periodicals owned by his library enables the student to see easily what articles he will be able to find.

Entries in *The Reader's Guide* (and in other indexes) are in this form:

COAL industry
United States
Better prospects for coal peace.
il U S News 22:32–3 My 16 '47
Blue ribbon railroads. il tab
Bsns W p70–2+ My 24 '47
Coal without strikes. S Raushenbush.
Harper 194:492–9 Je '47

In noting the references on his bibliography cards, the student should translate these abbreviated entries into the form correct for his final bibliography. His card for the last entry would read:

Raushenbush, S., "Coal Without Strikes,"
Harper's, vol. 194, June, 1947, pp. 492-9

In addition to *The Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature* (1900 to date), students should be familiar with the following useful indexes:

Agricultural Index, 1916 to date.
Annual Magazine Subject-Index, 1908 to date.
Art Index, 1929 to date.
Cumulative Book Index, 1928 to date. (Indexes all books published in the English language.)
Document Catalogue. (Government publications from 1893 to 1934.)
Dramatic Index, 1909 to date.
Education Index, 1929 to date.
Engineering Index, 1884 to date.
Essay and General Literature Index, 1900 to date. (Analyzes and indexes parts of books, which would not be listed in the card catalogue.)
Index to Legal Periodicals, 1908 to date.
Industrial Arts Index, 1913 to date. (Indexes material on business, finance, engineering, applied science.)
International Catalogue of Scientific Literature, 1902 to date.
International Index to Periodicals, 1907 to date.
New York Times Index. (Indexes current events from 1913 to date.)
Poole's Index to Periodical Literature, 1802–1906.
Psychological Index, 1894 to date.
Public Affairs Information Service, 1915 to date.
Quarterly Cumulative Index Medicus, 1927 to date. (Indexes medical books, journals, and articles.)
Writings on American History, 1906 to date.

3. We have said that reading an account in an encyclopedia, for a general view of the research subject, is often a good beginning of work on the paper. Standard encyclopedias are very useful, too, as bibliographical aids. They usually list, at the end of an article, a well-selected bibliography for further reading in the field. In addition to the *Encyclopædia Britannica* and *Encyclopedia Americana,* students should be familiar with special encyclopedias and reference works which give more detailed information, and specialized bibliogra-

phies, in particular fields. Some of the most useful of these works are:

Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, 1930–35.
McLaughlin and Hart's *Cyclopedia of American Government,* 1914.
Dictionary of American History, 1940.
Palgrave's *Dictionary of Political Economy,* 1923–26.
Bailey's *Cyclopedia of American Agriculture,* 1907–09.
Grove's *Dictionary of Music and Musicians,* 1927–28.
Thorpe's *Dictionary of Applied Chemistry,* 1922–27, and 1934–35.
Munn's *Encyclopedia of Banking and Finance,* 1937.
Bryan's *Dictionary of Painters and Engravers,* 1903–05.
Baldwin's *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology,* 1928.
Hastings' *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics,* 1908–28.
Catholic Encyclopedia, 1907–22.
The *Columbia Encyclopedia,* 1935–42.
Jewish Encyclopedia, 1925.
Cambridge Ancient History, 1923–34.
Cambridge Medieval History, 1911–32.
Cambridge Modern History, 1926.
Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature, 1940.
Mudge's *Guide to Reference Books,* 1936.

Yearbooks, like *The American Yearbook,* the *Statesmen's Yearbook, Commerce Yearbook, The World Almanac,* and the annual supplements to encyclopedias, are excellent sources for recent facts and statistics. For biographical material, the student should consult such works as the *Dictionary of National Biography* (British), the *Dictionary of American Biography, Who's Who, Who's Who in America, American Men of Science, Living Authors, Authors Today and Yesterday, Twentieth Century Authors, Contemporary American Authors,* and *Current Biography.*

An hour or two spent browsing in the reference room of the library, locating and examining the various indexes and reference works, is time well spent. Work on the research paper would be valuable if it taught students only this: how

to use a library, how to find material on any subject which they may need to investigate.

III. TAKING NOTES

In taking notes on the material he reads for his research paper, the student should bear in mind two things: first, that his paper will be written from these notes, after he has read a great deal of material, and after particular references have become blurred with others and are no longer fresh and clear in his mind; second, that he will be required to footnote his material, giving the source, including the exact page, from which he has taken his information. His notes, therefore, must be full enough to recall the material; they must accurately record its source; they must also be taken, and labeled, in such a way that they can easily be arranged in convenient order for the writing of the paper.

Scholars have worked out an efficient system for noting, filing, and organizing material. All notes are taken on cards, 3 by 5, 4 by 6, or 5 by 8 inches. (Students usually find 4 by 6-inch cards the most convenient size.) Each note card carries the exact source from which the material on the card is taken. Each card carries a heading which describes its content and shows where this material fits in the outline of the paper. The material on each card concerns only one subdivision of the paper. Each note card also shows clearly whether the material is quoted from the source, or is summarized.

Below are two sample note cards. The first, a note for a research paper on the migration of birds, is an example of summary; the second, for a paper on the philosophy of Thomas Hardy, shows by its form that it is an exact quotation. In general, very few notes should be quotations. Sometimes, of course, it is important to quote exactly in the research paper the opinion of one authority on a controversial subject, or the wording of an historical document; sometimes an idea is so strikingly expressed that one wishes to use the

Whitlock, Migration of Birds Cold

110 cold by itself not sufficient direct influence on majority of species to leave home to which they are devotedly attached

111 with increasing cold, daily migrations in search of food have to be prolonged to distance where return during daylight is impossible

SUMMARY NOTES

Cecil, Hardy Religion
223

"He found it impossible to believe the Christian hope. . . . But he can only be respected for the honesty which compelled him to accept a philosophy of the universe so repugnant to the deepest instincts of his heart. And still more must he be honored for that elevation of soul which enabled him to maintain the Christian temper without the help of the Christian consolation."

QUOTATION

perfectly turned sentence or phrase. In such cases, the material should be copied accurately on the note card and clearly enclosed in quotation marks. But most material is not worth full quotation; and an acceptable research paper is never a series of quotations or near-quotations. Although the material is taken from other authors, the language, as well as the organization, should be the writer's own. It is wise, therefore, as well as economical, to use the summary note form in most of one's note-taking. Digesting the material as one reads, and condensing it in one's own words will prevent later worry about staying too close to the wording of the sources and slipping, perhaps unconsciously, into plagiarism in the research paper.

It is impossible to overemphasize the importance of labeling each note card, not only with its exact source, but with a heading ("Cold" and "Religion" on the cards above) which describes the material on the card and also represents a section of the paper. In order to do this labeling, the student must have in mind a tentative outline of his paper, or at least an idea of its main divisions. Many instructors require a tentative written outline early in the research project, to facilitate this valuable labeling of note cards. Whether or not the outline is required, it should be made early, on the basis of one or two general accounts of his subject (encyclopedia accounts, for example) which the student reads before he begins seriously to take notes. The labels on his early note cards may be rather general; as he learns more about his subject, and as his outline with its various subdivisions takes shape, the labels can be increasingly specific.

The value of this labeling becomes most apparent when the student has finished gathering material and is preparing to write his paper. He can, without reading all the material on his cards, pull out and put into separate piles all those cards having the same heading; he then arranges the piles in the best order for discussion in the paper; he is ready to begin writing from notes in logical sequence, with no necessity of

leafing through a notebook, or scanning large sheets of paper for particular bits of material which he remembers having somewhere. This flexibility of the note cards—the fact that they can be shuffled and arranged—is the principal reason for using them; but much of their value is lost unless each card is complete with source and heading.

Worth re-emphasizing, too, is the importance of putting on any one card *only* material which concerns *one subdivision* of the paper. If one reads, for example, an article on the Lincoln-Douglas debates, and wishes to make from it two brief notes—one on the first debate, another on the effects of the debates—it is a temptation to put the two short notes on one card. A little reflection will show, however, that those two pieces of material belong in different parts of the paper; a single card can be in only one place in a pile of note cards; the two notes should, therefore, be put on different cards, each with its informative label. It is more trouble, of course, to make out two cards; it is more trouble in general to take careful notes than it is to take slipshod ones. But the writer is well repaid for his effort by the ease with which a paper can be written from accurate, intelligible, systematic notes.

As he reads and takes notes, the student should make some evaluation of his sources. Obviously sources are not of equal worth. They may even contradict one another. How is the student, not himself a specialist in the field, to judge the authority of what he reads? The reputation of the author is often a guide; his qualifications as an expert can sometimes be checked in the biographical dictionaries; his work may be referred to with respect or criticized adversely by other writers in the field, so that an estimate of him gradually emerges from other sources. The publication in which an article appears should be considered in evaluating it: an article in a reputable magazine is more to be trusted than a feature story in the Sunday newspaper; an article from a paper or magazine with a definite political slant should be read with that slant in mind. The style and tone of a book or article are not infallible

measures of its soundness; but, generally speaking, a work which is documented either with footnotes or with sources introduced into the text is more reliable than a popular, undocumented account; a novelized biography, for example, may be lively and interesting and generally accurate, but for reliable facts about the subject one would consult a more scholarly work. Finally, the date of the book or article is relevant in evaluating it. The most recent work is not invariably the best, but it has the benefit of previous scholarship; and in some fields, science and technology particularly, sources are quickly outdated. The student should be sure that he has seen the most recent material on his subject, and that any older material which he uses checks with the latest data.

IV. WRITING AND FOOTNOTING THE PAPER

When the student feels that he has gathered enough material for his paper, he is ready for two last preliminaries to the actual writing of the first draft. First, he should thoughtfully revise the outline which has been growing and changing as he has taken notes and thought about his paper. This outline may be changed still further during the writing of the paper; that is, the writer may find, when he gets into the material, that certain parts of it need to be rearranged for better development, coherence, or emphasis. But a full outline, which shows the material in logical sequence and organization, is necessary for the second step toward writing.

This second step consists of arranging the note cards in sequence, following the order of the outline. If the student has labeled his cards carefully, it will not be necessary, as we have said before, to read all of the notes, but only to look at the headings, which will correspond, roughly at least, to the headings and subheadings in the outline. With his note cards arranged in this logical sequence, and with his outline before him, the student is ready to write.

Paragraph by paragraph, writing the research paper is

much like writing any theme. But the material is so much more complex than it is in a short paper that, as we have said, it presents special problems. The writer, in addition to having the organization of his paper clearly in mind, must take special care to keep that organization clear to the reader by means of skillful transitions between paragraphs and sections of the paper, and by means of occasional summary statements or paragraphs which pull together the preceding material and lead into the next phase of the development. He must be sure that he is explaining, fully enough for a general audience, the terms, processes, or events which have by now become thoroughly familiar to him. And he has a special problem, of course, in handling the footnotes in a research paper.

There are two kinds of footnotes: those which give additional information about a point which cannot be developed easily or coherently in the text of the paper, and those which give exact references to sources. Most of the footnotes in a student research paper will be of the second type. These footnotes are used in a paper of this kind for three reasons. First, they observe a code of scholarship: they give credit where credit is due; they honestly acknowledge the debt of the writer to other writers whose information and ideas he has used. Second, the footnotes give support to what would otherwise be the writer's unsupported, and perhaps questionable, word: they say in effect to the reader, "This is not a mere fancy of mine; So-and-so, an authority in the field, has this idea." Third, the footnotes give the exact source of the information so that the interested reader can readily find the reference if he wishes to check it or to read further on a particular point.

Reference footnotes, in short, are evidence of the honesty the soundness, and the exactness of the paper. They are used, therefore, not simply to acknowledge direct quotations, but to acknowledge and substantiate all borrowed ideas, opinions, and conclusions, and all factual information which the writer has received from his reading and which is not common

knowledge. Just what constitutes common knowledge, what facts are so generally accepted that they need no footnote, is sometimes hard to decide. Having too few footnote references is, however, decidedly a more serious fault than having too many. "When in doubt, footnote" is a good safe rule.

A footnote number is used *at the end* of a borrowed passage, and is raised slightly above the typed line. The footnote itself, preceded by this number, is commonly set at the bottom of the page. Footnotes are numbered from 1 on each page, or, preferably, they are numbered continuously from the beginning to the end of the paper. Typical student research papers have at least three or four footnotes to a typed page. In good research papers the footnote references on each page are varied; they show that the student has brought together, in his own synthesis, material from different sources.

The *first* footnote reference to a book or article is a full reference, including the author's full name (with first name first) and complete bibliographical information. Below are examples of first footnote references, to a book and to an article:

[1]Charles R. Adams, Intravenous Anesthesia (New York, Paul B. Hoeber, Inc., 1944), p.12.

[2]H. M. Ausherman, "Anesthesia by Vein," Hygeia, XXII (April, 1944), 261.

Later footnote references to the same source are simplified; they may be reduced to the author's last name and the page number, or they may use the author's last name with a shortened form of a long title, or with the abbreviation *op. cit.* (from the Latin *opere citato* meaning "in the work cited"), which takes the place of the title:

[3]Adams, p.15.

[*Or*]

[3]Adams, op. cit., p.15.

If more than one book by the same author is used in the paper, footnotes must give at least short forms of the titles to make the references clear.

Ibid. (an abbreviation of the Latin *ibidem,* "in the same place") is used to refer to the source named in the immediately preceding footnote:

[4]Howard R. Raper, Men Against Pain (New York, Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1945), p.235.

[5]Ibid., p.236.

Besides *op. cit.* and *ibid.,* a number of conventional abbreviations and symbols are used in footnotes. The most common are listed below. The student may not use all of them in his research paper, but he should know their meanings in order to understand their use by other writers.

ch., chs. *or* chap., chaps.—chapter, chapters
cf. (Latin *confer*)—compare. The English *see* is now more often used.
ed.—edition *or* edited by
et al. (Latin *et alii*)—and others
f., ff.—following. P. 2 f. means page 2 and the page following; p. 2 ff. means page 2 and the pages following.
l., ll.—line, lines.
n.—note
n.d.—no date
p., pp.—page, pages
passim—here and there. This symbol is useful when material is condensed from a number of pages. The reference "pp. 79–90 *passim*" means that here and there, scattered through the pages, the material was found. *Passim* should not be used when a more exact citation is possible.
vol., vols.—volume, volumes. When a reference requires both volume number and page number, the symbols for volume and page are omitted: *Encyclopædia Britannica,* X, 480.

In writing the first draft of his paper, the student will probably waste time and divert his attention from the pres-

entation of his material if he stops to write footnotes in correct form for his finished paper. It is important, however, to make a record of footnotes as one writes the first draft; the sources are on the note cards with the material; it is obviously a waste of time and effort to write the paper without footnotes and then to go through the cards a second time to find and write down the sources. An easy and efficient way of keeping track of footnotes in the first draft is to put a very brief notation—usually author and page will do—in parentheses where the footnote number will be in the final copy. Many students find it useful to underline this embryonic footnote in red or blue pencil, or to put it in red or blue parentheses, so that it stands out from the text of the paper. Later, this brief notation can be expanded into correct footnote form, dropped to the bottom of the page, and given its proper number. Keeping track of sources in the first draft, like making careful bibliography and note cards, will save trouble in the long run, and ensure accurate documentation of the paper.

V. REVISING AND COMPLETING THE PAPER

Most instructors, before they read and judge a research paper, examine its outline, bibliography, and footnotes. This initial survey is partially a check on correct form, but it is more than that. The outline represents the scope and organization of the paper; the bibliography gives some indication of the amount of reading done and the value of the sources which the student has found and used; the footnotes show to some extent how well he has drawn together materials from different sources and integrated them into a paper which, though composed of borrowed data, is genuinely his own. In a good research paper, the outline, bibliography, and footnotes are in proper form; also, and more important, they give initial evidence of these qualities in the paper: logical organization, adequate coverage of the subject, sufficient

manufacture of implements.[4] These eras are also characterized by their relation to the various phases of glacial development.[5]

The term Eolithic has been assigned to the time that elapsed between man's picking up of stones with an intelligent purpose and the acquisition of sufficient knowledge to shape them into the crudest forms of eoliths.[6] It is very doubtful whether or not certain flint nodules were actually human artifacts or merely the products of natural forces.[7] During the first and greater part of the Eolithic age, sticks and stones were awkwardly grasped by hands still accustomed to the boughs of trees.[8] These natural materials were used quite as they were found, with no thought of improving them to facilitate usage.[9] Two schools of thought exist concerning this epoch. Some have assailed it as a product of imagination, asserting that the so-called eoliths were nothing but products of nature.[10] Others have accepted the

[4] Madison Grant, The Passing of the Great Age (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1924), p.102.
[5] George S. MacCurdy, The Coming of Man (New York, University Society, Inc., 1932), p.149.
[6] Wilder, op. cit., p.133.
[7] Grant, op. cit., p.103.
[8] Wilder, op. cit., p.133.
[9] Ibid., p.134.
[10] A. L. Kroeber, Anthropology (New York, Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1923), p.147.

PAGE FROM A STUDENT RESEARCH PAPER

documentation, and skillful integration of scattered materials.

Although the machinery of the research paper is important, students should not become so absorbed in it that they neglect what is, after all, essential to excellence in any composition—good writing. Even though a research paper represents many hours of hard work, even though it is elaborately and correctly footnoted, it is not a good paper if it is incompetently written. Careful revision is, therefore, very important.

The length of the research paper and the complexity of its content make the inexperienced writer susceptible to faults which in a short paper he probably would avoid. Six of the most common of these faults are listed below. Some of them have been discussed earlier, but they deserve special comment in connection with revising and completing the research paper. Easy to fall into, they are also easy to correct in revision. The six faults:

1. *Lack of transition between sections of the paper.* This fault usually is a result of writing different sections of the paper at different times, and thinking of them as completely separate units. Units they are, but they are also parts of a whole; their close relationship must be established by transitional phrases and sentences which lead the reader from one part of the paper into the next. In the following sentence, the writer of a student research paper on modern jazz makes a smooth transition from New Orleans jazz to Dixieland jazz:

> While New Orleans was enjoying its last days as jazz capital, groups of white musicians, seeing the success of the Negroes, attempted to imitate them, and in doing so created what is called the Dixieland style.

By means of the following transitional paragraph from a paper on Cro-Magnon man, the reader is saved what would have been a confusing leap from the Cro-Magnons back to the Eolithic age:

> Before studying the Cro-Magnon race, it is necessary to have some knowledge of the epochs that preceded it. Our pre-history has been divided into three chronological classifications. . . .

2. *Choppy sentences.* Choppy sentences are often simply careless, but sometimes they come from the mistaken idea that items of information from different sources should be put in separate sentences. Material from different sources is frequently, and quite properly, welded into a single sentence; two or more footnotes may be used in one sentence to give the sources of the combined material. The following excerpt from a paper on the assassination of Lincoln will illustrate:

> Booth savagely reeled about, put the knife into his right hand, and slashed the Major's arm; [22] then he leapt from the box down to the stage twelve feet below.[23]

Short, choppy sentences are even more objectionable in a research paper, presumably a mature piece of work, than in an informal theme.

3. *Choppy paragraphs.* Short, underdeveloped paragraphs sometimes are caused by a misconception similar to the one which produces choppy sentences: the student mistakenly thinks that the material from each source should be presented in a separate paragraph. More often, choppy paragraphs come from using a paragraph break at each minor division in the outline of the paper. Organizing paragraphs around a topic sentence is the cure for this serious weakness. A third-level subdivision in the outline (I, A, 1) is often the topic idea of a solid paragraph; the points under it (a, b, c) are not likely to require separate paragraphs, because these points are essentially the facts and details which support the topic idea. Paragraphs should bind together, not separate, such closely related subordinate points.

4. *Unconscious repetition of material.* Some repetition, for emphasis, or for purposes of summary, may be desirable in dealing with complex material. But the use of the same material more than once without reference to its earlier use gives the impression that the writer, blindly stumbling through his note cards, has lost track of what he has already said. If it is desirable to call the reader's attention to facts

previously discussed in the paper, a phrase like "we have seen that," or "as has been said before" will indicate that the repetition is purposeful and that the writer has a sure grasp of all the material in the paper.

5. *Unconscious contradiction.* This fault, seriously confusing to the reader, is closely related to unconscious repetition of material. It occurs when the writer, having on his note cards the differing opinions of two authors, thoughtlessly sets them down as if both opinions were facts. The writer who does this is, of course, using his note cards without using his brain. If the opinions of both authors appear to have some merit, if neither can fairly be rejected, they should be introduced in some such manner as this:

> There is some difference of opinion about the exact date when the first music that could be called jazz was played. Robert Goffin, in *Jazz from the Congo to the Metropolitan,* says that the first bands were formed in the 1880's.[4] Other authorities, however . . . .[5]

(Introducing sources into the text in this way, even when no contradiction is involved, often makes a clearer and more readable paper. Only the page reference is needed in the footnote when author and title are given in the text.)

6. *Unawareness of dates.* We have said earlier that the student should be sure that he is not using outdated sources. He should, moreover, be conscious of the dates of relatively recent sources. If in his paper he makes a statement like "Very recently a new development has occurred," and if the source of his statement is an article published in 1935, he has given misinformation. Checking of the manuscript with the dates in the bibliography will prevent such blunders in the final copy.

It seems hardly necessary to say that the writing in the research paper should be technically correct. Errors in agreement, parallelism, and reference are inexcusable in so important a paper. Run-together sentences and impressionistic

incomplete sentences are out of place in writing of this kind; they are incongruous with the formality of footnotes and the serious and scholarly tone of the whole research paper.

Because the paper is formal, contractions like *can't, won't, couldn't* should be avoided; and abbreviations should be used with caution—*Pres., Prof., Sen., Mass., U.S.,* for example, should be written out. Personal comment should be restricted to the preface; the text of the paper should be written in impersonal style.

This requirement of impersonal style in the formal paper does not mean that the writer's personality and judgment are excluded from the paper. On the contrary, in his selection of material, his arrangement of it, his expression of ideas, the words he chooses, the sentences he writes, the conclusions he may draw from the data he has assembled, the writer dominates the paper. He makes clear and interesting to a reader a subject which is clear and interesting to him. His phrasing is impersonal because his purpose in writing is to present, not himself or his experience, but the subject on which he has chosen to work and to write.

Checking the form of the outline, bibliography, and footnotes; examining transitions; inspecting for choppiness; eliminating unconscious repetition, contradiction, and confusion of dates; correcting mechanical errors; making the style consistently formal and impersonal as well as finished and exact —all of this takes time in a long paper. The foresighted student, therefore, plans to finish the draft of his paper at least a week before the paper is due, so that he will not be hurried in his revision. He may also need to allow several days for preparation of the final copy. A usual requirement is that the research paper be typed. The typing itself takes some time, of course; and even skillful typists may make mistakes, particularly in copying footnote references from a draft which has been a good deal revised. The student should allow time, not only for thorough revision, but for careful proofreading after the paper is typed. It is most unfortunate when the

painstaking work of weeks is marred or obscured by hasty work on the last stages of the paper.

Strange though it may seem to the student who has read this chapter and has yet to begin work on his own paper, many college students find the research paper the most enjoyable and rewarding work that they do all term. As they proceed systematically to assemble a bibliography, to take notes, to shape the outline of the material, what seemed at first a complicated and formidable task turns out to be simply a series of steps; no step is difficult in itself; and each one produces satisfying, tangible progress. Students who believe that they have no imagination are particularly likely to enjoy the research paper; it does not call for imagination, but for skill in finding, organizing, evaluating, and presenting material. Writing a long paper gives one confidence about handling other writing assignments, and nearly always a fluency which makes other writing easier. In work on the research paper there is, too, the pleasure of learning, of becoming an authority on a subject in which one is interested. Because it is a large project, the research paper is more likely than the short paper to give the conscientious writer the satisfaction that comes from orderly procedure, sustained effort, and solid achievement.

CHAPTER REVIEW

You are not expected, even after you have carefully read this chapter, to remember all of the details about sources, note-taking, bibliography and footnote form. You should use this chapter for reference as you work on the research paper, rereading the section on bibliography before you gather your bibliography, the section on taking notes when you are ready to take notes, the section on footnotes when you are ready to use them. Below are a number of instructions or admonitions which summarize the most important things to keep in mind as you work on your paper. You should be able, after reading

this chapter, to explain any of the instructions which are not self-explanatory.

1. Choose a subject in which you are interested.
2. Limit the subject so that it can be covered adequately in a paper of this length.
3. Be sure that there is enough available material before you decide finally on a subject.
4. Gather your bibliography from the card catalogue in the library, from periodical indexes, and from encyclopedias and reference books. (As your work proceeds, you will probably add to your bibliography other sources that you discover in the bibliographies and footnotes of books and articles which you read.)
5. Put the entries on your bibliography cards in correct form.
6. Take notes on cards, using separate cards for separate pieces of information.
7. Record on each note card the exact source, including the page number, of the material.
8. Give each note card a heading or label which tells exactly what the material on the card is about.
9. As early as possible make a tentative outline of the paper, so that headings on your note cards can correspond to headings in the outline.
10. Take summary notes rather than full quotations unless you have reason to quote directly from the source. Summarize the material in your own words.
11. Bear in mind that all sources are not of equal value.
12. Remember that your paper should integrate material from different sources. Your footnotes will reflect this integration.
13. Be sure that you understand clearly when and how to use footnotes. Study the footnotes on the page from the student research paper printed in this chapter to see:
    (a) where the footnote numbers are placed;

(b) how the information in the footnotes is arranged and punctuated;
(c) how footnote references are simplified after the first reference to the book or article; and
(d) how *op. cit.* and *ibid.* are used.

14. Put footnotes (though not necessarily in full and correct form) into the first draft of the paper.
15. Refer to the material in this chapter and to Appendix A on outlining to be sure that bibliography and outline as well as footnotes are in correct form.
16. Allow ample time to revise the writing in the paper. Guard particularly against the faults discussed in the last section of this chapter.

EXERCISES

I. Put the references below into proper footnote form, keeping them in their present order.

1. Page 53 of a book called A Story of Our Republic written by Melville Freeman and published in 1938 in Philadelphia by F. A. Davis Company.
2. Page 43 of an article called April Elegy, by Archibald MacLeish, which appeared in the Atlantic Monthly, volume 174, June, 1945.
3. Part of a news story on the death of Lincoln which appeared in the Boston Advertiser of April 14, 1865. The excerpt is quoted in an article in New England Magazine for December, 1893, volume 9; the article was written by H. King, and the quotation is on page 426. The title of the news story was President Assassinated.
4. Page 48 of a book by David Miller Dewitt, published in New York in 1909. The name of the book is The Assassination of Abraham Lincoln and Its Expiation.
5. Page 49 of the book cited in footnote 4.
6. Page 43 of the Atlantic Monthly article cited in footnote 2.
7. Page 400 in the article on Lincoln in Harper's Encyclopedia of United States History, published by Harper and Brothers in 1907 in New York. The article is in volume 5 of the encyclopedia.

8. Here and there in pages 17 to 38 of a book by Otto Eisenschiml entitled Why Was Lincoln Murdered? The book was published in 1937 by Little, Brown and Co. in Boston.
9. Page 37 of the book by Melville Freeman cited in footnote 1.
10. Page 50 of the book Why Was Lincoln Murdered? cited in footnote 8.
11. An article in Century Magazine, vol. 51, April 1896, page 945. The article is called At the Death-bed of Lincoln, and was written by E. C. Haynie.
12. The same page of the same article cited in footnote 11.

II. Arrange the items in Exercise I in correct form and order for a bibliography.

III. The first eight footnotes of a poorly annotated paper on hypnotism are listed below. Point out the errors in the footnotes as they stand. Whenever it is possible without more bibliographical information, put the notes into proper form.

1. Raper, Howard W., *Man Against Pain,* 30
2. Bromberg, W., *The Mind of Man,* page 161
3. op. cit. 163
4. Hypnotism Now Commonplace, "Literary Digest", March 7, 1936
5. Raper, *Man Against Pain,* page 32
6. "Journal of Amer. Med. Assoc.", Feb 19, 1944, page 531
7. Ibid
8. Bromberg, W., the Mind of Man, page 162

CHAPTER TEN

SOME EVERYDAY USES OF ENGLISH

CERTAIN USES OF ENGLISH, though very important, are likely to be underemphasized or neglected because they often do not fit easily into the courses of particular high schools and colleges. In this chapter we are assembling suggestions about speech and conversation, public speaking, writing examinations, writing business letters and social notes, and writing personal letters—some of the important everyday uses of English which the college student needs to know.

I. SPEECH AND CONVERSATION

Since one may range in conversation from purely conventional social phrases to lofty philosophical discussion, conversation is so large a subject that any short treatment of it is necessarily inadequate. All that can be done here is to point out the great importance of speech and conversation and to throw out a few suggestions in the hope of causing some thought about a matter that receives all too little.

Speech—in which we include enunciation and the rate, pitch, volume, and tone of voice—is an aspect of personality which is very important in the whole impression that one makes on others. Sloppy speech can be as offensive to the ear as grease-spotted clothing to the eye; yet some people

who look in a mirror many times a day to reassure themselves about their physical appearance have never heard their own voices as their acquaintances hear them, and would not recognize a recording of their own speech. Those who have monotonous speech patterns, whose voices are raspy or squeaky or twangy, who mumble and mutter instead of producing clear, resonant speech sounds, who embarrass their hearers with too much volume or irritate them by making them strain to hear—such people load themselves with conversational handicaps for which wit and wisdom can hardly compensate. Anyone at all interested in the impression he makes on others should hear a recording of his own voice and should get some competent person's comment on his voice and his enunciation. Since many colleges make voice recordings for their students and tell them how to improve their speech, and since all colleges offer speech courses, college students have little excuse for continuing to speak poorly. Students who think that voice and speech are not important should read the text of an address by Winston Churchill or Franklin D. Roosevelt and then listen to a recording of the same speech.

Good voice and enunciation are means, however, and not ends; the most common end is good conversation. What constitutes good conversation is perhaps a matter of opinion; but nearly everyone would agree that the rule of doing to others as you would have them do to you will supply a good general guide. A quick and reasonably sure way to improve one's powers as a conversationalist is to make a check list of faults to avoid, building up the list by thinking of conversational habits that one has found most obnoxious in others. For example:

Talking too much. Everyone is painfully aware that some people talk too much, but most people are so pleased with their conversation that they notice the fault only in others. The best way to avoid this most boring of all faults is never to talk long without some obvious encouragement from one's companions. Good conversation is likely to be either give-and-take or ask-and-give. When people are really interested

in the subject, they ask further questions or make comments which are intended to encourage the speaker to go on. Silent people are seldom thought to be foolish; wise people know that speech is silver and that silence, at least at intervals, is golden.

Persistently interrupting others, or talking while they talk, or insisting on drawing someone out of a general conversation which he is enjoying, to listen to a private conversation in which he does not want to engage.

Being too dogmatic or too argumentative, and arguing to win instead of trying to see the other person's point of view.

Not listening when others are talking, especially asking questions and not listening to answers.

Praising oneself or one's possessions, or focusing conversation too much on oneself.

Insulting by heavy-handed flattery or condescending explanation of the obvious.

Insisting on being the only one to guide the conversation, or being stubbornly unwilling to change the subject.

Demanding too much response from a listener. After conversing with a demanding speaker, one notices that one's face is tired because the speaker has forced him so often into an appreciative expression. Such speakers are also likely to emphasize their points by tapping the hearer on the chest or shaking a finger under his nose or repeating "see?" at frequent intervals.

Taking too long to tell a straight story, drawing out a light anecdote so that the point comes as an anti-climax; exhausting patience with trivial or irrelevant details.

Haranguing an obviously restless or busy listener.

Inflicting efforts at humor upon people who do not enjoy such humor, or are not in a mood for it.

Pushing the conversation toward peoples' private affairs, forcing them either to be ill-mannered or to express opinions they prefer not to express.

Pretending to knowledge that one does not have; or speak-

ing authoritatively on little knowledge; or being contemptuous of people who differ with one on points which are, after all, matters of opinion.

John Henry Newman's definition of the educated man, the gentleman, is a definition also of a good conversationalist; it sets up an ideal which one may not reach, but to which, at least, one can aspire:

The true gentleman in like manner carefully avoids whatever may cause a jar or jolt in the minds of those with whom he is cast;—all clashing of opinion, or collision of feeling, all restraint, or suspicion, or gloom, or resentment; his great concern being to make every one at their ease and at home. He has his eyes on all his company; he is tender towards the bashful, gentle towards the distant, and merciful towards the absurd; he can recollect to whom he is speaking; he guards against unseasonable allusions, or topics which may irritate; he is seldom prominent in conversation, and never wearisome. He makes light of favours while he does them, and seems to be receiving when he is conferring. He never speaks of himself except when compelled, never defends himself by a mere retort, he has no ears for slander or gossip, is scrupulous in imputing motives to those who interfere with him, and interprets everything for the best. He is never mean or little in his disputes, never takes unfair advantage, never mistakes personalities or sharp sayings for arguments, or insinuates evil which he dares not say out. From a long-sighted prudence, he observes the maxim of the ancient sage, that we should ever conduct ourselves towards our enemy as if he were one day to be our friend. . . . If he engages in controversy of any kind, his disciplined intellect preserves him from the blundering discourtesy of better, though less educated minds; who, like blunt weapons, tear and hack instead of cutting clean, who mistake the point in argument, waste their strength on trifles, misconceive their adversary, and leave the question more involved than they find it. He may be right or wrong in his opinion, but he is too clear-headed to be unjust; he is as simple as he is forcible, and as brief as he is decisive. Nowhere shall we find greater candour, consideration, indulgence: he throws himself into the minds of his opponents, he accounts for their mistakes. He knows the weakness of human reason as well as its strength, its province and its limits.

II. PUBLIC SPEAKING

In order to become an effective public speaker, one needs a knowledge of the principles of public speaking, some expert criticism, and numerous opportunities to speak and to hear other speakers. Since a good course in public speaking supplies these essentials, the best thing to do is to take such a course. This brief section on public speaking is intended to supply the student with some guidance and to make him feel less at a loss when there is occasion for him to speak.

Because both public speaking and writing are means of verbal communication, most of what we have said in the preceding chapters about writing applies equally well to oral communication, and could with a few changes go into a book on public speaking. There are certain important differences, though, between planning a speech and planning a composition, and there are additional things to say about practicing, delivering, and criticizing speeches.

In planning a speech one needs constantly to keep in mind that the speaker and the writer have different relationships to their audiences. A writer may if he wishes make his communication so impersonal that one gets little impression of the man behind it. A speaker cannot; his audience watches his movements, gestures, and facial expressions and hears his voice; it judges not only the speech but the speaker. If the speaker wishes his speech to produce a favorable impression, he must establish a favorable personal relationship with his audience. He must induce confidence and friendly respect by the way he talks to the audience and by what he says. A good speaker gives his audience a sense of participation; he keeps in mind the information, the experience, the loyalties, the attitudes, the ideas, the common background that his hearers have or are likely to have; he stresses those things that he has in common with his hearers; he points his whole discourse at the particular selected group that he is addressing. Winston Churchill, for example, in the first two paragraphs of a speech

addressed to Congress and to the American radio audience, clearly pointed his speech at his audience and adapted it to the occasion

I feel greatly honored that you should have thus invited me to enter the United States Senate chamber and address the representatives of both branches of Congress. The fact that my American forebears have for so many generations played their part in the life of the United States and that here I am, an Englishman, welcomed in your midst, makes this experience one of the most moving and thrilling in my life, which is already long and has not been entirely uneventful. I wish indeed that my mother, whose memory I cherish across the vale of years, could have been here to see. By the way, I cannot help reflecting that if my father had been American and my mother British, instead of the other way around, I might have got here on my own. In that case, this would not have been the first time you would have heard my voice. In that case, I should not have needed any invitation, but if I had it is hardly likely that it would have been unanimous. So perhaps things are better as they are.

I may confess, however, that I do not feel quite like a fish out of water in a legislative assembly where English is spoken. I am a child of the House of Commons. I was brought up in my father's house to believe in democracy; trust the people, that was his message. I used to see him cheered at meetings and in the streets by crowds of workingmen 'way back in those aristocratic, Victorian days, when, as Disraeli said, the world was for the few and for the very few. Therefore, I have been in full harmony all my life with the tides which have flowed on both sides of the Atlantic against privilege and monopoly, and I have steered confidently towards the Gettysburg ideal of government of the people, by the people, for the people.

Franklin D. Roosevelt in "A Call to War Veterans to Rally to the Colors in a Peacetime Sacrifice" (address before the American Legion Convention, Oct. 2, 1933) first cemented the relationship between himself and his audience:

I am glad to come here again and I am glad to have the right to come here as your comrade. I have come because I have faith in the American Legion and in all veterans in all our wars. And,

incidentally, the right which I have to come here works both ways because just as long as I am in the White House you have the right to come and see me there.

You know my relationship with you is not a matter of the past six months. It dates back to the war days. It dates back to the time when I participated with you, not only in this country but also on the North Sea, and in the Channel, and on the actual fighting front in France.

I want to talk with you very simply about the problems of government, the difficulties that you and I as Americans have faced and solved and the difficulties which we still face and are going to solve. I recognize and appreciate, and the Nation recognizes and appreciates, the patience, the loyalty, the willingness to make sacrifices, shown by the overwhelming majority of the veterans of our country during the trying period from which we are beginning successfully to emerge.

I want to talk to you about national unity. Let us look at it as a living thing—not a mere theory resting in books, or otherwise apart from everyday business of men and women. It means that we all live under a common government, that we trade with each other, pay common taxes, many of them too high. It means that we give to, and receive from, a common protective government of which we are part. So to recognize national unity, to hold it above all else, seeing that upon it depends our common welfare, is just another way to say that we have patriotism.

Throughout the speech, Mr. Roosevelt addressed himself directly to the veterans, maintaining and deepening his personal relationship with his audience by using such expressions as: "I want to talk to you. . . ." "Let us look. . . ." "You and I who served in the World War know. . . ." "You men of the Legion. . . ." "But, my friends. . . ." "My, you are a young-looking bunch. . . ." "Your task and mine are similar. . . ." He concluded the speech with this paragraph, in which he made a direct and personal appeal to his audience of veterans:

Comrades of the Legion, I ask your further and even greater efforts in your program of national recovery. You who wore the uniform, you who served, you who took the oath of allegiance to the American Legion, you who support the ideals of American

citizenship, you I have called to the colors again. As your Commander-in-Chief and your comrade, I am confident that you will respond.

Since the two speeches to which we have referred were largely persuasive speeches, the relationship between the speaker and the audience was, of course, especially important. Members of an audience are not likely to be persuaded to accept an attitude or to perform an action unless they like the speaker and feel that they have something in common with him. In informative speeches, the situation is somewhat different, for the speaker is not asking the audience to do anything or to accept any controversial belief. Since he is primarily concerned with presenting his subject clearly, he is likely to be less personal and more objective. The fact remains, though, that the audience must respect the speaker if it is to respect his knowledge, and the speech will not be effective if the speaker misses his particular audience by assuming that his hearers have more knowledge than they have and so talking over their heads, or by underestimating them and so talking down to them. The informative speech will gain in interest and clarity when the speaker makes allusions aimed at the special knowledge and interests of his particular audience and when he adapts his remarks to the particular occasion.

Speeches which aim at sociability or entertainment—after-dinner speeches, for example—also call for the establishment of a certain rapport, a kind of genial sharing, between speaker and audience. To be amused we need to like the person who is attempting to amuse us. Often we are induced to like him by the *tone* he adopts, that is, by his attitude toward us and toward himself. A speaker is most likely to entertain when he shows a friendly regard for his audience and its opinions and when he does not appear to take himself too seriously. Mark Twain, Will Rogers, and Bob Hope—in fact all good entertaining speakers—have succeeded in amusing and entertaining audiences not only by wit, humor, and shrewd ob-

servation but also by adapting the tone of their remarks to the audience and the occasion.

Another difference between written and spoken communication is that most people find it more difficult to follow development of thought when they listen than when they read. In reading it is always possible to turn back a page or two and pick up the thread or to reread a paragraph or a sentence that is not immediately clear. For the listener there is no turning back and no opportunity to pause and reflect on an idea. Good speakers take into account these differences between reading and listening. They try to use shorter and less complex sentences than in writing, to repeat or to summarize more frequently, to give examples more often, to develop fewer main points, to make the main points and the organization unmistakably clear, and to use transitions and repetitions so frequently and so effectively that their audience will not lose the continuity, or will be able, if it does, to pick up the thread again.

Although the speaker needs to be constantly aware of the differences between speech and writing, the actual steps in preparing a speech are similar to those followed in preparing a composition. They may be listed as follows: (1) choosing an appropriate subject, (2) making an outline and perhaps writing a draft of the speech, (3) practicing the speech, (4) delivering the speech.

A good subject fits the speaker and the audience and the occasion. It fits the speaker when it calls for subject matter which he knows or can find and in which he has a real interest. A speaker who chooses a subject about which he knows little, and in which he is only faintly interested, invites suffering; a dull plodding speech is painful to listen to and painful to give.

Even when the subject suits the speaker, it may not suit the occasion and the audience. At a formal faculty dinner a doctor gave a graphic account of recent advances in surgical techniques. The subject matter was good, the doctor was in-

terested in it, and the audience was made up of educated people, but the *occasion* called for sociable after-dinner remarks and not for talk about scalpels and blood. An example of a subject unsuitable to the *audience* was supplied by an evangelical young English instructor. Asked to address a high-school study hall, he chose to discuss Matthew Arnold's idea of culture and he talked for forty minutes with deep conviction but with no concessions to the interests of his hearers. He was later considerably embarrassed when he learned that the high-school teachers had barely succeeded in keeping his restless audience in order. The choice of subject is important; when the speaker knows beforehand the audience and the occasion, there is little excuse for an inappropriate choice.

After a speaker has chosen his subject, he is ready to select the substance of his speech and to organize it. Here, as in writing the informal theme, it is necessary to make an outline. The writer's outline often does no more than block out the rough organization; the speaker's outline, because it will serve as a kind of prompter when he practices his speech, needs to be much more detailed and more carefully planned. Except under very special circumstances, good speakers never memorize their speeches word for word. They may, after they have made a thorough outline, write out a draft of the speech so that they can look at what they are going to say and check the organization, but when they actually practice the speech they refer to the revised outline and not to the draft, and they memorize an abbreviated form of the outline but not the draft. If they wish to have notes available when they speak, the abbreviated outline serves that purpose too. A well thought-out, carefully constructed outline is essential for a speech of any length.

In making his detailed outline the speaker should not only consider the body of the speech, the argument or information; he should give special attention to the introductory remarks and the conclusion. The purpose of the introductory remarks is usually three-fold: (1) to gain the attention of one's hearers

and to establish a favorable relationship with them, (2) to state specifically the subject of the talk, and (3) to bring home to the members of the audience the significance of the subject to them. In short, the introduction usually indicates what the speech is about and puts the audience in a friendly and receptive frame of mind. The body and conclusion of the speech are similar to the body and conclusion of a composition except for the differences of style, development, transitions, and the like that we have already considered. The conclusion of the speech, like the introduction, needs to be pointed at the particular audience and needs to be planned, and later phrased, with special care.

Once the speaker has drawn up a suitable outline, he is ready to practice his speech aloud, looking at the outline as he does so, and timing himself to see that his speech is of proper length. In order to deliver a speech effectively it is desirable to practice it at least four times. While practicing, one should memorize his outline, or at least the key words of the outline. Some speakers feel more comfortable if they have an abbreviated key-word outline available when they actually deliver the speech. Such notes, however, should be used only to bolster one's sense of security; the speaker should practice until he can give his speech easily without referring to them.

In addressing an audience the speaker is likely to find it hard to keep in mind all the points that are required for good delivery. A good speaker must speak loudly enough to be heard, must enunciate clearly, must use pauses and voice emphasis effectively, must not talk too fast, must speak easily without *ah's* and *uh's,* must be independent of his notes and able to watch his audience and adjust to it. In practicing a speech, therefore, the speaker should go through the whole routine as if he were actually on the platform and the audience were before him. He should decide how he is to stand, what he is to do with his hands, how fast and how loud he is to talk, what words he will emphasize and where he will

pause, so that when he does address his audience he will be doing again what he has been doing in practice. Good habits established during practice will go far to ensure good delivery.

If a speaker has chosen a subject that is important to him, has adapted it to the audience and the occasion, and has practiced his speech until he is able to deliver it well, he has reason to feel confidence in his speech and in himself. It would be unrealistic, though, to say that such a speaker has nothing to worry about. There is still the problem of stage fright.

The best way to avoid or to lessen stage fright is to know something about it. Everyone, even speakers and actors of long experience, suffers from a feeling of tenseness before the performance, and such tenseness is natural and in fact desirable. A speaker, like an athlete, needs to be keyed up beforehand to do well. Another consoling fact is that a speaker's nervousness is much more apparent to him than it is to his audience; the student speakers who are praised by classmates for being at ease on the platform are usually the first to admit that they felt extremely nervous. Since stage fright is a form of self-consciousness, one can reduce his nervousness, not by ignoring the audience as most fearful speakers tend to do, but by looking at it, thinking about it, talking to it. When a speaker shifts his attention from himself and forces himself to focus on his subject and his audience, stage fright disappears, public speaking loses its terrors, and the speaker begins to enjoy himself.

One way to achieve effective delivery is to be aware of some common faults and to know how to avoid them. The faults mentioned below will serve as a kind of check list for the inexperienced speaker.

1. *Starting too abruptly.* Inexperienced speakers are frequently so eager to get through the ordeal of speaking that they walk rapidly to the platform and rush breathlessly into their subject. Experienced speakers pause for a moment before they say anything. They know that they will feel more at ease if they become physically adjusted before they start

speaking. Often they arrange notes or wipe their glasses or shift the light. They usually look at the audience and take a deep breath. Insufficient air in the lungs will cause a speaker to gasp and to speak jerkily. After the initial pause, good speakers address the audience directly, first mentioning the names of distinguished people present and then going on to "Ladies and gentlemen" or some appropriate term of address. If they have been introduced, they often make brief extemporaneous remarks alluding to the introduction before they begin their prepared speech. Such remarks put the speaker and the audience more at ease.

2. *Not looking at the audience.* This is a cardinal sin in public speaking. One should look at his audience as he begins to speak and should continue to look at it throughout his talk. What is called "eye contact" is very important in public speaking; it gives the audience a sense of being in direct communication with the speaker, and it gives the speaker a chance to see when the audience is restless or perplexed or unable to hear.

3. *Poor enunciation.* The time to improve enunciation is during the practice period before the speech is given. Saying the speech and having a friend point out faults will help. The permanent cure for poor enunciation is forcing oneself to enunciate with reasonable clarity all the time.

4. *Forgetting the speech.* This fault is usually a result of inadequate preparation or of trying to memorize a set speech word for word. If one knows and speaks from his outline, he may speak in sentences that are not so well turned, but he will not be at a loss because he cannot remember a particular phrase, and his speech will sound like a speech and not like a recitation.

5. *Distracting facial expressions, posture, mannerisms.* Practicing a speech before a mirror is one good way to see and to correct one's own faults. Another is to get criticisms from one's friends. In speech classes, one gains from the criticisms of the instructor and of classmates.

6. *Lack of emphasis, monotony.* The speaker who knows exactly what he wants to say and who feels that his subject is important seldom fails to give effective emphasis. He then talks with much the same stress that he would use in conversation. It is wise, also, to give considerable thought to emphasis as one practices a speech.

7. *"Uh" or "ah" habit.* People usually say "uh" or "ah" because they are momentarily at a loss for a word and feel that they should fill the silence while they think. There are several ways to avoid this distracting habit: (a) speaking more slowly; (b) deliberately pausing where pauses are justified—at the end of a sentence, for example—and thinking ahead during the pause; and (c) realizing that a moment of silence is less conspicuous than an "uh," and resolutely saying nothing until the right word comes.

8. *Too hasty ending.* There are at least two very ineffective ways of ending a speech: just stopping, without preparing the audience by words or by voice for the ending; and mumbling the last few words and then fleeing from the platform. Both the wording of the conclusion and the voice of the speaker ought to announce that the speech is at an end, and the movements of the speaker afterward ought not to suggest flight. It is generally assumed that only the wicked flee when none pursueth.

One of the defects of a brief discussion of public speaking is that a full use of examples is impossible: generalizations without examples may be too abstract to give much helpful guidance. The reader, however, can supply the deficiency by considering thoughtfully the speeches that he hears. Since one learns by knowing what to avoid as well as what to practice, there are advantages to be gained from a critical examination of almost any speech that one hears, even a poor one.

Some of the points to consider in examining a speech are:

1. The actions of the speaker at the very beginning of the speech.
2. The introduction—the speaker's way of gaining the fav-

orable attention of his audience, indicating the general content of his speech, and arousing interest in his subject.
3. The organization.
4. Transitional devices.
5. The means used to develop the material concretely.
6. The ways in which the speech is adapted to the particular audience and occasion.
7. The language the speaker uses—level, choice of words, sentence structure, clarity and economy and subtlety of expression.
8. The use of the voice—volume, rate, pauses, voice emphasis.
9. Movement, posture, gesture.
10. Eye contact with the audience.
11. The use of language and of voice to achieve finality at the conclusion.

A final point is that public speaking, like any other art, demands practice. Generalizations about speaking and the analysis of speeches may make an intelligent critic, but practice and more practice are necessary to make a good speaker.

III. WRITING EXAMINATIONS

College students do not need to be told that writing good examinations is an important practical matter. Often, of course, students fail examinations because they lack sufficient knowledge. That lack may be due fundamentally to a difficulty with language—to an inability to read well and to grasp the content and organization of the material in the course. But we are concerned here, not with insufficient knowledge, but with the actual taking of the examination; with the kind of failure, or poor result, of which the student says, "I really knew the material, but I guess I didn't do a good job on the exam." This kind of failure often comes from incompetence in the use of English.

The poor reading of questions written in clear and simple English is a major cause for unsatisfactory examination papers. It is commonly responsible, first, for a careless omission of parts of questions. If an examination question asks students

to "define and give an example of each of the following," nearly always one or two students in a class of twenty-five or thirty will define the terms without giving examples. It is unlikely that they could think of no examples; more probably, as soon as they read the word *define,* they stopped reading and plunged into writing on the question as they understood it. The instructor reading these papers may surmise what has happened; but he expects his students to be able to read, and he cannot give credit for the part of the answer which is not there. Frequently, too, students leave out a whole question on an examination. Because they cannot answer the question? Perhaps; perhaps not. The instructor cannot guess; he can only deduct the 15 or 20 per cent allotted to this part of the test.

The student can avoid these costly errors of omission by taking a few minutes at the beginning of the hour to read all of the questions *carefully* before he begins to write. This preliminary reading has another value: it enables the student to make some estimate of the time he will need on each part of the examination, and to budget his time as he writes. Sometimes the instructor has suggested on the question sheet the number of minutes to be devoted to each part; when he has, the suggestions should be noted and followed as closely as possible, for college examinations are meant to be completed. The wise student will also try to allow a few minutes at the end of the hour for reading his paper, and for checking it with the question sheet to be sure that nothing is omitted.

Another failure in reading, often serious, is the failure to note directions about the *form* of the answer. Nearly always the form is prescribed in directions like "discuss briefly," "discuss as fully as time allows," "outline," "list five reasons," "write a short essay," "in a few sentences summarize. . . ." These directions are important. They are designed to test the extent of the student's knowledge, or his ability to select the main ideas, or his ability to organize complex material or to assemble many facts in a short time. There is always a reason

for the directions; and the student who outlines when he is asked to write an essay, lists ten causes when he is asked to discuss three, writes a sprawling account when he is asked to state clearly in one sentence, fails to give evidence of the *kind* of knowledge for which he is being tested in the question.

It will be clear that we are primarily concerned here not with the purely objective examination which requires only the substitution of a word, or a true-false judgment, but with the examination which is at least partially essay and discussion. Students will have examinations of this type particularly in English, history, government, sociology, economics, and philosophy.

A good answer to an essay or discussion question is a little composition; it presents the problems of any theme. The steps in the writing process must be taken quickly in writing examinations, but they are essentially the same: the student must assemble and select his material, being sure that all of it is clearly focused on what the question asks for; he must organize it; he must write it correctly and clearly and with as much *relevant concrete detail* as time and the directions on the examination permit.

This relevant concrete detail often makes the difference between a good examination paper and a mediocre or poor one; and the failure to include detail often comes, not from scanty information, but from vague, general, thoughtless expression. Consider the following answer, written on an examination question which asked students to state clearly the function of a number of characters in the short story in which each appeared. This answer was written about the second stranger in Hardy's story, 'The Three Strangers":

The second stranger was introduced by the author to give the story excitement and suspense. His appearance at the cottage was important because it furthered the action of the story.

"Excitement and suspense"? In what way? "Furthered the action of the story"? Certainly; so does any character in any well-planned story. The answer is almost meaningless; and

yet oral questioning showed that the student who wrote it was familiar with the details of the story. He was capable of writing a good, well-packed answer like this one:

> The second stranger, the brother of the condemned man, by fleeing when he saw his brother and the hangman in Shepherd Fennel's cottage, caused the company to pursue him, and so enabled his brother to escape. His explanation when he was caught made the situation clear to the reader.

We have said before that the successful writer does not assume that his reader knows intuitively, without needing to be told, the contents of his mind. This is never more true than in writing examinations. The job of the student is to assure his reader, beyond any doubt, of the fullness and accuracy of his knowledge. Packing his answers with specific detail is one of the best ways of showing his thorough grasp of the material.

Let us make this perfectly clear, however: the detail must be *relevant* detail. Few things are more exasperating to a busy instructor than wading through material which is not pertinent to the question. The inclusion of irrelevancies on examinations sometimes comes from the student's failure to focus mentally on the question, from a general fogginess about what is asked for. Sometimes it is deliberate evasion: knowing very little about the question asked, the writer hopes to receive credit by writing on a slightly different subject. Sometimes, more innocently but no more wisely, the student includes irrelevant material out of an impulse to display all he knows, whether it is asked for or not. The effect, in any case, is to convince the instructor that the student is confused and unsure of the material since he has not written a coherent, well-organized, well-focused answer.

In addition to covering the questions completely according to directions, being clearly organized, specific, and well-focused, good examination papers are legible and literate. Students have been known to protest, when instructors in other departments have criticized their handwriting, grammar, spelling, and sentences, that "this is not an English

course." Students who have read this book will, we hope, not be inclined to any such attitude; any course is an English course in so far as it requires meaningful communication in English. Most students cannot write as effectively under pressure as they can with time for thought and revision, but they can express themselves clearly and with reasonable correctness. Jumbled or ungrammatical sentences in which the meaning is obscure, frequent misspellings of common words, unreadable words and phrases, interpose a barrier to communication; they are irritating to the reader, and they give an impression of the writer's incompetence which no amount of factual information about the subject can wholly remove.

An inappropriate level of English also creates an unfavorable impression. Examination papers are seldom written in very formal English, but they should maintain a good level of informal usage and avoid, by all means, lapses into slang and vulgate which are out of key with the occasion and the subject under discussion ("Hamlet was disturbed and unbalanced when he found his father had been bumped off"). Part of competence in any field is the ability to discuss the subject in appropriate language.

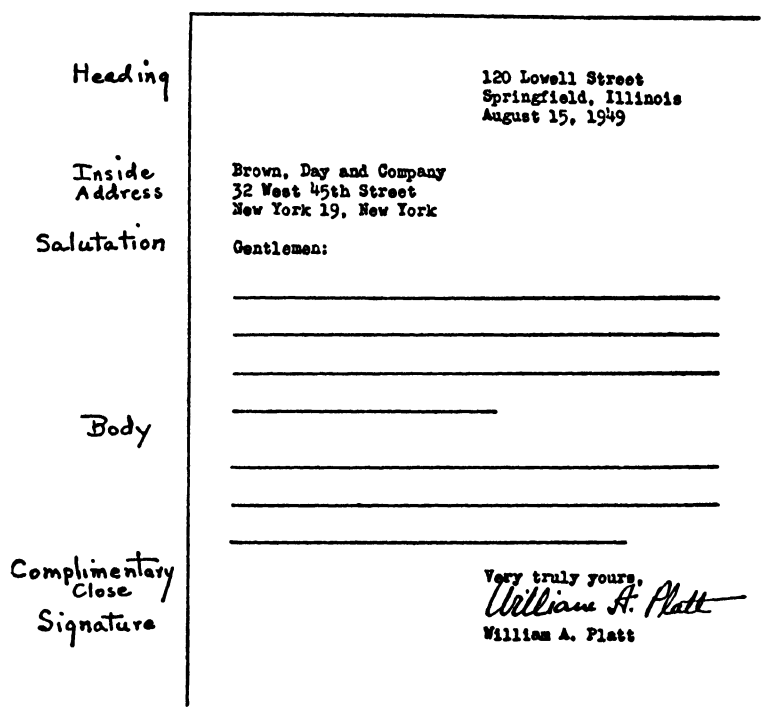
The student who has trouble with examinations often finds it very profitable to read the papers written by good students. Actually seeing excellent answers to questions on which he has written poorly, noting what material has been selected and what omitted as inconsequent or irrelevant, and how the material has been organized and presented, may be of practical help to him in writing other examinations in that course.

In general, students will find that their examination papers improve if they follow these rules:

1. Read all the questions carefully before starting to write.
2. Budget time to ensure completion of the examination.
3. Realize that organization and expression are important; they are worth the time they may take.
4. *Answer the question, the whole question, and nothing but the question.*

IV. WRITING BUSINESS LETTERS

The basic requirements of a good business letter are that it state its business clearly, concisely, and courteously, and that it follow certain conventional patterns of usage. A business letter has six parts: the heading, the inside address, the salutation or greeting, the body of the letter, the complimentary close, and the signature.



The heading, in the upper right-hand corner, gives in three lines the street address of the writer, the city and state, and the date. (If one is using paper which has a letterhead, only the date is required in the heading.) The heading of a typewritten letter is usually in block form, as in the example above. The indented form may, however, be used, and is more

common than the block form when the letter is written in longhand:

120 Lowell Street
Springfield, Illinois
August 15, 1949

The form chosen should be used consistently throughout the letter, that is, in the heading, the inside address, and the address on the envelope. Punctuation at the ends of the lines is unnecessary.

The inside address gives the name of the person or company to whom the letter is written, and the complete address. It follows the form (block or indented) of the heading, and is set flush with the left-hand margin, from three to six spaces below the last line of the heading.

When a person's position is included in the inside address, it is usually placed on the same line as his name; if this makes the line awkwardly long, the title may be put on a second line, or it may be divided in this way:

Professor John F. Carter, Chairman
Department of Economics
Tufts College
Medford 55, Massachusetts

A letter to a company may, in the inside address, name the member of the firm whose attention the writer wishes to call to the business discussed in the letter:

Eliot-Johnson Company
50 Franklin Street
Boston 10, Massachusetts
Attention: Mr. G. H. Harper

Names of states may be abbreviated in the inside address and the heading if the abbreviation produces a better balance in the length of the lines.

The salutation, or greeting, of the letter is written flush with the left-hand margin, two spaces below the last line of the inside address. It is always followed by a colon.

The salutation used depends on the degree of formality the writer considers appropriate for this letter. Conventional salutations, in order of increasing informality are: *Sir* or *Madam* (very formal); *My dear Sir* or *My dear Madam; Dear Sir* or *Dear Madam; My dear Mr. Brown; Dear Mr. Brown.* The last two salutations are now most commonly used if the writer knows the name of the person who will receive the letter. If the addressee is a company or group, the salutation will be *Gentlemen, Dear Sirs,* or *Mesdames* (plural of *Madam*).

The body of a typewritten letter is usually single-spaced, with double spaces between paragraphs. The paragraphs may be indented, or they may begin flush with the left-hand margin. Since business letters should be easy to read, paragraphs are frequently short.

A generation ago, business correspondence was conventionally carried on in a jargon which was a peculiar combination of curt efficiency and elaborate formality: *Yours of the 5th instant received and contents duly noted; In reply to your esteemed favor of the 8th inst. would say . . .* This jargon has, fortunately, dropped out of current usage. Simple, direct expression is now characteristic of most business correspondence. The body of the business letter, unlike its other parts, is no longer conventionalized; within certain limits it may, and should, express the personality of the writer.

In general, business letters are still formal and impersonal; but the degree of formality and impersonality depends upon the situation and the writer's purpose. His purpose must guide him, too, in his choice of material, his arrangement of it in the letter, and his use of language. Some business letters are purely factual and informative, but many of them are also persuasive; the tone of the letter may be as important as the plain sense in accomplishing the aim for which the letter was written.

The complimentary close is written slightly to the right of the middle of the page and two or three spaces below the last line of the body of the letter. A comma is usually placed after the close. Only the first word of a closing phrase is capitalized.

The complimentary close should be consistent with the heading, and both should be chosen for their harmony with the tone of the letter. A very formal letter beginning *Sir* would close *Yours respectfully, Respectfully yours,* or *Very respectfully yours.* A letter beginning *Dear Sir* would consistently close with *Yours truly, Yours very truly,* or *Very truly yours.* A less formal letter, addressed to a business acquaintance, and beginning *Dear Mr. Brown,* might close with *Sincerely yours, Sincerely, Very sincerely yours, Cordially yours,* or *Cordially.*

The participial close (*Hoping for the favor of an early reply; Trusting that this answers your question*) is no longer considered good form.

The signature is always handwritten. Unless a letterhead carries the writer's name, the name is typed below the signature, to insure legibility.

A professional title (*Dr.* Thomas Sand) is never used before the signature. If the letter requires mention of the writer's professional status, this form may be used:

Thomas Sand, M. D.

A married woman signs her own name, not her husband's, and indicates her status parenthetically:

Marjorie J. Carson

(Mrs. Frank Carson)

[*Or*] **(Mrs.) Marjorie J. Carson**

Letters of application, sometimes the most important compositions which students write, deserve special attention. A

letter of application must, if it is to receive favorable consideration, follow the conventional business-letter form outlined above. It must be neatly typed and neatly spaced on the page or pages, and it must be free from mechanical errors. In all details it should convey an impression of the writer's competence and his care in composing this letter.

The content of the letter will depend on the situation, but, generally speaking, a letter of application should include a discussion, or at least mention, of the six points listed below. These requirements for the letter are subject to modification by particular circumstances; for example, the applicant may, as part of his application, be asked to fill out blanks which cover some of these six points; he may be writing his letter to a person who is acquainted with his work, so that discussing it would be unnecessary. The average letter of application, however, should cover this material:

1. *The application itself*—a clear statement of the position applied for and the fact that the writer is applying.
2. *Qualifications*—the education and experience of the applicant. (Usually the longest and most detailed section of the letter.)
3. *Personal information*—age, health, habits, community activities, marital status, race and religion if the writer wishes to include them. (This section, usually very important in the letter, gives a picture not simply of the worker but also of the human being in whom the prospective employer is interested.)
4. *References*—names, positions, and addresses of people willing to vouch for the ability and character of the applicant.
5. *Salary*—the amount expected or understood.
6. *Request for an interview*—with information about the writer's availability, free time, telephone number—anything which will make it easy for the receiver of the letter to arrange the interview.

The interview is so important that getting it is often the real purpose of the letter of application. The letter fails in its intention if the reader is not convinced that the writer is

worth seeing; it may fail, too, if arranging the interview is not made easy and convenient.

A letter of application presents a very interesting problem in communication. The facts in the letter, the applicant's actual record, will, of course, determine to a considerable extent the response of the reader; but the way the facts are presented, the emphasis they are given, the total impression the reader receives of the total person writing the letter may determine his response even more. A skillful letter of application attracts attention without dramatics and without violation of conventions. Within the bounds of a rather formal style it communicates a personality. It is both honest and subtly slanted. It persuades without pressing; it conveys self-confidence without conceit.

V. WRITING SOCIAL NOTES

The form of informal social notes—thank-you notes, bread-and-butter letters, notes of congratulation or sympathy, informal invitations and replies—is less rigidly prescribed than the business-letter form. The heading is sometimes in the upper right-hand corner, but usually the writer's address and the date are placed at the end of the note, lower than the signature, and at the left of the page. Often only the date is given, if the writer's address is known by the addressee. Even the date may be omitted if the occasion and the relationship are very informal. The inside address is never used. The salutation and complimentary close accord with the tone of the note and the writer's attitude toward the receiver (*Dear Mrs. Jones . . . Sincerely yours; Dear Mary . . . Affectionately*). The salutation may be followed by a colon, as in a business letter, but a comma is more often used.

The note should, of course, be carefully composed, and written neatly and legibly on attractive paper. Because the communication is brief, any blunders or signs of carelessness create a particularly bad impression of the writer, and indi-

cate a lack of consideration for the person to whom he is writing.

In addition to showing evidence of care, the social note, even though it is short, should be detailed enough to convey something of the writer's personality and, above all, the genuineness of the feeling which prompted him to write. A perfunctory, mechanical, merely dutiful note defeats its purpose of cementing or furthering a social relationship. Not to express thanks for a gift is certainly inexcusably thoughtless and rude; but to write: "Dear Jean, Thank you so much for your lovely gift. It was nice of you to remember my birthday. Love, Amy"—to express thanks in this way is almost equally thoughtless and rude. The absence of detail shows indifference both toward the gift and toward the friend who was kind enough to buy and send it, and even suggests that the writer is not sure which one of her birthday gifts came from Jean.

The following social notes, though brief, are detailed and concrete enough to show genuine feeling, and thoughtful consideration of the receiver.

Dear Mrs. Bronson,

You are very kind to ask me to supper Sunday night, and I shall be delighted to come. Phil has talked so much about his family and his home. I know that the Dobermans are really as gentle as kittens, and I want to see the den that Phil has papered with three walls plain and the fourth one plaid. But most of all I am looking forward to meeting you and Mr. Bronson.

Sincerely yours,
Jane Weatherby

1496 University Avenue
March 24, 1949

Dear Uncle Peter,

When I told you before the holidays that I had decided to give up cigarettes and start smoking a pipe I wasn't hinting. But honestly, I was never so pleased in my life as when I opened the package from you Christmas morning and saw your beautiful old meerschaum. I'm smoking it right now, and I've been thinking about the times I used to sit on your lap while you blew

smoke rings for me, with this same pipe, wasn't it? Anyway I like to think so. I'll never go back to cigarettes now.

It was fine to see you at school last month. I hope your client in Denver will want to see you again soon.

Give my love to Aunt Marian and Hilda, and thanks again for the pipe.

Your nephew,
Jack

December 27

Dear Ginny,

It was such fun to see you and Tom again. I can't get over the delicious meals cooked by a girl who couldn't fry an egg three months ago. And I love your apartment. I wish I could have stayed until we finished painting the kitchen—it must be done by now, unless you had to spend yesterday resting from too much company. I'm sending you some breakfast mats I saw in Field's today, that I think are just the color of the new walls. In fact, I know it, because they match the green paint I still have in my hair! Thanks for a wonderful week-end. I enjoyed every minute of it.

Love,
Marg

6320 Ashland Boulevard
Chicago, Illinois
September 13, 1949

For one kind of social correspondence, formal invitations and replies to formal invitations, a pattern is rigidly prescribed. The formal invitation and the reply have no heading (though the sender's address is sometimes written at the lower left-hand side of the page), no inside address, no salutation, no complimentary close, and no signature. They are consistently third person and consistently present tense. Numbers are written out, and no abbreviations except *Mr.*, *Mrs.*, and *Dr.* are used. Formal invitations are engraved or written by hand; replies are handwritten, never typed, and are neatly spaced on note paper of good quality and of sufficient size to prevent crowding of the lines.

Students should familiarize themselves with this standard-

ized pattern of the formal invitation and reply. The form is so firmly established by convention that the person who fails to follow it reveals an ignorance of social custom for which he is often severely condemned.

A formal invitation is worded this way:

Mr. and Mrs. Albert Winthrop
request the pleasure of
Mr. Robert Jackson's company
at dinner on Wednesday evening,
November the twelfth,
at eight o'clock

The reply follows the wording of the invitation and confirms the date and hour:

Mr. Robert Jackson
accepts with pleasure
the kind invitation of
Mr. and Mrs. Albert Winthrop
to dinner on Wednesday evening,
November the twelfth,
at eight o'clock

[*Or*]

Mr. Robert Jackson
regrets that he is unable to accept
[or, that a previous engagement
prevents his accepting]
Mr. and Mrs. Albert Winthrop's
kind invitation to dinner
on Wednesday evening,
November the twelfth,
at eight o'clock

VI. WRITING PERSONAL LETTERS

A good personal letter is like a garment made by an excellent tailor: it is designed to fit the receiver perfectly; yet its material and workmanship bear unmistakably the mark of the maker. Because each letter writer is himself unique and

because he writes different letters to different people, it is hard to make enlightening comment about writing personal letters. Some consideration, however, of the purpose, content, organization, form, and style of personal letters, along with a few examples of good letters, may be of use to the student in his private correspondence.

Although the particular purposes of the writer will vary from letter to letter, most writers of personal letters have in common the desire to renew or to continue or to deepen their relationship with the recipient of the letter, whether the recipient is a friend, a sweetheart, or a relative. The writer of personal letters is, therefore, most concerned with projecting himself, recreating the relationship, and giving the reader a sense of his presence. Everyone has had the experience of getting a letter from a close friend, chuckling over parts of it, saying something like, "Good old George; this letter sounds just like him," and then settling back to recall pleasant past experiences. A letter which produces this effect on the reader is a good letter.

One other test of a good letter is the feeling that the writer has as he reads it over before he sends it. A letter is a kind of second-self, a representative whose traveling expenses are a few cents for postage. If the reader feels that the letter represents his best self—reflective, cultivated, humorous, entertaining, full of interesting information—then it passes the second test. The good personal letter satisfies the writer and satisfies the reader.

Good letters often give the effect of spontaneity, but they are seldom entirely spontaneous productions. Like other forms of communication, though in a less formalized way, they require the writer to gather material, to select, and to decide in advance upon at least a rough plan of development.

In gathering material one obvious step is to reread the letter that one is answering. Common courtesy requires one to answer questions and to make appropriate comment. Some letter writers follow the practice of devoting the first part of

their letter to replying to the letter that they have just received—answering questions, commenting, perhaps asking questions themselves—and then, after they have dealt in full with their friend's interests, going on to write about their own affairs. This practice has its advantages: it causes one to give thought to the friend and to his activities, and it launches one deep into his own letter; but the practice should not be made an invariable rule. A certain amount of spontaneity is desirable; rigid following of formulas kills spontaneity and produces letters that sound, and are, mechanical.

Oftentimes in reading over and thinking about the letter he is to answer, the letter writer will fall into a kind of reverie in which he thinks back over the things he and his friend have done together, the people they have known, the subjects they have discussed. Engaging in reminiscences of this sort is a second and very rewarding means of gathering material. Also it puts the writer in a good mood for letter writing because it recreates shared past experiences and so makes him feel closer to his friend. When old friends see each other after a period of separation, one of the first things they do to renew their acquaintance and to feel at ease with each other is to talk about the experiences they have shared, to recall amusing incidents, to exchange information about the recent activities of mutual friends and acquaintances. A personal letter which makes lively and concrete use of two friends' common memories can give the recipient almost as much pleasure as seeing the writer in person, and can keep the friendship alive and warm.

A third source of material for letters is information about the writer himself—his associates, his surroundings, his travels, his successes and failures, his reflections on his experience. A letter gives one an opportunity to share his present life and his thoughts with his friend, to bring their relationship up to date. It is reasonable to assume that the friend will be interested in anything that concerns the writer as long as it is presented in such a way that the friend can grasp its significance

and share the writer's feeling. Many letter writers, however, do not write interestingly about their own concerns. They simply give a catalogue of events or a list of activities and fail to select their material and to develop it to give it meaning. Such unsuccessful writers are likely to tell everything they have been doing, but to give only bare facts and to leave out details. ("Had a busy week. Went swimming yesterday, went to a dance last night, going to another dance tonight. Wish you were here.") Skillful writers select a few centers of interest, focus on those few, and write so concretely that their account is as interesting to the reader as the experience itself was for the writer.

The organization necessary in a letter depends upon the content. Some letters, particularly those which deal with ideas, may have a tight, logical structure; others, especially those which deal with reminiscence and the small events of everyday living, may ramble on informally, passing from one subject to another by a process of association. The writer should have in mind, as we suggested before, some rough plan of organization before he begins his letter, but if he should happen unexpectedly upon a rich vein, he should depart from his plan and make the most of the congenial subject matter. Good letters are likely to contain sudden turns of thought, sallies of wit, excursions into philosophy, anecdotes, allusions, elaborations, whimsical afterthoughts that occur to the writer as the letter grows. In personal letters, flavor and life come first; only so much organization is needed as will hold the letter together.

The form of the personal letter, since it is the same as that of the informal social note, presents no problems, or at least no problems which can be solved here. It is true that whether to begin a letter *Dear* or *Dearest* and whether to close with *Very sincerely, Sincerely yours,* or *Love* may be important questions—for people read letters carefully, particularly those that are, or almost are, love letters—but only the writer can decide these questions.

Consideration of style may make the difference between a fairly good letter and an excellent one. Although personal letters seldom call for formal English, they do call for lively, personalized, finished, informal expression. Concreteness is, of course, the very lifeblood of personal letters, and all that has been said elsewhere on the subject is especially pertinent here. Comparisons, allusions, particularizations, figures of speech, sharp bits of description, fragments of dialogue—all these play their part.

Comparisons and allusions can be particularly effective in those parts of the letter in which the writer is dealing with persons, places, or ideas unfamiliar to the reader. If one is describing Paris for a reader who lives in New York, a comparison between the two cities will make the material more informative and more interesting to the New Yorker. If one is describing his efforts to grow a lawn, an allusion to bluegrass—"my crab grass grows as evenly as your bluegrass and is much more hardy"—may be pleasing to a Kentucky reader. It has a shade of humor and it also gives him the feeling that the writer, though dealing with material unrelated to him, still has him in mind. Good letter writers know the value of such allusions; whatever they write about, they take every opportunity to point up the material for their particular reader. This practice is so common that good letters sometimes mean little to a third person until the allusions are explained.

An aspect of style similar in effect to allusions and perhaps peculiar to personal letters and conversation is the use of what we shall call private language. People who have associated intimately with one another—friends, lovers, members of the same family—especially lovers—have a way of creating new words or attaching special and private meaning to standard words. Use of such private language gives a certain intimacy and warmth to personal letters because it sets up a series of pleasant associations and memories.

Before going on to examples of good personal letters, it

may be well to round off our discussion by commenting on some frequently quoted generalizations and superstitions about letter writing.

1. *Always answer a letter on the day you receive it.* A good rule for business correspondence, but frequently not applicable to personal letters. It is true that one may write a better letter if he writes while the impact of his friend's letter is still affecting him, and that a very prompt reply is good if both people want to write almost daily letters. Often, though, an immediate reply puts a certain strain on the receiver. He doesn't want to write again immediately and so he may be embarrassed by his friend's dismaying efficiency. There are two ways of killing a correspondence: smothering it and starving it to death. Usually it is best to space one's letters at intervals appropriate to the circumstances and the relationship. One can recreate the impact of a friend's letter by reading it again thoughtfully before answering it.

2. *Never type a friendly letter.* A rule that no longer generally applies. It is true that some people feel an added intimacy in handwriting and prefer handwritten letters. Probably these people should be humored when their preference is known. If one's handwriting is difficult to read, though, it may be a duty and an act of friendship to type.

3. *Never begin a letter with "I."* A superstition. The basis for this superstition may be the belief that beginning a letter with *I* is a mark of conceit and self-centeredness. The word *I,* however, produces different effects in different contexts. Certainly there is no conceit in beginning a letter, "I was stupid in going contrary to your advice." Good letter writers —Charles Lamb and John Keats, for example—pay no attention to this rule. There is no reason why anyone should be bound by it.

4. *The beginning is the most important part of a letter.* A statement that contains a good deal of truth. Certainly the first paragraph is important; often it sets the tone of the whole communication. Also many people tend to write first about

the matter that is uppermost in their minds. Generalization about the position of greatest emphasis is difficult, however, because each letter writer tends to follow his own pattern. Some people put the important matter at the end, or even in a postscript.

5. *Avoid apologies at the beginning of the letter.* A good rule. To start off with an apology is usually to start off on the wrong foot. Unless very skillfully executed, an apology at the beginning damages the tone of the letter because it suggests that the writer really doesn't want to write but is urged on by a sense of duty; few people want letters written for duty and not for love. An apology, if there must be one, is usually best buried in the middle of the letter and made to seem an explanation instead of an apology.

6. *Don't write anything in a letter that you wouldn't be willing to have read in court.* Cynical advice, but worth considering if one does not take it too seriously. Personal letters have figured in breach-of-promise suits and other legal actions, and well-intentioned but thoughtless friends have, on occasion, caused embarrassment by showing letters to others. It is best to think twice before making promises and commitments, and not to entrust very private opinions or information to indiscreet people.

7. *Never mail a spiteful, sarcastic or angry letter.* A good rule, and most worth following when one feels most like going contrary to it. Such letters are almost always written when one's pride or one's feelings have been hurt and when one is unable for a time to take a sensible view of the situation. Often caused by misunderstanding, angry letters are almost sure to produce further misunderstanding; the brief satisfaction that writing them gives is often followed by embarrassment or regret or even sorrow over a lost friendship. Sarcasm, spite, and anger are about as likely to improve human relations as kerosene is to extinguish fire. Even when anger is justified, an objective, clear, restrained statement of one's grievance will cause respectful attention and will have

more effect than overstatement, sarcasm, and vituperation. An angry letter may produce an angry reply or a cold silence; a calm, fair letter doesn't justify anger and it can't be ignored by a fair-minded person. It leaves no easy way out and so it hits home.

In the example below, Dr. Johnson's famous letter to Lord Chesterfield, presumably his patron, Johnson makes clear his displeasure and the grounds for it without losing his dignity or his sense of proportion. Because the letter was written to a lord, because of its subject matter, and because Dr. Johnson wrote it in his characteristic Johnsonian manner, it is unusually formal for a personal letter. Noteworthy in it are the directness and the courtesy of the beginning, the rugged modesty of tone, the apt allusion to Virgil, the comparison to the drowning man, the forceful but objective statement, and the unusual turn given to the complimentary close.

To the Right Honorable the Lord of Chesterfield

7th February, 1755.

My Lord,

I have been lately informed, by the proprietor of *The World* that two papers, in which my Dictionary is recommended to the public, were written by your Lordship. To be so distinguished is an honor, which, being very little accustomed to favors from the great, I know not well how to receive, or in what terms to acknowledge.

When, upon some slight encouragement, I first visited your Lordship, I was overpowered like the rest of mankind, by the enchantment of your address, and could not forbear to wish that I might boast myself *Le vainqueur du vainqueur de la terre;*— that I might obtain that regard for which I saw the world contending; but I found my attendance so little encouraged, that neither pride nor modesty would suffer me to continue it. When I had once addressed your Lordship in public, I had exhausted all the art of pleasing which a retired and uncourtly scholar can possess. I had done all that I could; and no man is well pleased to have his all neglected, be it ever so little.

Seven years, my Lord, have now past, since I waited in your

outward rooms, or was repulsed from your door; during which time I have been pushing on my work through difficulties, of which it is useless to complain, and have brought it at last to the verge of publication, without one act of assistance, one word of encouragement, or one smile of favor. Such treatment I did not expect, for I never had a patron before.

The shepherd in Virgil grew at last acquainted with Love, and found him a native of the rocks.

Is not a patron, my Lord, one who looks with unconcern on a man struggling for life in the water, and, when he has reached ground, encumbers him with help? The notice which you have been pleased to take of my labors, had it been early, had been kind; but it has been delayed till I am indifferent, and cannot enjoy it; till I am solitary, and cannot impart it; till I am known, and do not want it. I hope it is not very cynical asperity not to confess obligations where no benefit has been received, or to be unwilling that the public should consider me as owing that to a patron, which providence has enabled me to do for myself.

Having carried on my work thus far with so little obligation to any favorer of learning, I shall not be disappointed though I should conclude it, if less be possible, with less; for I have been long wakened from that dream of hope, in which I once boasted myself with so much exultation, my Lord, your Lordship's most humble, most obedient servant,

Sam. Johnson.

Charles Lamb's letters, like his essays and like the man himself, are full of wit, fancy, whimsicality, allusion and humor. The letter below was written to Dr. Vale Asbury. (Since this letter refers to an instance of Lamb's intemperance, it is fair to add that for him "a little wine went a long way" and that he was not in general an intemperate man.)

Dear Sir, It is an observation of a wise man that "moderation is best in all things." I cannot agree with him "in liquor." There is a smoothness and oiliness in wine that makes it go down by a natural channel, which I am positive was made for that descending. Else, why does not wine choke us? Could Nature have made that sloping lane, not to facilitate the down-going? She does nothing in vain. You know that better than I. You know how often she has helped you at a dead lift, and how much better entitled

she is to a fee than yourself sometimes, when you carry off the credit.—Still there is something due to manners and customs, and I should apologize to you and Mrs. Asbury for being absolutely carried home upon a man's shoulders thro' Silver Street, up Parson's Lane, by the Chapels (which might have taught me better), and then to be deposited like a dead log at Gaffar Westwood's, who it seems does not "insure" against intoxication. Not that the mode of conveyance is objectionable. On the contrary, it is more easy than a one-horse chaise. Ariel in the "Tempest" says

> On a Bat's back do I fly,
> After sunset merrily.

Now I take it that Ariel must sometimes have stayed out late of nights. Indeed, he pretends that "where the bee sucks, there lurks he," as much as to say that his suction is as innocent as that little innocent (but damnably stinging when he is provok'd) winged creature. But I take it, that Ariel was fond of metheglin of which the Bees are notorious Brewers. But then you will say: What a shocking sight to see a middle-aged gentleman-and-a-half riding upon a Gentleman's back up Parson's Lane at midnight. Exactly the time for that sort of conveyance, when nobody can see him, nobody but Heaven and his own conscience; now Heaven makes fools, and don't expect much from her own creation; and as for conscience, She and I have long since come to a compromise. I have given up false modesty, and she allows me to abate a little of the true. I like to be liked, but I don't care about being respected. I don't respect myself. But, as I was saying, I thought he would have let me down just as we got to Lieutenant Barker's Coal-shed (or emporium) but by a cunning jerk I eased myself, and righted my posture. I protest, I thought myself in a palanquin, and never felt myself so grandly carried. It was a slave under me. There was I, all but my reason. And what is reason? and what is the loss of it? and how often in a day do we do without it, just as well? Reason is only counting, two and two makes four. And if on my passage home, I thought it made five, what matter? Two and two will just make four, as it always did, before I took the finishing glass that did my business. My sister has begged me to write an apology to Mrs. A. and you for disgracing your party; now it does seem to me, that I rather honored your party, for every one that was not drunk (and one or two of the ladies, I am sure, were not) must have

been set off greatly in the contrast to me. I was the scapegoat. The soberer they seemed. By the way is magnesia good on these occasions? . . . But still you'll say (or the men and maids at your house will say) that it is not a seemly sight for an old gentleman to go home pick-a-back. Well, may be it is not. But I have never studied grace. I take it to be a mere superficial accomplishment. I regard more the internal acquisitions. The great object after supper is to get home, and whether that is obtained in a horizontal posture or perpendicular (as foolish men and apes affect for dignity) I think is little to the purpose. The end is always greater than the means. Here I am, able to compose a sensible rational apology, and what signifies how I got here? I have just sense enough to remember I was very happy last night, and to thank our kind host and hostess, and that's sense enough, I hope.

Charles Lamb.

N.B.—What is good for a desperate head-ache? Why, Patience, and a determination not to mind being miserable all day long. And that I have made my mind up to.

So, here goes. It is better than not being alive at all, which I might have been, had your man toppled me down at Lieut. Barker's Coal-shed. My sister sends her sober compliments to Mrs. A. She is not much the worse.

Yours truly,
C. Lamb.

A letter, or rather a selection from a letter, written by John Keats to John Hamilton Reynolds, illustrates the kind of sharing of ideas that sometimes enriches reflective personal letters. This particular letter is distinctive because of the concrete imagery that Keats uses to make his ideas clear, because the ideas themselves are significant, and because the letter, like good conversation, gives the sense of a lively mind at work, reflecting on human experience and advancing tentative conclusions.

Teignmouth, 3 May

My dear Reynolds,

. . . . With your patience, I will return to Wordsworth—whether or no he has an extended vision or a circumscribed

grandeur—whether he is an eagle in his nest, or on the wing. And to be more explicit and to show you how tall I stand by the giant, I will put down a simile of human life as far as I now perceive it; that is, to the point to which I say we both have arrived at.

Well—I compare human life to a large Mansion of Many Apartments, two of which I can only describe, the doors of the rest being as yet shut upon me. The first we step into we call the Infant or Thoughtless Chamber, in which we remain as long as we do not think. We remain there a long while, and notwithstanding the doors of the second Chamber remain wide open, showing a bright appearance, we care not to hasten to it; but are at length imperceptibly impelled by the awakening of the thinking principle within us—we no sooner get into the second Chamber, which I shall call the Chamber of Maiden-Thought, than we become intoxicated with the light and the atmosphere, we see nothing but pleasant wonders, and think of delaying there for ever in delight. However among the effects this breathing is father of is that tremendous one of sharpening one's vision into the heart and nature of Man—of convincing one's nerves that the world is full of Misery and Heartbreak, Pain, Sickness, and oppression—whereby this Chamber of Maiden-Thought becomes gradually darken'd and at the same time on all sides of it many doors are set open—but all dark—all leading to dark passages. We see not the balance of good and evil, we are in a Mist. *We* are now in that state—we feel the "burden of the Mystery."

To this point was Wordsworth come, as far as I can conceive when he wrote "Tintern Abbey," and it seems to me that his Genius is explorative of those dark Passages. Now if we live, and go on thinking, we too shall explore them. He is a genius and superior to us, in so far as he can, more than we, make discoveries, and shed a light in them. Here I must think Wordsworth is deeper than Milton, though I think it has depended more upon the general and gregarious advance of intellect, than individual greatness of Mind. From the Paradise Lost and the other Works of Milton, I hope it is not too presuming, even between ourselves to say, that his Philosophy, human and divine, may be tolerably understood by one not much advanced in years. In his time Englishmen were just emancipated from a great superstition, and Men had got hold of certain points and resting places in reasoning which were too newly born to be doubted,

and too much opposed by the Mass of Europe not to be thought ethereal and authentically divine—Who could gainsay his ideas on virtue, vice, and Chastity in Comus just at the time of the dismissal of Cod-pieces and a hundred other disgraces? Who would not rest satisfied with his hintings at good and evil in the Paradise Lost, when just free from the inquisition and burning in Smithfield? The Reformation produced such immediate and great benefits, that Protestantism was considered under the immediate eye of heaven, and its own remaining Dogmas and superstitions, then, as it were, regenerated, constituted those resting places and seeming sure points of Reasoning— from that I have mentioned, Milton, whatever he may have thought in the sequel, appears to have been content with these by his writings. He did not think into the human heart, as Wordsworth has done. Yet Milton as a Philosopher, had sure as great powers as Wordsworth.

What is then to be inferr'd? O many things. It proves there is really a grand march of intellect; it proves that a mighty Providence subdues the mightiest Minds to the service of the time being, whether it be in human Knowledge or Religion. I have often pitied a Tutor who has to hear "Nom: Musa" so often dinn'd into his ears—I hope you may not have the same pain in this scribbling—I may have read these things before, but I never had even a thus dim perception of them; and moreover I like to say my lesson to one who will endure my tediousness, for my own sake.

After all, there is certainly something real in the World—Moore's present to Hazlitt is real—I like that Moore, and am glad I saw him at the Theatre just before I left Town. Tom has spit a *leetle* blood this afternoon, and that is rather a damper—but I know—the truth is there is something real in the World. Your third Chamber of Life shall be a lucky and a gentle one—stored with the wine of love—and the Bread of Friendship.

When you see George, if he should not have received a letter from me tell him he will find one at home most likely—tell Bailey I hope soon to see him. Remember me to all. The leaves have been out here for many a day. I have written to George for the first stanzas of my "Isabel"—I shall have them soon, and will copy the whole out for you.

Your affectionate friend
John Keats

Not only literary men write good letters. The letter below, written by a college sophomore to her sister, sustains comparison with the letters that precede it and illustrates many of the characteristics of the good personal letter.

Monday

Dear Sisser,

The *Story* magazine pleases me immensely—really more than anything else I can think of. Of course I *am* wondering whether it was sent more for my pleasure, or for my profit as the sugar-coated corrective following my first writing exercise. I trust that the gang on the corridor at school will give me first chance at it!

Floss has been in her heyday! Christmas season and four of her children at home—why, she's never had so much mail to open! My little package for the folks was due to arrive sometime last week, and arrive it did on Wednesday. But by the time I reached it, it had been thrice opened, Floss leading by a nose. Best of all is Mother's explanation: "Why, Honey, I saw it was addressed to you, and it was just the *natural* thing for me to open it!"

Your Christmas letter (by the way—Merry Christmas) created quite a bit of excitement. It arrived the Saturday before Christmas. Mother laid it before her on the table, fingered it gently, and announced defiantly, "I'm going to open it." The Judge immediately set down the law, "Now *Floss,* etc., etc., etc.," and he picked the letter up and triumphantly deposited it on the mantle. An hour later found Floss fumbling with the flaps of the letter, and then the Judge removing it to some other perfectly accessible place. And so until Christmas Eve, when the Judge and Floss again entered into a disagreement which ended with your letter being placed in Father's pocket until the next day. And then when the big moment finally arrived, Mother sat there and was content merely to look at the outside of the letter while the Judge fluttered around like an old lady, and finally opened the letter with his own hands!

Christmas morning, about 11:30, Father came in from town and stalked upstairs to find his tweezers, use them, and be really dressed up for Christmas dinner! But the tweezers were gone—("Can't keep a thing in the house"). I happened to be in my room: "Bee-a-tur," he shouted, "are you using my tweezers?" Hastily, "No, Father." Frances was upstairs too. "Girl, have *you*

taken my tweezers?" "No, Father." The Judge stomped to the top of the stairs. "Now where are those boys; can't have a thing of my own.—*Boys.*" A silence and then a "huh?" and a "what?" "What have *you* done with my tweezers?" roared the Judge. Then 'midst of the chorus of disavowals and denials, Floss came to the bottom of the stairs. Very meekly she inquired, "Why, Frank, will you need them before dinner?" "Well, no, but I'd like to know where they are!" "Well, uh, Frank, I, uh,—I've been using them—to pull out the *pin feathers* in the *turkey!*" Never have I seen such an expression as whoopzed across the Judge's face! And he walked up and down the hall for fifteen minutes, stroking his whiskers and repeating, "Well, that Floss girl, that Floss girl!" while Frances and I chuckled incessantly; the boys shouted with glee; and Mother retired into the kitchen, a little confused, but on the whole, triumphant.

Yesterday we drove up to Beardstown to see George and Winifred. They are coming here to lunch tomorrow. George has a moustache, much tweeds, a red tie, and an extra fifty pounds around the middle. He sat joggling his baby on his knee while Marshall sat in the corner and crowed, "Isn't that the prettiest picture!" Uncle Will Luthringer, who is stone deaf, kept shouting at Ouie, "Can you hear me now, Pearl?" Ouie repeatedly informed anyone who would listen that "Will is the funniest thing. Imagine *him* asking if I can hear!" while Father, who missed out on the greater part of the conversation because he couldn't hear it, confided in Marshall that it was too bad how deaf Pearl was getting!

Father, by the way, is having as much fun showing off his cheese box this year as ever before. Mother wore her pajamas (the new ones) Christmas Eve, and nearly smothered because it was a warm evening! Also, she kept insisting that the scarf was too pretty for her, must have been for one of us—we convinced her. Mans thinks his striped tie is "sure keen"; Sam wore his to the Christmas dance. Frances' shoes are darling. Not all my artful persuasion could make her part with them even for a night! And have I told you how much I liked *Story?* Thanks, Mr. and Mrs. Joyce.

Love, Beater

Noteworthy in the preceding letter are:

1. The selection of material: family activities and personalities of interest to the writer and the receiver.

2. The use of private language: "Sisser"; "Floss" for Mother; "whoopzed"; the signature "Beater," a nickname, instead of Beatrice.
3. The lively, informal, but by no means slovenly, style.
4. The very good use of anecdote, somewhat exaggerated for effect: Mother opening the package; Father and the tweezers; Ouie, Uncle Will, and Father in conversation.
5. The organization of material about a few central points: fully developed anecdotes about Mother, Father, Ouie, and Uncle Will.
6. The concrete development of anecdote by particular detail ("Floss came to the foot of the stairs"; "George has a moustache, much tweeds, a red tie, and an extra fifty pounds around the middle"), and by dialogue or quotation ("Can't keep a thing in the house," and Mother's explanation for opening the package).
7. The effective beginning and ending achieved by the initial and final reference to *Story* magazine.

EXERCISES

I. Who is the best conversationalist you know? After listening to his conversation, jot down an analysis of what makes it good.

II. Write a short informal essay on poor or boring or irritating conversationalists you have known.

III. Make a list of the faults in public speakers which you find most trying. Consider teachers, ministers, lecturers, and other speakers whom you have heard.

IV. Get an examination written by an A student in a course you are taking, and compare your examination paper with his. (This is to be done, of course, when the papers are returned, not during the examination.)

V. Write a business letter to the bursar of your college, explaining that you have been charged a laboratory fee for a course which you are not taking.

VI. Write your insurance company an account of an automobile accident in which you have been involved.

VII. Following the suggestions given in the section on writing letters of application, write a letter applying for the kind of position you hope you will be applying for ten years from now. You will, of course, need to give a fictitious account of your experience during this ten-year period.

VIII. Write a note thanking a friend who has sent you a present.

IX. You, a member of the freshman class, have received the following formal invitation. Write two answers, one accepting it, the other regretting that you cannot accept.

President and Mrs. James Fairfax Brown
request the pleasure of the company of
the members of the Freshman Class
at a reception at Newton Hall
on Saturday, October the fifteenth,
at four o'clock

R.S.V.P.

X. The mother of one of your college friends has invited you to Thanksgiving dinner. Write a note accepting or declining the invitation.

XI. Write a personal letter to a close family friend or a relative, describing some of the things that happened in your home during the Thanksgiving or Christmas holiday, or on some other occasion when the family was assembled.

XII.

Dear Mother,

I've been so busy I haven't had a minute to write. They certainly pile on the work here. I'm having a good time though. Hope you're all right. Tell Dad I really need an extra five dollars.

Your loving son,
Henry

Expand the letter above into a good personal letter, drawing on your own experience to do so. (If you don't need the five dollars, you may omit that part of the letter.)

CHAPTER ELEVEN

READING

THE WORK DONE in recent years in reading clinics has shown that many students do poorly in their college courses because they have not learned to read efficiently. Many students, furthermore, have missed the pleasure and the profit that come from reading widely and well, because they have not developed skill in absorbing material from the printed page. Skillful reading involves many things: an ability to grasp ideas quickly and accurately; an adequate vocabulary; a power of active concentration on the material and of critical judgment in evaluating it; and an ability to apply different methods of reading to different kinds of material. In this chapter we are discussing three kinds of reading: rapid reading, reading for study, and critical reading. These three kinds of reading are not mutually exclusive. Although much of the material designed for college study cannot be read at high speed, practice in reading rapidly is likely to improve reading for study; and a critical evaluation of the material should be part of any kind of reading. The three sections of this chapter, then, are simply three different approaches to the complex problem of reading. Their combined purpose is to help the student gain more knowledge and pleasure from the reading he is required to do and the reading he freely chooses to do.

I. RAPID READING

The average college freshman reads ordinary material (novels, magazine articles, nonfiction of a nontechnical nature, etc.) at a rate of 300 to 325 words a minute. With practice in more rapid reading he can increase his rate to 450 or 500 words a minute, with no loss of comprehension. A number of college students read 200 words a minute or less; that is, they labor through their reading at a rate which is normal for fifth graders in elementary school, and which is an appalling handicap at college level. With practice they can double their reading speed, and, at the same time, increase their comprehension. To save reading time, to be able to read twice as much printed material in a given number of hours, is an obvious gain; but the most important point about learning to read rapidly is this: *as reading speed increases, comprehension nearly always increases too.*

The slow reader (who, incidentally, is usually sure that he *must* read slowly in order to understand), laboriously reading each separate word, sometimes every separate syllable, becomes so involved in the individual words that he loses the thread of the thought, the sweep and development of the whole idea. He is likely to emerge from his reading with only a cloudy impression of the organization of the material, and little sense of the relative weight of its different parts. He has been lost in the woods of words. Furthermore, because his plodding reading is difficult, he tires quickly; his attention is easily diverted, and his concentration is poor. When he learns to absorb whole phrases at a glance, to move swiftly from idea to idea instead of slowly from word to word, he grasps the material more quickly and easily, and his comprehension is clearer and more accurate.

Slow reading may be caused by defects in vision or muscular control, for which the advice of an oculist is needed. If one's vision is good, or has been corrected by glasses, increasing reading speed and with it comprehension is surprisingly

simple. It requires an easily made analysis of one's own reading habits, and a few weeks of practice in eliminating bad habits by forced rapid reading for a short time every day.

The first step for the student interested in more rapid reading is to ascertain his present reading rate. He should read for five or ten minutes, at his usual rate, part of a magazine, a biography, or a book of informal essays. The number of words he has read can quickly be estimated by counting the words in several lines and multiplying the average number of words in a line by the number of lines read; that total number of words, divided by the exact number of minutes taken for the reading gives him, of course, his reading rate in words per minute. If that rate is between 300 and 325, his reading speed is average, but it can and should be increased for this kind of reading. If his rate is below 180, he can be reasonably sure that he is a word-for-word reader.

Word-for-word reading, that is, reading and silently pronouncing every word, is probably the greatest obstacle to efficient reading. The fast and skillful reader absorbs whole phrases in an instant, wasting no time on unimportant words. For example, in reading the sentence "He drove the car at a rate of seventy miles an hour around the curves of the country road," the efficient reader spends no time reading and pronouncing *the, at, a, rate, of, miles, an, hour, around, the, of, the;* he immediately grasps the meaning first of phrases and then of the sentence through the key words, *drove, car, seventy, curves, country road.* He reads and understands the sentence, therefore, in less than half the time taken by the word-for-word reader.

A reading rate of less than 180 words a minute is, as we have said, an almost infallible indication of word-for-word reading. But the slow reader can, by several easy tests, determine for himself whether he is reading word-for-word. He may be lip-reading, that is, moving his lips to form each word as he reads; a friend can watch him and tell him if he has this habit. He may keep his lips still, but pronounce each

word in his throat; if he reads with his fingers on his voice box and if he feels a constant vibration, he will know that he is doing this silent "vocalizing." He may be an "auditory" reader, not actually vocalizing the words, but hearing the sound of each word in his mind; honest examination of his own experience while reading will tell him whether or not this is true. Auditory reading is usually faster and less tiring than lip-reading or vocalizing, since it does not involve muscular activity; but it is a form of word-for-word reading and is therefore undesirable except in special circumstances.[1]

A bad habit second only to word-for-word reading is the habit of "regression," that is, looking back and reading again phrases or whole sentences. Regression sometimes comes from faulty vision, sometimes from inattention or lack of interest. Often it is simply a habit born of a nervous fear of not understanding in only one reading. Habitual regression makes comprehension more difficult, as well as slower, because it interrupts the sequence of thought.

Another bad habit, akin to word-for-word reading, is making too many eye-stops, or "fixations," in reading a line of print. When one's eyes are moving across a line, they are not seeing; when the eyes stop, one sees and reads. The poor reader commonly makes six or seven fixations in a single line. The good reader usually needs only three for an ordinary line on a printed page. His eyes move, not in numerous short jerks, but in a rhythmical motion, across the lines, and from one line to the next; he has developed a wider eye-span, so that in his few fixations his eyes take in a number of words. He reads twice as fast as the reader who stops twice as often in a line, and he absorbs more of the sense because he gets it in larger and more meaningful units. The reader can determine the number of fixations (and also regressions) he makes by putting a mirror on one page of a book, reading from the

[1] In reading poetry and certain types of prose, auditory reading is appropriate and desirable. It is undesirable when it is used indiscriminatingly with all types of material. Trying to speed-read all the time is as unwise as reading always at an inappropriately slow rate.

opposite page, and having a friend look over his shoulder and watch his eye movements in the mirror as he reads.

When the reader knows through actual experimentation what his reading rate is, and what bad habits of word-for-word reading, regression, or too frequent fixations are slowing his reading, he is ready to embark on a program of eliminating his bad habits and improving both his speed and his comprehension. The program is simple: for a few minutes every day, he should practice reading rather easy material (newspapers, magazines, any light reading) at a rate *too fast for comfort.* Not worrying about how much he is comprehending (and his comprehension will at first be poor), he should concentrate on pushing through the material, covering as much ground as he can, and not allowing himself to indulge in any particular bad reading habit which he has. If he forces himself as he should through this practice reading, he will have no time to stop at and absorb unimportant words, no time to vocalize, no time to look back and re-read. The forced rapid reading not only helps to eliminate retarding habits; it develops a new mechanical skill; and, before long, the reader will find that increased comprehension results from new habits of increased eye-span, fewer and shorter fixations, and continuous, rhythmical phrase-reading.

Dr. Robert M. Bear, director of the reading clinic at Dartmouth, says this about the principle and the experience of rapid reading:

> The fundamental rule for increasing reading speed is simply this: *For five minutes every day for a month, force yourself to read a little faster than is comfortable.* Don't worry if occasionally you miss the exact meaning of a phrase, sentence, or even a paragraph. Just keep plowing ahead, grasping the main theme and letting the niceties of expression go hang. It's a good idea to keep a record of how many words you cover during five-minute sessions each day. To simplify the word-count, just figure the average number of words to a line and multiply by the number of lines you have read.

From my experience with hundreds of students, I can predict

what will happen. On the first day your impression of what you are reading will be hazy and vague, like looking at a landscape through a dirty windowpane. But gradually, after five or ten days, you will begin to digest more of the meaning; and by the end of thirty days you will be comprehending even more than when you started. And then, paradoxically, you will discover that you are reading at about twice your previous clip.

The effects of such a short self-training program in overcoming the bad reading habits of years seem too good to be true; but they are true. The present writer has seen striking results even from a brief speed-reading project in which college freshmen read at a faster-than-comfortable speed one essay a week for eight weeks, with a comprehension test on each essay. One girl, who began by reading 200 words a minute, with comprehension scores of 50 and 60 out of a possible 100, was, on the last four essays, reading at a rate of 700 words a minute, with comprehension scores of 100. Delighted with her progress, but hardly trusting it, she continued to test herself on other reading; she found that her normal pace was now 500 to 600 words a minute. She was able to read her assignments in history and government at a rate of over 400 words a minute, and her work in those courses, with which she had had serious difficulty, improved markedly with the improvement in reading skill. Another student, who began the timed-reading essays with a good reading pace of 375 words a minute, was, by the end of the project, reading at the exceptional speed of 800 words a minute; his comprehension scores, always high, remained 90 and 100. These two cases are, of course, spectacular, and not typical. Very common, though, among some 600 students, was an increase in reading speed of 150 to 200 words a minute, with no loss, and usually with a gain in comprehension.

Many students are blocked in their reading by a "slow-but-sure" superstition; they believe, mistakenly, that the hard way must be the best way, and they are gripped by a fear of not understanding if they try to "rush through" their reading.

Practicing speed on reading which is nonessential, and learning for themselves that they can comprehend as well or better once they have adjusted to a faster rate releases them from this fear; they are free to strike a new pace which is right for them, and to adjust that pace to different kinds of reading. One of the problems of the slow reader is that he reads at an equal rate, with equal care, essential and nonessential material, an assignment in economics and a light novel or magazine article. The usual result is that he has no time for reading which is not immediately essential; since reading is so difficult for him, he has no experience with reading for pleasure, and little experience of enjoying what he is required to read.

It is important, in beginning a program of rapid reading, to choose for the experiment fairly easy, unrequired reading. A period of confusion, of blurred comprehension, is inevitably a first stage in changing one's reading habits. Students commonly find, as they practice rapid reading and develop new reading habits, that they can prepare more rapidly and with better understanding their assignments in "reading courses" like history, government, economics, English, and sociology. But to begin by speed-reading those assignments would be most unwise. A large part of the good result of forced rapid reading comes from the relaxing knowledge that clear comprehension is not essential in the first stages of the experiment.

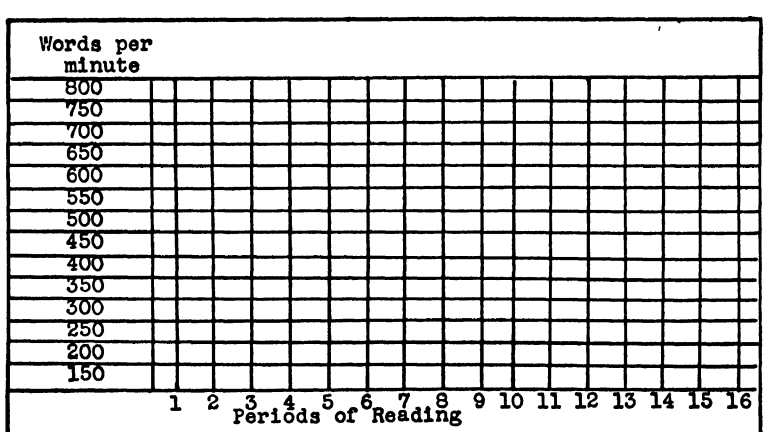
Students often find it interesting to speed-read a popular or semi-popular biography, reading the book a half hour a day at a faster-than-comfortable rate, and keeping a chart of the number of pages they read each day. Experimenting with a book instead of with various short pieces has advantages: the average number of words to a page can be determined early, so that the work of keeping a record is simplified; the level of writing, its degree of difficulty, is more likely to be constant; and if the biography is interesting, it provides an incentive for the daily reading practice. Some instructors

RECORD OF RAPID READING

Book:
Average number of words to a page:

Day	Time spent reading	Pages read	Words per minute

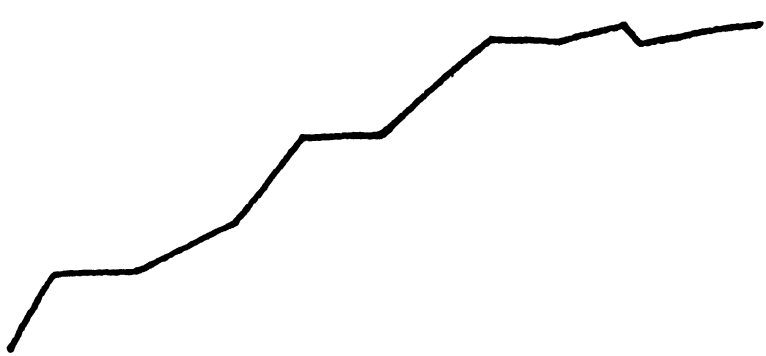
It is interesting, too, to record each day's results in graph form:



assign a book to be read in this way, knowing that the reports written on the book may not show the detailed knowledge usually expected in book reports, but knowing, too, that practice in rapid reading and improvement in general reading skill are worth far more to students than clear comprehension of a single book.

For the convenience of students beginning their rapid reading program with a book, we are printing on the opposite page a chart on which each day's reading may be recorded.

We have said that comprehension will be blurred in the early period of forced rapid reading; this is natural, and by no means a reason for concern or discouragement; accurate comprehension comes after new habits are established. Nor should one be discouraged if, after initial progress, he seems to hit a dead level, a "plateau" at which neither his speed nor his comprehension improves. These plateaus are normal in learning any new skill; they are simply temporary halts, after which progress is usually more rapid than before the plateau was reached. A graph of a student's progress in rapid reading during a trial period of fifteen or twenty days of forced rapid reading is likely to look somewhat like this:



Keeping on with the faster-than-comfortable reading, forcing one's eyes to take in more words at a single fixation, allowing no time for the uneconomical indulgences of regression or

vocalizing, will produce results, and will open an entirely new reading experience to the poor reader.

College students should not be content with their reading until they are covering ordinary nontechnical material at a rate of 400 to 500 words a minute, and understanding it well.

II. READING FOR STUDY

In reading for study, speed is a secondary and sometimes completely irrelevant consideration. One may wish, and need, to spend fifteen minutes absorbing the full meaning and implication of several lines of poetry, or of a brief formula in organic chemistry; auditory reading—letting each word sound in one's mind—may be the best reading for literature in which rhythm and sound are important parts of the full meaning the writer is trying to communicate. At the same time, the student who has developed the rapid-reading skill discussed in the preceding section is likely to be a better reader of any material, however complex, because he has learned to grasp meaning quickly from phrases, without spending time on unimportant words; and because he has developed the habit of continuous forward movement in reading, which enables him to see the sequence and development of ideas.

Students who have done poorly on quizzes and examinations often say, "But I read the material over three times" —or "four times." They usually *have* read the material three or four times, but that fact is not a credit to them; it is evidence that they are in a groove of ineffectual reading. The last two or three readings have been of little or no value because they have been simply repetitions—diluted repetitions—of the first unskillful reading. In the following pages we shall outline a method of study to replace this unsystematic and unproductive method of reading an assignment again and again.

These are the common weaknesses in the reading for study of college students:

1. Missing main ideas; confusing minor points with major points.

2. Failing to see the connection between points; missing the broad development of the theme or idea.

3. Not understanding, or misunderstanding, the author's terminology, and so not understanding the meaning of whole paragraphs or chapters.

4. Taking notes which misrepresent the organization and emphasis of the material, and which are, consequently, useless either for daily preparation or for review.

No simple remedy can be prescribed for all of these weaknesses; inadequate background in the field, inadequate reading experience, and inadequate vocabularly are often at least partially responsible for them, and there is no quick, easy cure for such deficiencies. But most students find a marked improvement in their grasp of a subject as soon as they learn a technique or method of study. The method may differ slightly with different material, but reading for study should, in general, consist of these four steps:

1. *A preliminary survey* (if the material is expository), which gives the reader a skeleton outline of what the author is going to say, and enables him to fit particular facts and details into a general pattern when he begins to read. This preliminary survey is made by looking at the table of contents, which usually lists the main points discussed in each chapter of a book; and, chiefly, by leafing through the pages assigned and making a mental note of the headings and subheadings by which the author has indicated the organization of his material. Most college texts have such headings, in capital letters, in heavy type or italics, or in marginal notations. (With books which do not have headings or marginal notations, the best way to get an idea of the organization and general development is to skim along looking at topic sentences. The first or second sentence of a paragraph will usu-

ally be a topic sentence.) Often, too, the first paragraphs of a chapter state what is to be covered in the chapter, and the concluding paragraphs summarize what has been said; reading these paragraphs may be a valuable part of the preliminary survey. With a little practice, students can make an efficient survey of thirty or forty pages in five or ten minutes. These minutes are well spent. Having in mind the outline of the material, and the names, at least, of the main points, the student can read with a sense of direction, and knowledge of the whole plan. This initial survey does much to prevent the first two of the weaknesses in study listed above—missing the main ideas, and failing to see connections between ideas.

2. *Reading the material through* to see the development of the ideas noted in the preliminary survey, *without stopping* to re-read difficult passages, to look up words, or to take notes. The reading should be as rapid as is consistent with the student's understanding of the material (here, of course, the rapid reader has a great advantage over the slow reader), and the reading should be continuous. It is wise to mark with a check in the margin passages which seem important, and with a check or question mark passages which are unclear; but breaking the reading by puzzling long over a passage, or by stopping to take notes, will interfere with one's grasp of the sequence and development of ideas. Also, one is likely to waste time with such stops: a momentarily unclear passage may be clarified by the later context; and notes taken before the reader knows surely what is most important in the material are likely to be useless or misleading.

3. *Checking through the material, and re-reading with care any sections which are difficult or obscure.* This is a very different procedure from simply reading the assignment over again. The reader should look once more at section headings, and at paragraph beginnings; if he can mentally fill in their content, he can go on to the next section without re-reading the material here. He should concentrate on passages about which he is vague, or which, in his first reading, he has checked

for later consideration. This is the stage of reading for study in which one may profitably spend fifteen minutes over a few lines of poetry, a formula, or a paragraph of philosophical reasoning.

An important part of this process of checking and selective re-reading should be fixing in mind not only the topic ideas of the assignment, but the meaning of key words *as the author uses them.* We have listed as a common study fault the misunderstanding of the author's terminology. Sometimes the student needs to consult his dictionary in order to understand the author's language; more often he needs to consider carefully the context of a troublesome word or term. In this book, for example, we have used repeatedly the word *context.* The student who slides over the early definition and the use-in-context of the word, and who attaches to it an idea of his own that context means "text" or "content," will miss the meaning of a number of sentences in which that word is used. In economics, a number of familiar words, like *wealth, goods, cost, scarcity,* are used in special senses; students have difficulty in understanding a text in economics if they assume that they know the meaning of such words, and fail to read carefully the economist's definition of them. Some historians use the word *revolution* to describe social or economic upheaval or change; students who take for granted that "revolution" always involves the violent overthrow of a political regime will be misled by overlooking the writer's definition of the word.

Part of checking and selective re-reading, too, should be active thinking about the material presented, and perhaps some criticism or evaluation of the author's opinions and techniques. The complex problem of evaluating what one reads is discussed more fully in the next section. Evaluation is not always possible for the student reading material in a field which is completely new to him. But thinking about the material, being alert and curious about new ideas and the implications of those ideas, and relating those ideas to his own

interests and experience are certainly important parts of good reading in any field, and of education in general.

4. *Taking notes.* Since good notes represent, in concise form, the organization and the most important ideas of a body of material, the student is in no position to take useful notes until he knows the organization and the central ideas of what he is reading. Steps 3 and 4 in this process of reading for study may be combined; that is, the reader may take notes as he checks the material and re-reads the difficult passages. But he should not take notes until he has completed his first reading of the assignment, and until the outline of the material and the major ideas are clear to him.

III. EVALUATING WHAT ONE READS

If it were possible to establish general hard-and-fast standards for judging everything that we read, analyzing and assessing a particular communication would be simple. It seems that we should be able to say that all good writing must have such characteristics of style as correctness, clarity, economy, emphasis, concreteness, interest, and must contain relevant and true information. When we consider various kinds of writing, however—say a cookbook, an economics text, an editorial, a magazine article, a *New Yorker* profile, a political speech, a personal letter, an informal essay, a short story written in dialect, a poem—we see that a general standard cannot apply to all of them, and is more likely to mislead us than to help us.

Because different kinds of writing aim at different effects and different kinds of excellence, we must reach our evaluation, not by trying to apply a single rigid standard, but by looking steadily at the communication itself and by judging it first *objectively,* according to the success of the writer in achieving his purpose; and then *personally,* according to our beliefs and values. The whole process of evaluation can be described as follows: first the reader suspends judgment and

tries by analysis to gain a clear understanding of the communication; second, he determines in the light of his analysis just what the writer's intention was and with what skill the writer has accomplished that intention; and third, he arrives at his personal evaluation, determining the worth and truth of the communication *for him.*

The preliminary step, gaining an impartial understanding of the communication, calls for some method of analysis. The method recommended here was suggested by Rudyard Kipling:

> I keep six honest serving men
> (They taught me all I know) :—
> Their names are What and Why and When
> And How and Where and Who.

These six serving men supply us with the questions we need to answer in order to understand a piece of writing. For some types of communication some of the questions may be irrelevant or inappropriate, but the general method intelligently adapted can be applied with profit to all types of writing.

Since it is sometimes easier to answer one question first, sometimes another, the more detailed suggestions given below do not necessarily represent the sequence of steps in the analysis. Usually it is best to start with the question that we can answer with most certainty.

1. *When* and *where.* Knowing just when and where a communication appeared may help us judge the reliability of the communication and the intention of the writer. An article on the effects of alcohol published in a medical journal in 1949 would obviously be more authoritative and trustworthy than a tract published by the Prohibition Party in 1918.

2. *How.* An examination of how a communication is written can do much to reveal the character of the writer and to afford a surer knowledge of his intention. The reader should give particular consideration to: level and choice of language; sentence structure, rhythm, alliteration, and other aspects of style; use of the techniques of slanting and charging; the atti-

tude of the writer toward his reader, his subject, and himself; the use of generalizations and substantiating particulars.

3. *What.* The "what," equivalent to the plain-sense meaning of the communication, is, of course, always important. The reader should as far as possible reduce what is said to referential, uncharged language. He is then in a better position to make an unprejudiced judgment of the subject matter. This kind of referential restatement is particularly useful in examining writing which aims to persuade or to convince the reader.

4. *Who.* The more we know about the background, knowledge, experience, and reputation of a writer, the more we are helped in judging what he says. If we have no information about him, we can often deduce a great deal from the "how and "what" of his communication. Is he an educated man? Does he have special knowledge of his subject? Does he seem to be presenting his material fairly? Is his use of English fair, good, or excellent? What attitude does he take toward his reader and himself? What seems to be his position or profession?

5. *Why.* Sometimes the "why," the intention, is apparent on the face of the communication, as it is in a mathematics text; sometimes it is subtly concealed under charged language and specious logic, as it usually is in propaganda and advertising. A careful reader will always be alert to the concealed intention, which often is to be discovered only by close examination of inconspicuous slanting or use of shaded words. After he has completed his six-point analysis, he should reconsider in the light of the other five points his interpretation of the "why." He needs to be sure he has interpreted the why (intention) correctly; if he fails here, his later judgments will have little validity.

The audience for whom a piece of writing is intended may determine to a considerable extent the "how" of the communication, and to some extent the "what" and "why." Sometimes the reader may profitably add to Kipling's six serving

men one more—*To Whom?* That is, for what audience, or what kind of audience, was this communication written?

In applying the whole method of analysis described here, it is essential that the reader suspend judgment, that is, compel himself to hold his emotions in check and to be scrupulously fair in analyzing each point. Practicing this kind of fairness puts a great strain on intellectual integrity. It requires that the reader make an honest and self-forgetting effort to follow as exactly as possible the "what" (the plain sense) of the communicator. He must resist the very strong temptation (1) to twist the words of the communicator to fit his own meaning for them, (2) to close his mind to views that are different from his own, and (3) to accept or reject facts and judgments and attitudes before he has made a fair effort to follow and to understand the whole communication. In analyzing the "why" and "how" he should take for granted, unless there is evidence to the contrary, the honesty and good intention of writers who express opinions contrary to his own, and he should not accept uncritically the facts and judgments of those most able to mislead him—people who share or appear to share his opinions, attitudes, and prejudices.

After the reader has completed his analysis, he is ready to decide how well the communicator has used the means at his disposal—organization, facts, and language—to achieve his intention. In this *objective* judgment he is not interested in the truth or value of the communication; he is simply considering the writer's success in achieving his end, whatever that end may be. One can, for example, admire Hitler's skill as a propagandist, even though one condemns the purpose for which Hitler was using language; one can admire the skill or craftsmanship of a poet or short-story writer even though the particular type of poem or short story is not pleasing to one's taste.

Thus far the reader has been primarily concerned with understanding the communication and then with answering two questions about it: "What is the writer trying to do?" and

"How well has he achieved his intention?" The final question is, "What is my evaluation of the whole communication?" Now the reader can fairly let his tastes, his code of morality and his view of "truth" come into play. He can say, "Hitler was a skillful propagandist, but I have read *Mein Kampf* and have thought about it, and I am convinced that he was wrong on these points: . . ." He can say, "I have given this poem or short story a fair reading and I understand what the writer is trying to do and how he has done it [or I honestly don't understand]; I regard it as good literature [or as poor literature] for these reasons: . . ." This final step, the *personal* evaluation, is usually almost automatic. Executing it is like deciding whether we like a house after we have lived in it for some time. We know all the facts about it; evaluating is now simply a matter of balancing merits and defects, and then expressing our judgment accurately.

Another remark about evaluation is appropriate here. There are some communications which, even after our best efforts, we know we can not evaluate with any sense of assurance. Our uncertainty may be produced by lack of sufficient knowledge or lack of experience with certain types or techniques of writing. A fair reader, for example, might read in different newspapers two contradictory accounts of a labor dispute, one presenting the side of the employer, the other the side of the union. In a complicated dispute of this sort one can't reach a sure judgment without detailed knowledge of many facts. Here the best the reader can do is to arrive at as sound a judgment as he can in the light of the facts that he knows, to realize that he may be wrong, and to hold himself ready to change his opinion when additional facts throw more light on the subject. In our complicated modern society many of our opinions need to be held in this tentative way.

In judging writing which calls for special techniques of reading or for special background—poetry, for example, experimental novels, the literature of the past—the critic again

needs to make a personal judgment as best he can, but he needs also to realize that his lack of special knowledge prevents his finding in his reading what a trained reader finds. To say that *he* has been able to find little of value in such writing may be to state a fact; but to say that there is no value in it is like saying that a foreign language has no meaning. One should learn the language or recognize his ignorance of it.

A final note: there is some danger that the procedure of evaluation presented here may sound much more formidable and more time-consuming than it actually is; the reader may simply throw up his hands and say, "If I have to go through all that to reach a critical evaluation, I'll just keep my prejudices and cherish my ignorance." If the reader will suspend judgment about this method of evaluation and will give it a fair trial, he will find that learning to evaluate critically is comparable to learning to play a good game of bridge or chess —and is perhaps less difficult. Bridge players who pause for only a moment and then play a difficult hand rapidly and skillfully, chess players who can look at the board and plan twelve moves ahead, achieve with ease and assurance feats of analysis beyond the comprehension of the novice. The practiced reader analyzes and evaluates what he reads with similar speed and assurance and with a greater sense of reward.

EXERCISES

The following passages are taken out of their context and are presented without any of the information the reader usually has about the author and the date and occasion of the communication. Since the passages are given without the clues that usually help shape judgment, the analysis and the evaluation of them present a particular problem and challenge. Working over the passages and arriving at judgments about them will give concentrated practice in the kind of

critical reading outlined in the last section of this chapter, and will sharpen perceptiveness and skill in interpretation.[2]

The order of analysis will not be the same for each passage; the following questions, however, should be applied to each, and answered in all possible detail:

1. What is the plain sense of the passage? (The *What*)
2. Are there any clues as to the *When* and *Where*? Is the writing modern? Do any allusions date it or place it? Do you think it is part of a speech, a letter, a story, a textbook, or an essay? Under what circumstances was this communication made?
3. What can you say about the style and use of language? (The *How*)
4. What seems to be the author's intention? (The *Why*)
5. For what kind of audience was this intended? To what kind of audience would it appeal? (*To Whom*)
6. What conclusions can you draw about the writer of the passage? (The *Who*)
7. What, after your analysis, is your personal reaction to this piece of writing? Do you like it, dislike it? Why?

A.

I made it a rule to forbear all direct contradiction to the sentiments of others, and all positive assertion of my own. I even forbid myself . . . the use of every word or expression in the language that imported a fix'd opinion, such as *certainly, undoubtedly,* etc., and I adopted, instead of them, *I conceive, I apprehend,* or *I imagine* a thing to be so or so; or it *so appears to me at present.* When another asserted something that I thought an error, I deny'd myself the pleasure of contradicting him abruptly, and of showing immediately some absurdity in his proposition; and in answering I began by observing that in certain cases or circumstances his opinion would be right, but in the present case there *appear'd* or *seem'd* to me some difference, etc. I soon found the advantage of this change in my manner; the conversations I engag'd in went on more pleasantly. The modest way in which I propos'd my opinions procur'd them a readier reception and less contradiction; I had less mortifica-

[2] The sources of the passages are given in the Handbook under **Evaluation.** The student should not refer to this information until he has completed his analysis and has deduced as much as he can about the author of each selection.

tion when I was found to be in the wrong, and I more easily prevail'd with others to give up their mistakes and join with me when I happened to be in the right.

And this mode, which I at first put on with some violence to natural inclination, became at length so easy, and so habitual to me, that perhaps for these fifty years past no one has ever heard a dogmatical expression escape me. And to this habit (after my character of integrity) I think it principally owing that I had early so much weight with my fellow-citizens when I proposed new institutions, or alterations in the old, and so much influence in public councils when I became a member; for I was but a bad speaker, never eloquent, subject to much hesitation in my choice of words, hardly correct in language, and yet I generally carried my points.

B.

There is no hope whatever in the Governor's message for even simple justice to the small property owners of this state who have been held down in a brutal vise of skyrocketing operating costs, confiscatory taxation and frozen rents.

The Governor has clearly knelt in meek obeisance to the Communists, the left wingers, the fellow travelers, and the bureaucrats who would foist on the Commonwealth all the Gestapo tactics of the now defunct and discredited OPA. A state rent control bureau which the Governor demands would bring about perpetual regimentation and a police state in fact.

C.

For the general use of the urban citizenry several hundred "parks of culture and rest" have been laid out in the various cities of the Soviet Union. In Moscow the Central Park of Culture and Rest contains grounds for sport, entertainment, theaters, cinema houses, and a "Town of Children" where parents may leave their offspring while enjoying the facilities of the Park. The parents may employ their time reading in libraries, listening to lectures, visiting picture galleries, or viewing the exhibitions in figures, posters, and diagrams of the achievements of the Soviet Union.

Excursions into the country or to parks of culture and rest are arranged for families on rest days and holidays. These would correspond in nature to the American family picnic. Similarly, trips to the city are arranged for peasant families for recreational purposes.

One of the most notable developments in the Soviet Union has been the rise of innumerable technical, historical, literary, educational, art and other museums. Some of the palaces of the Tsar and former nobility are preserved as museums. The role of the museums is partly instructive and partly propagandistic.

D.

Let us reflect in another way, and we shall see that there is great reason to hope that death is a good, for one of two things: either death is a state of nothingness and utter unconsciousness, or, as men say, there is a change and migration of the soul from this world to another. Now if you suppose that there is no consciousness, but a sleep like the sleep of him who is undisturbed even by the sight of dreams, death will be an unspeakable gain. For if a person were to select the night in which his sleep was undisturbed even by dreams, and were to compare with this the other days and nights of his life, and then were to tell us how many days and nights he had passed in the course of his life better and more pleasantly than this one, I think that any man, I will not say a private man, but even the great king will not find many such days or nights, when compared with the others. Now if death is like this, I say that to die is gain; for eternity is then only a single night. But if death is the journey to another place, and there, as men say, all the dead are, what good, O my friends and judges, can be greater than this? If indeed when the pilgrim arrives in the world below, he is delivered from the professors of justice in this world, and finds the true judges who are said to give judgment there, . . . that pilgrimage will be worth making. What would not a man give if he might converse with Orpheus and Musæus and Hesiod and Homer? Nay, if this be true, let me die again and again. I, too, shall have a wonderful interest in a place where I can converse with Palamedes, and Ajax the son of Telamon, and other heroes of old, who have suffered death through an unjust judgment; and there will be no small pleasure, as I think, in comparing my own suffering with theirs. Above all, I shall be able to continue my search into true and false knowledge; as in this world, so also in that; I shall find out who is wise, and who pretends to be wise, and is not.

E.

Society is commonly too cheap. We meet at very short intervals, not having had time to acquire any new value for each

other. We meet at meals three times a-day, and give each other a new taste of that old musty cheese that we are. We have had to agree on a certain set of rules, called etiquette and politeness, to make this frequent meeting tolerable and that we need not come to open war. We meet at the post office, and at the sociable, and about the fireside every night; we live thick and are in each other's way, and stumble over one another, and I think that we thus lose some respect for one another. Certainly less frequency would suffice for all important and hearty communications. Consider the girls in a factory—never alone, hardly in their dreams. It would be better if there were but one inhabitant to a square mile, as where I live. The value of a man is not in his skin, that we should touch him.

F.

But when men have realized that time has upset many fighting faiths, they may come to believe even more than they believe the very foundation of their own conduct that the ultimate good desired is better reached by free trade in ideas—that the best test of truth is the power of the thought to get itself accepted in the competition of the market, and that truth is the only ground on which their wishes safely can be carried out. That at any rate is the theory of our Constitution. It is an experiment, as all life is an experiment. Every year if not every day we have to wager our salvation upon some prophecy based upon imperfect knowledge. While that experiment is part of our system, I think that we should be eternally vigilant against attempts to check the expression of opinions that we loathe and believe to be fraught with death, unless they so imminently threaten immediate interference with the lawful and pressing purposes of the law that an immediate check is required to save the country.

G.

The bedrock on which the scholarly activities of a university are founded is a charter of free inquiry; without this you may have an institution of advanced education, a technical school or a military college, for example, but you do not have a university. I am sure we are all agreed on that. There should be no barriers to an objective analysis of every phase of our national life. No compromise with this principle is possible even in days of an armed truce. The nation has a right to demand of its educational institutions that the teachers dealing with controversial

subjects shall be fearless seekers of the truth and careful scholars rather than propagandists. But granted honesty, sincerity and ability there must be tolerance of a wide diversity of opinion. Indeed, this diversity of opinion is not only basic for the welfare of our universities but for that of the entire nation. For in a democracy with our traditions only those reasoned convictions which emerge from diversity of opinion can lead to that unity and national solidarity so essential for the welfare of our country. Essential not only for our own security but a requisite for intelligent action toward the end we all desire, namely, the conversion of the present armed truce into a firm and lasting peace.

H.

The statesmen of both of the groups of nations now arrayed against one another have said, in terms that could not be misinterpreted, that it was no part of the purpose they had in mind to crush their antagonists. But the implications of these assurances may not be equally clear to all—may not be the same on both sides of the water. I think it will be serviceable if I attempt to set forth what we understand them to be.

They imply, first of all, that it must be a peace without victory. It is not pleasant to say this. I beg that I may be permitted to put my own interpretation upon it and that it may be understood that no other interpretation was in my thought. I am seeking only to face realities and to face them without soft concealments. Victory would mean peace forced upon the loser, a victor's terms imposed upon the vanquished. It would be accepted in humiliation, under duress, at an intolerable sacrifice, and would leave a sting, a resentment, a bitter memory upon which terms of peace would rest, not permanently, but only as upon quicksand. Only a peace between equals can last.

I.

Sometimes a war is entered upon, because the enemy is too strong, and sometimes because he is too weak. Sometimes our neighbors want the things which we have, or have the things which we want; and we both fight, till they take ours or give us theirs. It is a very justifiable cause of a war to invade a country after the people have been wasted by famine, destroyed by pestilence, or embroiled by factions among themselves. It is justifiable to enter into war against our nearest ally, when one of his towns lies convenient for us, or a territory of land, that would render our dominions round and complete. If a prince

sends forces into a nation, where the people are poor and ignorant, he may lawfully put half of them to death, and make slaves of the rest, in order to civilize and reduce them from their barbarous way of living. It is a very kingly, honourable, and frequent practice, when one prince desires the assistance of another to secure him against an invasion, that the assistant, when he hath driven out the invader, should seize on the dominions himself, and kill, imprison or banish the prince he came to relieve . . . . For these reasons, the trade of a soldier is held the most honourable of all others; because a soldier is . . . hired to kill in cold blood as many of his own species, who have never offended him, as possibly he can.

J.

There is a vague popular belief that lawyers are necessarily dishonest. I say vague, because when we consider to what extent confidence and honors are reposed in and conferred upon lawyers by the people, it appears improbable that their impression of dishonesty is very distinct and vivid. Yet the impression is common, almost universal. Let no young man choosing the law for a calling for a moment yield to the popular belief. Resolve to be honest at all events; and if in your own judgment you cannot be an honest lawyer, resolve to be honest without being a lawyer. Choose some other occupation, rather than one in the choosing of which you do, in advance, consent to be a knave.

K.

The responsibility for inflation rests on the shoulders of the teachers, the veterans, the farmers, and the do-goodists. Along with the A.F. of L., C.I.O., and consumers' leagues, these pressure groups for special privilege are causing a lot of trouble. They look for special privileges for themselves from the government and expect the rest of us to pay for them.

The public confuses money with wealth. In this country money is becoming less and less stable because the government feels that it should keep prices of so many commodities higher than they would be but for the benefit of special privilege groups.

Everything from turkeys to turpentine is on the list of commodities with controlled prices stimulated by government action. It seems strange that the newspapers ignore such action when the result of it is to bring out more money for spending, which buys less and less.

Stable money that is important to those who invest in life in-

surance, put money in savings banks, and plan sound investments is not popular in our government today.

L.

What kind of collectivism do we want? Most people in the United States would probably answer this question by saying: "We do not want any kind of collectivism at all." The word "collectivism" is apt to suggest the word "socialism," and Socialism is for most people the same thing as Communism. This mistake leads to a great deal of useless confusion in thinking about such matters. First of all, therefore, I wish to make perfectly clear what I mean by collectivism. By collectivism I mean no more than the governmental regulation or control of the economic life of a community. Such regulation or control may be more or less complete, so that there are different kinds of collectivism, depending on the extent to which the regulation or control is carried out and the methods by which it is achieved. To say that we do not want any kind of collectivism is merely to express a pious wish. It is not a question of what we should like if it were possible to have it, but a question of what we must accept under conditions as they exist. We already have a certain amount of collectivism, a certain amount of governmental regulation of economic life; and it is about as clearly on the cards as anything can be that we must have still more of it . . . .

Four different forms of collectivism have in fact been proposed or adopted—Socialism, Communism, Fascism, and what for lack of a better term we may call Social Democracy. We cannot reverse the historic trend towards collectivism, but we can with intelligence and determination decide whether we shall have some brand of Social Democracy rather than some brand of Socialism, Communism, or Fascism. It will clarify the issue to see how these various brands of collectivism emerged historically, in what respects they are alike, and in what respects they are different.

M.

By *genteelism* is here to be understood the substituting, for the ordinary natural word that first suggests itself to the mind, of a synonym that is thought to be less soiled by the lips of the common herd, less familiar, less plebeian, less vulgar, less improper, less apt to come unhandsomely betwixt the wind and our nobility. The truly genteel do not offer *beer,* but *ale;* invite one to *step,* not *come,* this way; take in not *lodgers,* but *paying*

guests; send their boys not to *school,* but to *college;* never *help,* but *assist,* each other to potatoes; keep *stomachs* and *domestics* instead of *bellies* and *servants;* and have quite forgotten that they could ever have been guilty of *toothpowder* and *napkins* and *underclothing,* of *before* and *except* and *about,* where nothing now will do for them but *dentifrice, serviette, lingerie, ere, save, anent.*

N.

For there is a perennial nobleness, and even sacredness, in Work. Were he never so benighted, forgetful of his high calling, there is always hope in a man that actually and earnestly works; in Idleness alone is there perpetual despair. Work, never so Mammonish, mean, is in communication with Nature; the real desire to get Work done will itself lead one more and more to truth, to Nature's appointments and regulations, which are truth.

The latest Gospel in this world is, Know thy work and do it. 'Know thyself': long enough has that poor 'self' of thine tormented thee; thou wilt never get to 'know' it, I believe! Think it not thy business, this of knowing thyself; thou art an unknowable individual: know what thou canst work at; and work at it, like a Hercules! That will be thy better plan.

It has been written, 'an endless significance lies in Work'; a man perfects himself by working. Foul jungles are cleared away, fair seed-fields rise instead, and stately cities; and withal the man himself first ceases to be a jungle and foul unwholesome desert thereby. Consider how, even in the meanest sorts of Labour, the whole soul of a man is composed into a kind of real harmony, the instant he sets himself to work! Doubt, Desire, Sorrow, Remorse, Indignation, Despair itself, all these like hell-dogs lie beleaguering the soul of the poor dayworker, as of every man: but he bends himself with free valour against his task, and all these are stilled, all these shrink murmuring far off into their caves. The man is now a man. The blessed glow of Labour in him, is it not as purifying fire, wherein all poison is burnt up, and of sour smoke itself there is made bright blessed flame!

O.

Dictatorship, however, involves cost which the American people will never pay: The cost of our spiritual values. The cost of the blessed right of being able to say what we please. The cost of freedom of religion. The cost of seeing our capital confiscated.

The cost of being cast into a concentration camp. The cost of being afraid to walk down the street with the wrong neighbor. The cost of having our children brought up, not as free and dignified human beings, but as pawns molded and enslaved by a machine.

If the avoidance of these costs means taxes on my income; if avoiding these costs means taxes on my estate at death, I would bear those taxes willingly as the price of my breathing and my children breathing the free air of a free country, as the price of a living and not a dead world.

P.

It is interesting to contemplate an entangled bank, clothed with many plants of many kinds, with birds singing on the bushes, with various insects flitting about, and with worms crawling through the damp earth, and to reflect that these elaborately constructed forms, so different from each other, and dependent on each other in so complex a manner, have all been produced by laws acting around us. These laws, taken in the largest sense, being Growth with Reproduction; Inheritance, which is almost implied by reproduction; Variability, from the indirect and direct action of the external conditions of life, and from use and disuse; a Ratio of Increase so high as to lead to a Struggle for Life, and as a consequence to Natural Selection, entailing Divergence of Character and the Extinction of less-improved forms. Thus, from the war of nature, from famine and death, the most exalted object which we are capable of conceiving, namely, the production of the higher animals, directly follows. There is grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed by the Creator into a few forms or into one; and that, whilst this planet has gone cycling on according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being, evolved.

Q.

The notions of the beginning and the end of the world entertained by our forefathers are no longer credible. It is very certain that the earth is not the chief body in the material universe, and that the world is not subordinated to man's use. It is even more certain that nature is the expression of a definite order with which nothing interferes, and that the chief business of mankind is to learn that order and govern themselves accord-

ingly. Moreover this scientific "criticism of life" presents itself to us with different credentials from any other. It appeals not to authority, nor to what anybody may have thought or said, but to nature. It admits that all our interpretations of natural facts are more or less imperfect and symbolic, and bids the learner seek for truth not among words but among things. It warns us that the assertion which outstrips evidence is not only a blunder but a crime.

The purely classical education advocated by the representatives of the Humanists in our day, gives no inkling of all this. A man may be a better scholar than Erasmus, and know no more of the chief causes of the present intellectual fermentation than Erasmus did. Scholarly and pious persons, worthy of all respect, favour us with allocutions upon the sadness of the antagonism of science to their mediaeval way of thinking, which betray an ignorance of the first principles of scientific investigation, an incapacity for understanding what a man of science means by veracity, and an unconsciousness of the weight of established scientific truths, which is almost comical.

R.

Fog everywhere. Fog up the river, where it flows among green aits and meadows; fog down the river, where it rolls defiled among the tiers of shipping, and the waterside pollutions of a great (and dirty) city. Fog on the Essex marshes, fog on the Kentish heights. Fog creeping into the cabooses of collier-brigs, fog lying out on the yards, and hovering in the rigging of great ships; fog drooping on the gunwales of barges and small boats. Fog in the eyes and throats of ancient Greenwich pensioners, wheezing by the firesides of their wards; fog in the stem and bowl of the afternoon pipe of the wrathful skipper, down in his close cabin; fog cruelly pinching the toes and fingers of his shivering little 'prentice boy on deck. Chance people on the bridges peeping over the parapets into a nether sky of fog, with fog all round them, as if they were up in a balloon, and hanging in the misty clouds.

Gas looming through the fog in divers places in the streets, much as the sun may, from the spongy fields, be seen to loom by husbandman and ploughboy. Most of the shops lighted two hours before their time—as the gas seems to know, for it has a haggard and unwilling look.

The raw afternoon is rawest, and the dense fog is densest, and the muddy streets are muddiest, near that leaden-headed old

obstruction, appropriate ornament for the threshold of a leaden-headed old corporation: Temple Bar. And hard by Temple Bar, in Lincoln's Inn Hall, at the very heart of the fog, sits the Lord High Chancellor in his High Court of Chancery.

S.

I got it at last, why he was all dressed up, and not carrying out the chow like he used to, and acted so important. This Greek had had a fracture of the skull, and a thing like that don't happen to a dumb cluck like him every day. He was like a wop that opens a drug store. Soon as he gets that thing that says Pharmacist, with a red seal on it, a wop puts on a gray suit, with black edges on the vest, and is so important he can't even take time to mix the pills, and wouldn't even touch a chocolate ice cream soda. This Greek was all dressed up for the same reason. A big thing had happened in his life.

T.

England, my England! But which is my England? The stately homes of England make good photographs, and create the illusion of a connection with the Elizabethans. The handsome old halls are there, from the days of Good Queen Anne and Tom Jones. But smuts fall and blacken on the drab stucco, that has long ceased to be golden. And one by one, like the stately homes, they are abandoned. Now they are being pulled down. As for the cottages of England—there they are—great plasterings of brick dwellings on the hopeless countryside.

Now they are pulling down the stately homes, the Georgian halls are going. Fritchley, a perfect old Georgian mansion, was even now, as Connie passed in the car, being demolished. It was in perfect repair: till the war the Weatherley's had lived in style there. But now it was too big, too expensive, and the country had become too uncongenial. The gentry were departing to pleasanter places, where they could spend their money without having to see how it was made.

This is history. One England blots out another. The mines had made the halls wealthy. Now they were blotting them out, as they had already blotted out the cottages. The industrial England blots out the agricultural England. One meaning blots out another. The new England blots out the old England. And the continuity is not organic, but mechanical.

CHAPTER TWELVE

VOCABULARY

THE COLLEGE STUDENT hardly needs to be persuaded that a good vocabulary is important. If his vocabulary is poor, he usually discovers early in his college career that he is handicapped in understanding the speech and writing of educated people. Most of his learning in college comes through lectures and books which are likely to be high informal to formal in style and vocabulary; he is clearly at a disadvantage if he encounters in assigned reading, or hears in lectures, word after word which is completely strange or only vaguely familiar to him.

Weakness in vocabulary also hampers his own communication. In his informal social relationships he may get along reasonably well with a small store of words. But when he writes papers and examinations, when he phrases questions or answers them in class, when he conducts meetings, voices his opinions in public (or refrains from voicing them for fear of doing it badly), he becomes aware of the value of an exact vocabulary and of skill in usage above the level of slang. The person who fumbles for words, who talks around a term or a concept in a fruitless groping for the accurate word, who can't say exactly what he means, may be likable; but he is not impressive or effective.

Many college students know, too, some of the studies which

have been made of the relationship between vocabulary and successful work in college and in business and professional life. It is not possible to measure accurately the contribution of vocabulary to anything so complex as success; but an extensive vocabulary appears to be one constant factor in many kinds of achievement.

The purpose of this chapter is not to reiterate familiar general statements about the importance of vocabulary in learning, in expression, and in future success, but, first, to consider the basic relationship of words to thought and to communication; and, second, to suggest practical ways of improving one's vocabulary.

I. VOCABULARY AND THINKING

Essentially, a good vocabulary is important because most of our thinking is done in words. When we communicate the thought, we may need to adjust the words to a particular audience. But if the words in which we think are precise, the thinking is precise and clear; if the words are imprecise, the thinking is vague and blurred.

These statements need qualification, for *thinking* is an abstract word which covers a wide variety of intellectual and emotional experiences; and it is often impossible to draw a sharp line between thought and idle reverie, thought and feeling, thought and awareness, thought and image, thought and intuitive mystical perception. Thus one may "think," in the broadest sense of the term, not in words but in the wordless beat of tom-toms, in the rhythm of surf, in movement and gesture, in tone and harmony, in vivid images, in line and color, in non-verbal symbols and ritual and the sound of the unknown word. But when we think logically, rationally, and systematically, we usually think in words.[1]

The person who says "I know what I mean but I can't ex-

[1] Mathematical thinking and some kinds of scientific thinking are exceptions. Here words are replaced by symbols more exact than words.

press it" seldom knows clearly what he means. He has, in all probability, a feeling for the thing he wants to say, a hazy sense or sensation of it; but if he knew clearly what he meant he would be able to express it because the thought would be formulated in words. Try to imagine a competent doctor who examines a patient and says, "I know what disease he has but I don't know the name of it"; or a lawyer who says, "This is illegal, but I don't know what law it violates." A doctor or lawyer (or anyone else) may, of course, on occasion, have simply a sense of something wrong. But if he actually knows, knows precisely, what is wrong, he knows in words. The knowledge has a name; the name is an integral part of the knowledge.

The readers of this book may have had the experience of worrying for days over an apparently unsolvable problem, finally telling someone about it, and immediately afterward (even though the confidant had no new ideas and offered no advice) seeing a plain solution. Sometimes a problem is solved in this way because sharing it removes part of the worry which was obstructing thought, and sometimes because one has received at least silent approval of what he wanted to do all along. Frequently, though, the solution is a result of putting the problem into words. Thinking in words demands a kind of thinking, precise and logical thinking, which has not been applied to the problem before. Students sometimes have a similar experience when they "write out" a dilemma or a perplexing situation in a personal essay. The writing, the casting of the nebulous thought and feeling into exact and concrete words, requires exactness in thinking which clarifies the problem.

As the semanticists repeatedly remind us, the word is not the thing. Words are merely symbols which stand for complex objects or ideas. But these verbal symbols, used by one who understands and uses them well, can with amazing accuracy convey complex meaning, make subtle distinctions, differentiate finely between two similar referents. And a knowledge

of words produces a mental discrimination between objects or ideas which might otherwise be blurred.

"Her mother is in a dangerous condition." The accurate user of words will not only speak, but will *think* more exactly, because he has the verbal means of dissecting the general idea: "Is her mother's condition *serious* or *critical?*"

"The teacher is mean." Is he *strict, sarcastic, demanding,* or *unfair?*

"He doesn't believe in God." Is he an *atheist* or an *agnostic?*

"John is a poor student." Is he *lazy, uninterested,* or *incompetent?*

"He has a tumor." Is it *malignant* or *benign?*

"He behaved very badly." Was his behavior *rude, inconsiderate, immoral,* or *unconventional?*

"He's a thief. He even steals things he doesn't need." He may be a *kleptomaniac.*

The student of language will note at once that words like *serious, critical, strict, sarcastic, demanding,* etc. are still general words which have multiple meanings and which convey little specific information. But, in these contexts, they are words which make distinctions; they are the tools of a mind which makes distinctions, and which can make them more readily because it thinks in accurate words.

II. VOCABULARY AND COMMUNICATION

Making distinctions is the essence, too, of clear communication. The speech and writing of a person whose vocabulary is weak is like the playing of an unskillful pianist who, even in a simple composition, strikes wrong notes or hits two keys instead of one. Such a communicator calls an *agnostic* an *atheist;* confuses *imply* and *infer;* says an *obsequious* person is *obedient;* speaks of *defying* the rules when he intends to *circumvent* them. The general drift of his communication may be clear, but no part of it is precisely, sharply clear, be-

cause he lacks words which differentiate between subtly different things.

The following question-examples will illustrate the kind of differentiation which produces precise expression. Most of the questions cannot be answered without more context. Their purpose is simply to call attention to the shades of meaning communicated by different words.

Mr. Jones has lost five thousand dollars. Is this a *misfortune* or a *catastrophe?*

Phil received an A in biology without opening his book all term. Is his experience *unusual* or *unique?*

Sylvia does almost everything her roommate tells her to do. Is she *responsive, suggestible,* or *weak-willed?*

The professor threw away his cigar before he went into class. Did he *discard* it or *relinquish* it?

Mr. Parks has very good manners. Is he *polite, suave, urbane,* or *genteel?*

Don McDonald made ten thousand dollars this year in his lumber business. Is he a *shrewd* business man or a *sagacious* one?

Jane seems shy. Is she *bashful, modest,* or *coy?*

He tries to get attention. Does he *invite* it, *solicit* it, or *demand* it?

Dorothy, sitting in class, is thinking about her first experience in school. Does she *remember* it or *recall* it? Does she *hear* the lecture or *listen to* it?

Professor Hamilton described to his class the exact form for their reports. Was he giving *suggestions, instructions,* or *orders?* Was his manner *positive* or *peremptory?*

Herb appeared not to see the sarcasm in the remark. Did he *ignore* it or was he *oblivious of* it?

Marguerite has just learned that her term paper is due a week earlier than she thought. Does she feel *alarm, dismay, consternation,* or *panic?*

Tom was told by his English teacher that he had written a theme on a most inappropriate subject. Was he *embarrassed, disconcerted,* or *confounded?*

Mr. and Mrs. Brown have frequent disagreements. Do they *argue, quarrel, wrangle,* or *bicker?* Their neighbors try to help and advise them. Are the neighbors *intervening, inter-*

ceding, mediating, or *interfering?* Is the advice *generous* or *gratuitous?*

John ran into a tree and smashed the front end of his father's car. He said that he fell asleep at the wheel because he had studied history until four o'clock the night before. Did he offer this fact in *excuse* or in *extenuation?* Did his father *chide* him, *reprove* him, *remonstrate* with him, or *berate* him about the accident? Was John *ashamed* or *contrite?*

The reader will note that not all of the words used in these examples are formal words, beyond the range of the average student's vocabulary; many of them are informal, familiar words, which carry a particular shade of meaning. Learning new words is by no means the only way of improving one's vocabulary. A profitable way, which will be discussed later in this chapter, is to learn the exact meanings of familiar words and to make a conscious effort to use those words in one's own speech and writing.

We have been primarily concerned in this discussion with accuracy, with finding and using the precise word. But it is important to remember that the precise word in one's thinking, or on a page of the dictionary, is not always the precise word *in use with a particular audience.* One may, for example, think *trauma,* but find it necessary, in order to be understood, to use a less accurate word like *shock.* One may think *gambled foolishly,* but need to say, euphemistically, *made unwise investments.* Plain-sense accuracy is sometimes less important in communication than attitudinal accuracy. The latter, like the former, demands a sure knowledge of the full meaning of words.

III. LEARNING NEW WORDS

College students learn a number of new words—basic terms and technical names used in their courses—almost automatically. Such words are learned in the best possible way: they are usually defined in the text, explained by the teacher, used repeatedly throughout the course, and used by the student

himself when he talks or writes about the subject. The words are part of a body of information, and the student, over a period of time, absorbs both the names and the knowledge. They are thoroughly his. In the same way one naturally acquires new words from any new work or new activity—carpentering, sewing, sailing, taking pictures, reporting, acting. Like basic terms learned in courses, these new words have exact referential meaning, they are part of a pattern of knowledge, and they are used after they are learned. They are learned well.

Unfortunately, this natural acquisition of new words is usually too slow, and the words are often too specialized, to provide the good general vocabulary which the student should have. He needs to supplement the natural increase in vocabulary by actively acquiring new words. There is no easy way to do this. The best way is to read widely, absorbing the meanings of words from their contexts, and conscientiously looking up and learning words which are not defined by the context.

Students sometimes embark on a program of learning a word a day, or five words a week, from lists of words printed in newspapers and magazines. This method of increasing vocabulary has distinct disadvantages; the factors which make learning thorough and effective are not present. Since the words in the lists are given without context, the learner has no guide to their exact usage and their connotation. Also because they are not in context, he has nothing to attach the words to. Learned in a vacuum, they quickly slip out of memory. Their meanings are easily forgotten, too, because the words are usually so formal that the person learning them has little occasion to use them, and by using them to make them genuinely his. *Sycophantic, eclecticism,* and *meretricious* are good words to know, but they are not words which fit smoothly into everyday speech and writing.

Trying to learn new words from these lists may not be entirely unprofitable. The learner may remember some words

well enough to recognize them and have some idea of their meaning when he later encounters them in context. A surer, more profitable way of increasing vocabulary, however, is learning the meanings of new words which one encounters in reading, and following a procedure which fits the words into one's information and experience. This procedure should consist of three steps:

1. Finding the definition of the word in the dictionary.
2. Seeing how the word is used in the context of the sentence or passage.
3. Using the word in speaking or writing.

The use of the dictionary is discussed in Appendix B. It is worth saying here, however, that the student should learn the pronunciation of a new word as well as its definition, and that he may find it useful in remembering the word to note its derivation, particularly if he has some knowledge of other languages. It is especially important, in using the dictionary, not to seize on the first definition given, but to find what different meanings the word may have, and which meaning it seems to have in the particular passage one has read.

This involves the second of the three steps: seeing how the word is used, and fixing in mind its context. The meaning of a word is likely to slip away, as we have said, unless it is attached to something. The context, the sentence in which it is used, provides one anchor. Furthermore, fixing in mind the word-in-context instead of merely a dictionary definition gives the student one accurate usage of the word. He may find others as he comes across the word in different contexts, but from the beginning of his acquaintance with it he knows at least one way in which the word is properly used. He need not be afraid of using it himself in a similar sentence or construction.

It is often helpful in remembering a word to compose a new context for it. This should be a simple sentence in which the word is used as it was used in the original context, but in which there is more of a clue to the word's meaning. "He is a

notorious character" does not help one remember the meaning of *notorious;* but "Al Capone was a notorious gangster" does. Most words can be used in this way in sentences or phrases which clearly suggest their meaning: "Hot weather is enervating"; "I feel lethargic after a heavy lunch"; "My garrulous neighbor talked for two hours."

The third step—using a newly acquired word in conversation or in writing—is sometimes difficult, particularly if the word is considerably more formal than one's own level of language. It is unwise to sacrifice direct communication for the sake of practicing a new word; but using it three or four times is a very effective way of making it a permanent addition to one's vocabulary. After this early use which is part of the process of learning the word, one may seldom, or never, use it again; it will be part of a passive, recognition vocabulary, which is always larger than the vocabulary habitually used. Many words, though, which at first sound unnatural and overformal to the user of them, are actually quite appropriate and sound natural enough after he has used them a few times. They may become valuable additions to his active vocabulary.

IV. THE EXACT WORD

Many exact words are formal words. One who lacks a knowledge of exact or technical names (*podium, epigram, incantation, promulgation, leukemia, schizophrenia, bibliography*) is unable to communicate concisely the meaning represented by those words. Most college students need to increase their store of such words in order to express complex ideas in direct language, and in order to understand formal English when they hear and read it.

But many formal words are no more exact in referential meaning, and may be less exact in attitudinal meaning, than informal equivalents. Not exactness, but heavy inappropriateness, is produced by writing "The hapless mendicant lost his equilibrium and injured his head on the portal" instead of

"The unlucky beggar lost his balance and hurt his head on the door." The idea that the person who has a good vocabulary uses "big words" is a mistaken idea. He can use formal words when they are called for; but if he has judgment as well as vocabulary, he knows that simple informal words are often more exact, more direct, and more emphatic. *Hiss, yell, howl, purr, gape, leer, inch, pint, ash,* and *oak* are exact words. *Suspend, conclude, distinguish, confirm, dissent, sustain, rebuke, rebuff, ponder,* and *consider* are exact words. As important to the college student as learning new words is learning to use the vocabulary he has; to draw on the great store of words which are familiar to him; to find the exact word among the words he knows.

How is this done? First of all, the student needs to develop a consciousness of words, so that he hears and notes the verbal distinctions made by people who speak and write well. He is likely, if he is attentive, to note such distinctions as these: "Is it *usually* true, or *invariably* true?"; "They left *quickly,* but not *hastily*"; "It's a remarkable *feat,* if not an *achievement.*" He may need to consult the dictionary in order to understand the distinction made; nearly always, though, the context will make it clear.

In reading, the student who is developing a consciousness of words should pay particular attention to words which are near the border of his vocabulary. We "know" words, of course, in different degrees—well enough to recognize them and gather their meaning from context, well enough to know their general meaning without any context, well enough to use them accurately. A moment's study of a word only faintly familiar, the meaning of which can be grasped from the context, will make that word better known when the reader encounters it again. Eventually it will be a word he can use with assurance. In this chapter we have used a number of words which may be on the fringe of the reader's vocabulary, but which we believe are made sufficiently clear by their context. A few of them, with fragments of context, are:

intuitive *mystical* perception
worry which was *obstructing* thought
casting the *nebulous* thought and feeling into exact and concrete words

Noting such borderline words and pulling them closer to the center of familiarity should be made a habit in reading.

In writing and revising his papers, the student will find books of synonyms valuable aids in finding, or reminding himself of, the exact word. If he looks up in Roget's *Thesaurus*[2] a word which is not quite right but is akin to the word he wants, he will probably find in the list of synonyms the exact word, which he knows—perhaps well—but which failed to come to mind. He will also find a fascinating field for the study of words. It is inadvisable to use synonyms with which one is not familiar, because synonymous words differ, sometimes widely, in shade and degree of meaning. A partial list of the synonyms for *hate* in Roget's *Thesaurus* will illustrate: *hatred, disaffection, disfavor, alienation, coolness, enmity, animosity, malice, umbrage, pique, spleen, bitterness, bad blood, acrimony, repugnance, odium, detestation, abhorrence, loathing, abomination, aversion, antipathy.* These words cannot be used interchangeably; the writer would badly distort his meaning if he used *umbrage* to convey the idea of *odium.* Webster's *Dictionary of Synonyms* is a particularly good reference book because it indicates differences between synonyms.

Using the exact word is more difficult in speech than in writing. It is not always possible to pause in conversation until the right word comes to mind. It is possible, though, to choose one's words. The talk of good conversationalists is nearly always characterized by an accurate, considered use of words; and college students, who are young and who are forming habits, do well to practice using language, even in informal speech, as exactly as they can. Speech which is actu-

[2] Roget's *Thesaurus* is now available in a twenty-five cent Pocket edition as well as in the fuller standard edition.

ally halting is likely to disturb the listener; but a slight pause is never objectionable when out of it comes the exact word.

The college student can also, in speech and writing, make a conscious effort to avoid two common types of inexactness. They are usually produced, not by inadequate vocabulary, but by careless or inadequate use of the vocabulary one has. The first of these types of inexactness is a confusion of words which have a similar sound but different meanings: *accept* and *except; affect* and *effect; illusion* and *allusion; marital* and *martial; creditable* and *credible; ingenious* and *ingenuous.* If the reader is not certain of the meanings of these frequently confused words, he should look them up in the dictionary and fix their definitions in his mind. They are all very usable words, but using them incorrectly is worse than not using them at all.

A second type of inexactness is a combination of careless thinking and loose, careless expression. Calling an opinion a "fact" or a trivial matter "a most important issue" belongs in this category of inexactness. So do inexact figures of speech ("he sailed the sea of life, leaping over every obstacle"); a thoughtless reliance on clichés ("caught like a rat in a trap" —instead of a more accurate statement of how he was caught); and roundabout, ambiguous phrasing ("one of those shiny white flowers that smell so sweet"; "the activities in college that aren't part of your studies"). Other examples of this type of inexactness are "quite a few" when it is possible to say "fifteen" or "three hundred"; "rather horrible" when one means distasteful or garish or dull ("a rather horrible person," "rather horrible furniture," "a rather horrible lecture"); and "nice" and "fine" used as vague terms of approval when more accurate words could be used. Avoiding inexactnesses like these does not require a large vocabulary, but simply some precision in thinking about the thing to be communicated, and some care in choosing from even a limited vocabulary the words to communicate it clearly. Frequently the student who is apologetic about his small vocabulary, or who tries to excuse

unclear expression on the basis of limited vocabulary, does not realize how extensive his vocabulary actually is. He has never taken the trouble to use it.

One other kind of inexactness deserves a word of comment and of warning—the inexact and irresponsible use of charged language. Precise words, as we have said before, make distinctions; they clarify the difference between objects and ideas which have some similarity. But imprecise words, particularly words with strong emotional charges, may blur distinctions; they may obscure the actual referent instead of pointing to it. The charged words of race and nationality afford clear examples. *Negro, Jew, Pole, Italian* are not exact words when they are used as the description or designation of a complex human being. *Nigger, Kike, Polack,* and *Wop* are irresponsible words. The user of them may be innocent of malicious intention; but he is not innocent, socially and ethically, when the words he uses promote prejudice. Charged words of personal attitude and political opinion need similarly to be used with responsibility and care, so that they produce understanding of the referent, not an emotional blindness.

Skill in language is complex; but its foundation is skill in words. As the college student increases his knowledge of words —adding to his vocabulary, and learning to use accurately and fluently the words he already knows—he begins to feel a new mastery of language. Through words he can be clear, can be discriminating, can be fair. As he makes verbal distinctions, he makes finer mental distinctions. He can feel his thinking sharpened as he formulates the thought in the exact, the inevitable word.

He has a new satisfaction, too, and a new understanding, when he reads the words of others. He is less susceptible to words which distort and confuse. More important perhaps, he grasps subtleties and shades of meaning concealed from him before. The reader of this book may have had the experience of learning a new word, and then, within the next few

weeks, coming across the word three or four times in his reading. Suddenly everyone seems to be using that word. The change, most probably, is not in the language he reads, but in the reader himself. The word, once simply a blur or a blind spot, has become a point of awareness. He now sees it wherever it appears in his reading. And his awareness of the word-as-word is accompanied, of course, by a new awareness of its meaning, and therefore by a clearer understanding of the whole passage.

Reading without adequate vocabulary is like discerning vague outlines of objects in a strange and darkened room. A knowledge of words illuminates. With this illumination—a light in dark corners, a light on new colors—the reader perceives clear forms, designs, and texture. And here, in a strange environment, he still can feel at home.

EXERCISES

I. Write a "chapter review" for this chapter, either listing or asking questions about the points which you consider most important.

II. From the study of this book you have probably added a number of words to your vocabulary; for example: *referent, context, connotation, euphemism, cliché.* Make a list of other new words which you have learned thus far from your courses in college.

III. Make a careful study of the question-examples on pp. 383–384, thinking about the differences in meaning of the suggested words. If you cannot distinguish clearly between the italicized words, try to find in the dictionary, or in Webster's *Dictionary of Synonyms,* the exact shade of meaning conveyed by each word.

IV. Use each of the italicized words in the examples on pp. 383–384 in a sentence which shows that you know its exact meaning.

V. For the next week, make from your reading a list of words which you understand in context, but which are not part of your active vocabulary. Note how the words are used, and make an effort to use them in your conversation or writing.

A HANDBOOK OF USAGE, DEFINITIONS, AND CONVENTIONS

IN THE FOLLOWING PAGES the student will find advice about matters of usage, brief definitions of all terms used in this book, and information about conventions of punctuation, spelling, and grammar. The entries in the Handbook are arranged in alphabetical order. Some subjects, however, are presented in blocks, for the convenience of the student who needs guidance not simply on a particular term or point, but in a general area of convention or usage. Marks of punctuation and their principal uses are discussed in the Handbook under the heading **Punctuation.** Rules for English spelling and a list of words most commonly misspelled by college freshmen are put together under **Spelling.** Under the heading **Usage** the student will find information about the status of such locutions as *the reason is because, aggravate, due to,* and *enthuse,* and about words which sometimes cause trouble in college writing (*lay* and *lie,* for example, *like* and *as, beside* and *besides*). A few minutes spent leafing through the pages of the Handbook will show the student what kind of information it contains, and will enable him to locate more easily specific pieces of information which he may need in writing and speaking, in correcting his papers, and in review.

Abbreviations. In formal writing and in a high level of informal writing, it is customary to avoid abbreviations except

for certain very well-established ones like *B.C., A.D., i.e., etc., a.m., p.m., Mr., Mrs., Dr.* Courtesy titles like *Mr., Dr., Rev., Hon.* are properly abbreviated only when they are used with proper names.

I have an appointment with Dr. May. [*Not*—I have an appointment with the Dr.]

Abstract words. Words which point to referents that cannot be readily perceived by the senses. Abstract words name qualities (*intelligence*), concepts (*evolution*), and conditions (*insanity*).

The words *abstract* and *concrete,* like the words *black* and *white,* represent extremes on a scale: black—blackish—gray—whitish—white; abstract—relatively abstract—relatively concrete—concrete. A word which gives more particulars about its referent is said to be "more concrete" or "less abstract." *Collie,* for example, is more concrete than *dog* because the word *collie* gives more particulars about its referent than *dog* does (pointed nose, long hair, bushy tail, etc.). The following list illustrates an ascending scale from concrete to abstract: Prince (name of a particular collie), collie, dog, animal, living creature.

Active voice. A verb is in the active voice when the subject accomplishes the action. (See **Voice.**)

Active voice: He *hit* the ball. [*Or*] The ball *hit* him.
Passive voice: The ball *was hit.* [*Or*] He *was hit* by the ball.

Adjective. A word used to modify a noun or pronoun.

the *old* man *a* boy *that* book *which* road *some* people *seventy* children

Adverb. A word used to modify a verb, an adjective, another adverb, or a whole clause or sentence.

He ran *swiftly.*
a *very* pleasant day
too far
Perhaps he will be late.

Agreement. Logical and grammatical relationship between parts of a sentence. Subject and verb must agree in person and number. Pronoun and antecedent must agree in person, number, and gender.

Alliteration. The repetition of the same sound at the beginning of words or in stressed syllables within words.

Life's *f*it*f*ul *f*ever

Analogy. A detailed comparison, usually of two ideas or situations. Analogy is a useful device for clarifying an unfamiliar or complex situation by showing its similarities to a situation more familiar or easier to understand. For an example of analogy, see the paragraph written by Edward Bellamy, p. 189.

Antecedent. The noun, or the equivalent of a noun, for which a pronoun stands, and to which it refers.

Helen has finished her *thesis;* I read it today.

Apostrophe. See **Punctuation.**

Appositive. A noun or a noun equivalent which is used to explain another noun construction which has the same referent.

Don, *my college roommate,* is visiting me this week.

Archaic. An adjective applied to words and expressions belonging to an earlier period, and no longer used in ordinary speech and writing.

Attitude. One of the three parts or aspects of meaning. Attitude is the feeling of the communicator toward himself, his audience, and his subject.

Balanced sentence. A sentence in which parallel locutions are similar in length and rhythm as well as in grammatical construction.

To err is human, to forgive [is] divine.

Bibliography. A list of the sources consulted in the writing of a source paper. The entries in a formal bibliography are alphabetized according to the author's last name (or, if no author is given, according to the first important word in the title); each entry lists author or editor, title of the work, and place and date of publication.

Brackets. See **Punctuation.**

Capitalization. The conventions of capitalization are discussed in the first section of Chapter Three of this book. The student will also find information about the use of capitals in an introductory section or an appendix of his dictionary.

Caret. See **Punctuation.**

Charged language. Language which uses to a marked degree any or all of the devices for conveying a favorable or unfavorable impression.

Charged words. Words which carry strong emotional meaning, and cause the reader or hearer to feel attraction or repulsion toward the thing referred to by the words.

Clause. A group of words which is part of a sentence, and which contains a subject and a predicate. A MAIN or INDEPENDENT CLAUSE is capable of standing alone; it does not depend on other parts of the sentence.

When John arrived, *I was washing the dishes.*

A SUBORDINATE or DEPENDENT CLAUSE is not complete in itself, but depends for its sense on other parts of the sentence.

When John arrived, I was washing the dishes.

Cliché. A trite expression, one which has become stale through overuse.

blushing bride irony of fate tired but happy busy as a bee

Coherence. The orderly and logical connection between the sentences, paragraphs, and sections of a composition.

Collective noun. A noun which names a group of people or of things.

crowd majority minority jury number

Although collective nouns usually have singular verbs, they may have plural verbs when the group is thought of not as a unit but as a number of separate individuals.

The *majority is* solidly opposed.
The *majority are* persuading their friends to vote against the bill.

Colloquialism. A word or expression which is common in speech, but which is usually not appropriate in high informal or formal writing. For example, *dreadful* when used to mean "very bad," "ugly," or "unpleasant." The more formal meaning of the word is "awe-inspiring; causing great dread." For a fuller treatment of the term *colloquialism,* see **Usage.**

Colon. See **Punctuation.**

Comma. See **Punctuation.**

Common noun. A noun which names all members of a class.

woman university town cigarette lake street

PROPER NOUNS name a particular member of a class.

Maria the University of California Greenfield Camels Lake Erie Dover Street

Complex sentence. A sentence which contains two or more clauses, one of them independent, and the other or others subordinate.

Although his advice was good, I did not follow it.

Compound sentence. A sentence which contains two or more independent clauses.

His advice was good, but I did not follow it.

Concrete words. Words referring to objects which have existence in the physical world, on the nature and meaning of which, therefore, people can to a considerable extent agree. Words are increasingly concrete as they point out the individual characteristics of their referents and so call to mind a definite image. (See **Abstract words.**)

Conjunction. A word which connects words, phrases, or clauses. COORDINATING CONJUNCTIONS (*and, but, for, or, nor, yet*) connect sentence elements of equal weight. SUBORDINATING CONJUNCTIONS (*since, because, when, while, as, although,* etc.) connect subordinate clauses with main clauses. CONJUNCTIVE ADVERBS (*therefore, however, moreover, hence, nevertheless, accordingly, consequently,* etc.) connect independent clauses.

Connotation. The suggestion or emotional meaning, favorable or unfavorable, carried by lightly charged words.

Consistency. Harmony or congruity in a sentence or a passage. It is achieved by avoiding unnecessary shifts in subject, in the voice, mood and tense of verbs, in style, in tone, and in level of usage.

Context. The setting of a word or passage; the surrounding words or surrounding circumstances which help to determine the meaning of a locution.

Context-charged words. Words which get their emotional meaning less from past usage than from immediate context; their charge comes from the referent which is suggested by the context. The word *fire* is differently charged by context in the phrases *forest fire* and *fire on the hearth.*

Cutting clauses. Reducing clauses (independent or dependent) to concise phrases or concise words which do the work of the whole clause.

the student *who is ambitious*	the *ambitious* student

Dangling modifier. A modifier (word, phrase, or clause) which is said to be dangling because the locution which it should modify does not appear in the sentence.

Going into the back yard, the grass was full of weeds.

Dash. See **Punctuation.**

Dependent clause. A part of a sentence which has a subject and a predicate, but which cannot stand alone; it depends on the rest of the sentence for its meaning.

When he returned, she seemed a different person.

Descriptive writing. A general term for writing which describes people, places, or experiences.

Division of words. Sometimes, in manuscript and in print, it is necessary to divide words to make an even margin. Words so divided should be broken into syllables. Usually the pronunciation of a word will indicate its division into syllables: *a round, al to geth er, time ly.* When pronunciation is not an adequate guide, the dictionary, which gives the syllabification of words, should be consulted. Words which consist of a single syllable (*hour, school, plant*) should never be divided, even though the non-division makes a somewhat uneven margin.

Ellipsis. See **Punctuation.**

Euphemism. A soothing or comfortable, and usually a vague, term which is substituted for a blunt and usually more exact term.

He has *gone to his heavenly home.*
She is *taking paying guests* for the summer.

Euphemisms are sometimes desirable in personal communication, because they ease harsh truths and hide unpleasant situations. In impersonal communication they are undesirable, because they are indirect and inexact.

Evaluation. The analysis and appraisal of a communication to arrive at a judgment of value.

The sources of the passages for evaluation printed at the end of Chapter XI are:

A. Benjamin Franklin, *Autobiography,* 1818.
B. Speech made by a representative of a landlord's association when the Governor of Massachusetts asked for State rent control in 1947.
C. *Communism in Action,* a booklet prepared in 1946 by the Congressional Legislative Reference Bureau of the Library of Congress.
D. Socrates, speech at his trial, 399 B.C. (From the Jowett translation of Plato's *Apology.*)
E. Henry David Thoreau, *Walden,* 1854.
F. Oliver Wendell Holmes, dissenting opinion on the Abrams case, 1919.
G. James B. Conant, The President's Report to the Board of Overseers, Harvard University, 1947.
H. Woodrow Wilson, address to the Senate, January 22, 1917.
I. Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels,* 1726.
J. Abraham Lincoln, notes for a law lecture, 1850.
K. Speech reported in Boston newspapers, August, 1948.
L. Carl Becker, *How New Will the Better World Be?* 1944.
M. H. W. Fowler, *Modern English Usage,* 1926.
N. Thomas Carlyle, *Past and Present,* 1843.
O. Franklin D. Roosevelt, Message to Congress, January 1, 1939.
P. Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species,* 1859.
Q. Thomas A. Huxley, an address delivered at the opening of Sir Josiah Mason's Science College at Birmingham, England, 1880.
R. Charles Dickens, *Bleak House,* 1852–3.
S. James M. Cain, *The Postman Always Rings Twice,* 1934.
T. D. H. Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley's Lover,* 1928.

Exclamation point. See **Punctuation.**

Expository writing. A general term for writing which is primarily informative or which explains a problem or a process. The conventional terms *exposition, narration,* and *description* suggest a separation of the three kinds of writing

which does not always exist. Narrative and descriptive passages are frequently used in expository writing.

Figurative language. Language used in a non-literal way, to convey a sharp and usually concrete image.

Life's but a *walking shadow.*
Then imitate the *action of the tiger.*
Jealousy is *cruel as the grave.*
My love is *like a red, red rose.*

Common figures of speech are the simile, the metaphor, and personification.

Formal English. The English used on formal occasions by educated people addressing an audience of their peers.

Fragmentary sentence. A part of a sentence incorrectly punctuated as if it expressed an independent thought.

Good English. English which is appropriate to the occasion, to the audience, and to the speaker or writer and his intention.

Heavy words. Words which are inappropriately formal or elaborate for the context in which they are used.

I *reside* in Brooklyn.
I *anticipate visiting my domicile* the *forthcoming* week-end.

Hyphen. See **Punctuation.**

Idiom. An expression peculiar to a particular language or group. Examples of English idiom which a non-English-speaking person would probably find difficult: *catch cold, be all in, come in handy, by the skin of his teeth.*

Imperative mood. Mood is the way in which the action or state described by the verb is presented. The imperative mood gives a command or makes a request.

Be more polite.

Impersonal style. The style in which a writer concentrates on the subject of his communication and keeps in the background his personal feelings about the subject, about himself, and about his audience.

Independent clause. A part of a sentence which contains a subject and a predicate and which is capable of standing alone; grammatically it expresses a complete thought, although its full meaning may depend on the rest of the sentence.

Before Bill came, *I was content to live in Ashland.*

Indicative mood. Mood is the way in which the action or state described by the verb is presented. The indicative mood makes an assertion or asks a question.

He *is* a law student. *Is* he a law student?

Infinitive. The simple form of a verb preceded by *to: to go, to learn, to keep.* Infinitives are used as subjects, as objects, and as modifiers.

To live is happiness.
He wanted *to leave.*
I have time *to spare.*

Informal English. The English used by cultivated people in conducting their everyday affairs. It lies between vulgate and formal English.

Intention. One of the three parts or aspects of meaning. The intention (purpose) of a communicator is usually to inform, to persuade or convince, or to communicate feeling or experience.

Inversion. Placing a verb before its subject, for emphasis or variety in sentence movement.

Down the street sped the blue convertible.

Italics. See **Punctuation.**

Jargon. Pretentious language, characterized by wordiness, over-formality, or inappropriate use of semi-technical expressions.

a substantial segment of the population [instead of *many people*]

Levels of usage. A term used to describe the differences in construction, pronunciation, and vocabulary, which are produced by differences in education and social situation. This book discusses three main levels of usage: formal English, informal English, and vulgate English.

Localism. An expression peculiar to a certain locality, likely to be imperfectly understood outside that locality, and usually not appropriate in formal English.

go a piece want out corn pone sharpie

Locution. A general term referring to a word, phrase, clause, or sentence.

Loose sentence. A sentence which continues after the main idea has been expressed.

He got home, after missing two buses and losing his temper.

Meaning. A general term for what is communicated by language. The three parts of meaning—plain sense, intention, and attitude—are discussed fully in Chapter One.

Metaphor. A figure of speech which suggests comparison by applying to something a term not literally applicable.

I am the *captain of my soul.*
The world's *a stage.*
She is *a cat.*
a *dusty* answer

Misplaced modifier. A modifier so placed in the sentence that it appears to modify the wrong word.

She pinned the corsage on her shoulder *which was made of white orchids.*

Mixed figure. A careless figure of speech in which two or more comparisons produce absurdity or incongruity.

He sailed the sea of life, leaping over every hurdle.

Modifier. A word, phrase, or clause which explains, limits, or describes other elements in the sentence.

Mood. The way in which the action or state described by the verb is presented. See **Imperative mood, Indicative mood,** and **Subjunctive mood.**

Narrative writing. A general term for writing which tells a story or part of a story.

Non-restrictive modifier. A modifier (word, phrase, or clause) which merely adds more information, or incidental information, about the already-identified element it modifies. It is set off by commas from that element.

My father, *who broke his arm last week,* greatly enjoys the radio programs.

Noun. The name of a person, place, thing, or idea.

Numbers. In formal and informal writing, numbers are usually spelled out when the number can be expressed in one or two words: *two, fifty-three, six hundred, ten thousand, five million.* They are commonly written as figures when more than two words are needed to express them: $29.95, 157, 1142.

Figures are used in writing dates, street numbers, page and chapter numbers, and any group of numbers appearing in the same passage.

May 30, 1949 19 Weston Avenue Chapter 4, page 215
Take notes on 3 by 5, 4 by 6, or 5 by 8 cards.

A number is always written out when it occurs at the beginning of a sentence.

Three hundred and sixty people were present.

Object. A word, phrase, or clause which completes the meaning of a transitive verb.

He loves his *mother.*
She dislikes *earning a living.*
He hopes *that he can go to Florida.*

The noun following a preposition is called the object of the preposition.

to *Florida* in the *hall* above the *clouds*

Obsolete. An adjective applied to words and expressions which are out of date and no longer in use.

Padding. A term for words and phrases which add nothing but unnecessary length to a sentence.

round *in shape* large *in size* *first* beginning sunset *in the west*

Paragraph. A unit of composition, marked by the indentation of its first line. A good paragraph develops a single idea, and furthers the development of the whole composition.

Parallelism. The expression in the same grammatical form of elements which have the same function or the same relationship in a sentence or passage.

He enjoys *hunting, fishing,* and *swimming.*

Parentheses. See **Punctuation.**

Particularization. A method of paragraph development by which a general statement is developed and made clear by a series of concrete details or particular instances.

Passive voice. The voice of a verb which indicates that the subject is acted upon rather than acting. (See also **Active voice.**)

Long papers *were written* by the students.

Often, as in the preceding example, a passive statement is less effective than an active statement.

Period. See **Punctuation.**

Periodic sentence. A sentence in which the meaning is suspended until the end.

> Having sharpened his pencils, straightened his books, laid out a writing pad, and eaten an apple, he was ready to begin his theme.

Personal style. The style in which a writer includes in a communication his own personality, and his feelings about himself, his subject, and his audience.

Phrase. A group of words which does not contain a subject and predicate but which is a unit in a sentence; it may serve as a noun, a verb, an adjective, or an adverb.

Noun phrase: Typing with two fingers is laborious.
Verb phrase: I *have been thinking* about your problem.
Adjective phrase: A girl *with green eyes* is the girl for me.
Adverbial phrase: I walked *down the street.*

Plagiarism. Dishonest use of the work of others.

Few students in composition courses plagiarize deliberately; that is, few copy, with conscious dishonesty, another student's theme, or a passage from a book or magazine. But a number of students, feeling the pressure of regular writing assignments, and actually confused about the legitimate use of materials, may be tempted to "borrow" sentences and patterns of ideas, or to "get help" on a theme, unless the whole concept of plagiarism is clarified for them. It is the purpose of this note to make clear what plagiarism is and how it can be avoided.

Plagiarism means presenting, *as one's own,* the words, the work, or the opinions of someone else. It is dishonest, since the plagiarist offers, as his own, for credit, the language, or information, or thought for which he deserves no credit. It is unintelligent, since it defeats the purpose of the course—improvement of the student's own powers of thinking and communication. It is also dangerous, since penalties for

plagiarism are severe; they commonly range from failure on the paper to failure in the course; in some institutions the penalty is dismissal from college.

Plagiarism occurs when one uses the exact language of someone else without putting the quoted material in quotation marks and giving its source. (Exceptions are very well-known quotations, from the Bible or Shakespeare, for example.) In formal papers, the source is acknowledged in a footnote; in informal papers, it may be put in parentheses, or made a part of the text: "Sumner Wells says. . . ." This first type of plagiarism, using without acknowledgment the language of someone else, is easy to understand and to avoid: *when a writer uses the exact words of another writer, or speaker, he must put those words in quotation marks and give their source.*

A second type of plagiarism is more complex. It occurs when the writer presents, as his own, *the sequence of ideas, the arrangement of material, the pattern of thought* of someone else, even though he expresses it in his own words. The language may be his, but he is presenting as the work of his brain, and taking credit for, the work of another's brain. He is, therefore, guilty of plagiarism if he fails to give credit to the original author of the pattern of ideas.

This aspect of plagiarism presents difficulties because the line is sometimes unclear between borrowed thinking and thinking which is our own. We all absorb information and ideas from other people. In this way we learn. But in the normal process of learning, new ideas are digested; they enter our minds and are associated and integrated with ideas already there; when they come out again, their original pattern is broken; they are re-formed and re-arranged. We have made them our own. Plagiarism occurs when a sequence of ideas is transferred from a source to a paper without the process of digestion, integration, and reorganization in the writer's mind, and without acknowledgment in the paper.

Students writing informal themes, in which they are usually

asked to draw on their own experience and information, can guard against plagiarism by a simple test. They should be able honestly to answer *No* to the following questions:

1. Have I read anything in preparation for writing this paper?
2. Am I deliberately recalling any particular source of information as I write this paper?
3. Am I consulting any source as I write this paper?

If the answer to these questions is *No,* the writer need have no fear of using sources dishonestly. The material in his mind, which he will transfer to his written page, is genuinely digested and his own.

The writing of a research paper presents a somewhat different problem, for here the student is expected to gather material from books and articles read for the purpose of writing the paper. In the careful research paper, however (and this is true of term papers in all college courses), credit is given in footnotes for every idea, conclusion, or piece of information which is not the writer's own; and the writer is careful not to follow closely the wording of the sources he has read. If he wishes to quote, he puts the passage in quotation marks and gives credit to the author in a footnote; but he writes the bulk of the paper in his own words and his own style, using footnotes to acknowledge the facts and ideas he has taken from his reading. Fuller information on the use of sources in research papers and other term papers is given in Chapter Nine: The Research Paper.

Plain sense. One of the three parts or aspects of meaning. Plain sense is the fact or idea to be communicated.

Possessives. Possession is commonly indicated by adding an apostrophe and *s* to the name of the possessor: *Mary's eyes; love's labor; women's slacks.* If the noun ends in *s,* the apostrophe alone may be added: *Dickens' novels, Jones' house, babies' toys, friends' loyalty.* See *Apostrophe,* under the heading **Punctuation.**

Precharged words. Words which carry strong emotional meaning independent of context or referent, because of the way we have heard the words used and the associations we have attached to them.

mother home friend love democracy fascism communism prejudice hate war

Pronoun. A word used as a substitute for a noun.

he his who which this that

Proper noun. See **Common noun.**

Provincialism. A word or expression, like a localism, which is peculiar to a particular place or section of the country.

tote I reckon down the road a piece

Punctuation. Punctuation rules are simply ways of stating the generally accepted, conventional meaning of punctuation marks. The able writer is aware of the important part such marks play in clarifying meaning and emphasis, and he departs from the conventions only when there is clear and positive advantage to be gained from doing so. Marks of punctuation, with their conventional uses, are listed in alphabetical order in this section.

The apostrophe (') is used to form possessives and certain plurals, and to indicate the omission of one or more letters.

1. To form the possessive of nouns not ending in *s*, use the apostrophe plus *s*.

   Tom's shoes day's work man's fate men's clothes

2. To form the possessive of plural nouns ending in *s*, use the apostrophe alone.

   soldiers' uniforms friends' houses ladies' jewelry

3. To form the possessive of singular nouns ending in *s* or *s* sounds, use either the apostrophe alone, or the apostrophe plus *s*.

   Burns's poetry [*Or*] Burns' poetry

4. To form the plurals of figures, letters, and signs, use the apostrophe plus *s*.

   The word has three *t's* in it.

5. To indicate the omission of one or more letters, use the apostrophe.

   He said the 'gator [alligator] was dangerous.

   They won't come, and we can't meet without them.

Brackets ([ ]) are most commonly used to enclose interpolations by the writer or the editor in quoted material.

"He [Calvin Coolidge] had the reputation of being a man of few words."

"That year [1860] he met Lincoln for the first time."

Brackets are also used as parentheses within parentheses.

The colon (:) is a formal and specialized mark indicating introduction or anticipation. It is used:

1. To introduce a formal quotation or a formal enumeration of particulars.

   In his speech of July 3, 1947, Senator Patwell said: "This un-American law . . . ."

   The college library has ordered the following books: . . .

2. To follow the salutation of a business letter (*Dear Sir:*).

3. To separate hours from minutes (*12:15*).

The comma (,) is the most frequently used mark of punctuation. Misuse of it produces not only mechanical errors, but also confusion and misunderstanding. The principal uses of the comma are:

1. To separate two independent clauses joined by *and, but, for, or, nor.*[1]

   He spoke to his brother, and his father did not hear the remark.

2. To set off non-restrictive modifiers.

   Addison was glad to see his youngest brother, who had been away for eight years.

[1] Some authorities add *yet* and *so* to this list of coordinating conjunctions.

3. To set off words, phrases, or clauses that are parenthetical (i.e., are thrown in as interrupters when the grammatical structure is complete without them).

He is, however, unwilling to accept the compromise.

War and unemployment, on the other hand, are ever-present dangers.

He, it is said, was more to blame than his son.

4. To separate elements (words, phrases, or clauses) in a series.

Papers were strewn on the table, on the desk, and on the floor.

He enjoys hunting, fishing, and swimming.

He stated that conflict was imminent, that the opponents were well prepared, and that he felt uncertain of victory.

(When there is no danger of ambiguity or misreading, it is permissible to omit the comma before the final element in the series.)

5. To set off a non-restrictive appositive. (An appositive is a noun or a noun equivalent used to explain another noun construction which has the same referent.)

Mr. Morgan, John's father, was pleased. [Non-restrictive appositive; commas are needed.]

The poet Milton was blind. [Restrictive appositive; commas should not be used.]

6. To separate two coordinate adjectives not joined by a conjunction.

The tall, thin man shrugged his shoulders.

(The comma is not used when such adjectives are not coordinate, as in "The tired old man staggered under the pack." Here *tired* modifies the locution *old man*.)

7. To set off a short direct quotation from the rest of the sentence.

He said, "Are you going now?"

"You must go now," he said.

8. To separate the parts of dates, addresses, and geographical names.

   On August 17, 1949, his address was 14 Barton Street, Peoria 4, Illinois; later he moved to Cleveland, Ohio, to live near his sister.

9. To prevent misreading. (Sometimes the fact that commas are needed to prevent misreading is a hint that the sentence needs to be revised.)

   Before, he had insisted on cash payment.

   For him, to buy was better than to sell.

Commas are used (1) when they are needed to clarify meaning by marking a slight pause, and (2) when they are required by some of the established conventions stated in the rules above. Commas that are not justified by (1) or (2) should be omitted.

The dash (—) skillfully used does much to clarify meaning; unskillfully used, it misleads the reader and suggests that the writer is using punctuation to suit his own convenience rather than to guide the reader. Dashes may be used singly or in pairs.

1. Dashes are used in pairs to set off interpolations to which the writer wishes to give greater emphasis than parentheses or commas would give them.

   He said—you can imagine how this pleased me—that he would not accept my handwritten paper.

   These three elements—plain sense, attitude, and intention—combine to produce the compound of meaning.

   Charles, you must—don't scuff your feet and wear out your shoes—you must return Mr. Hazlitt's rake.

2. A single dash is used to mark an unexpected turn of thought, an abrupt suspension of sense, a sudden change in construction, or a hesitation in speech.

   He gave a—I'm sorry; I promised not to tell.

   Beets, carrots, tomatoes, corn, chard, onions—all these I planted in the unfertile soil. At the end of the summer I had well-fed worms and a flourishing crop of—weeds!

   Mary heard Tom say to her father, "Mr. Hodge, I—that is, we—well—uh—Mary said—to ask . . . ."

The dash should not be carelessly used as a substitute for other marks of punctuation. In general the dash serves as a signal that either the substance or the construction of the material it sets off demands particular attention. In typing, the dash is made by combining two hyphens.

Ellipsis (. . .) is used to indicate the omission of a word or words needed to complete a sentence, or the omission of part of a quotation. Four spaced periods instead of three are used in an ellipsis if it comes at the end of a sentence which is closed by a period, or if a period occurs in the material omitted.

I know that I should do it, but . . . .

Newman says that a university education "gives a man a clear conscious view of his own opinions and judgments, . . . an eloquence in expressing them, and a force in urging them."

The exclamation point (!) is used after an ejaculation (word, phrase, or entire sentence) to indicate emphatic utterance or strong feeling.

Ouch!

Get out!

And we spent our youth learning grammar!

The hyphen (-) is a mark used primarily to show close relationship between words or parts of words. Rules for the hyphen are not completely fixed: some compounds (combined words or parts of words) are hyphenated and others are written as solid words; and authorities differ about the use of the hyphen in particular cases. In general, the hyphen is used:

1. In compounds.

   An off-the-face-hat [*but*—off the face of the earth]

   A broken-down car [*but*—the car was broken down]

   Pro-German mother-in-law slow-paying hard-working hanger-on

2. At the end of a line when part of a word or a compound is carried over to the next line.

3. In compound numbers from twenty to one hundred.

   Twenty-one ninety-nine

Italics are indicated in manuscript by underlining the word or words to be italicized. Italics are used:

1. For titles of books, newspapers, magazines, and long poems and plays.

   Green Mansions

   the *Saturday Review of Literature*

   The Tempest

2. For foreign words and phrases.

   The ambassador was *persona non grata.*

3. For emphasis.

   I shall *never* consent.

4. For calling attention to words as words.

   Freedom is a word with many meanings.

Parentheses (( )) are used to set off material (definitions, additional information, asides, illustrative detail) which helps to clarify, but is not essential. Such material is thrown in, as we say, parenthetically.

The period (.) has two main uses: (1) to mark the end of a sentence or of an expression which in context serves the purpose of a sentence, and (2) to make clear that a letter or a group of letters is an abbreviation of a longer locution.

A series of periods (. . .), called *ellipsis,* is used to indicate the omission of a word or words necessary to complete a sentence, or the omission of part of a quotation. (See ***Ellipsis,*** above.)

The question mark (?) is placed at the end of a direct question, or is used parenthetically to express doubt:

"Are you going?" [simple question]

"You insist on doing this?" [statement spoken as a question]

Chaucer, born in 1342 (?), anticipated the English Renaissance.

Quotation marks (" ") are used to enclose all direct quotations and to call attention to locutions that are used in special ways. Single quotation marks (' ') are used within double quotation marks (" ") for a quotation within a quotation. The principal uses of quotation marks are:

1. To enclose direct quotations.

   The reporter wrote: "Hitler did not say, 'I will return'; he said, 'Show me the nearest bomb shelter.' "

2. To enclose locutions used in special ways:

   a. Titles of short poems, stories, magazine articles, and chapters of books. (Underlining—to indicate italics—is used for titles of books, magazines, newspapers, and plays.)

      He read aloud parts of the "Ode to Autumn" and then gave a lecture on Keats.

      He wrote a book report on Hardy's *The Return of the Native.*

   b. Technical terms which might confuse the reader if they were not identified as technical.

      In the "lead" the reporter must give certain information.

   c. Expressions that the writer wishes to call attention to as words, sometimes for ironic effect. (In formal writing, such words are usually italicized, but they are commonly put in quotation marks in informal writing.)

      "Recession" is a more pleasant word than "depression," and "strategic withdrawal" sounds better than "retreat."

Quotation marks should *not* be used to enclose indirect quotations or to excuse inappropriate phrasing:

Wrong: He said "that Tom will come."

Poor: Polonius was deceived because he did not know that Hamlet was "kidding him along."

In typing, quotations of two lines or more are usually single spaced and indented. Quotation marks are then not necessary.

Quotation marks used with other marks of punctuation sometimes cause trouble in student writing. A question mark or exclamation point is put inside the close-quotation mark if it belongs to the quotation, but outside the quotation mark if it belongs to the sentence which included quoted material.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"Stop!" he cried.

Can we ignore what Carl Becker has called "the climate of opinion"?

Periods and commas are conventionally put inside the close-quotation mark.

"It is difficult," Archibald said, "always to be in the right."

Semicolons are usually put after the quotation mark.

The semicolon (;), though actually an easy mark of punctuation to master, is second only to the comma in producing errors in student writing. The principal uses of the semicolon are:

1. To separate two *independent* clauses *not* joined by *and, but, for, or, nor.*

   They had reached a stalemate; neither would give in.

   He was discouraged; life had disappointed him.

2. To separate coordinate clauses joined by *and, but, for, or, nor* when one of the coordinate clauses contains commas. (This is always a safe rule; one need not follow it, however, when a comma instead of a semicolon will give the desired clarity and emphasis.)

   The French fought for liberty, equality, fraternity; and peace was a secondary consideration. [Here the semicolon is needed for clarity.]

   Charles, Tom, and Elliot came in late, and their father asked them where they had been. [Here the comma is certainly justifiable.]

3. To separate items in a series when one of the items itself contains a comma. (This rule, too, is dependent on context. Oftentimes a comma will serve the purpose.)

   She ordered doughnuts, cookies, and pies from the bakery; ice cream, chocolate sauce, and sherbet from the drug store; and balloons, horns, and cap pistols from the corner store.

In general, a semicolon indicates a shorter pause and a closer connection than a period, and a longer pause and a less close connection than a comma.

Question mark. See **Punctuation.**

Quotation marks. See **Punctuation.**

Reference. The reference, or relationship, of a pronoun to its antecedent. Reference is clear when a pronoun clearly re-

fers to one antecedent, and agrees with that antecedent in number, person, and gender.

Referent. The thing or idea to which a word refers. A word is merely a symbol. The thing which it stands for, which it verbally points to, is its referent.

Referential meaning. The plain-sense meaning of words, as distinguished from their attitudinal or emotional meaning.

Reporting. A term used in this book to mean the recording of verifiable facts, in uncharged language.

Restrictive modifier. A modifier (word, phrase, or clause) which identifies or restricts the meaning of the sentence element it modifies. Since the restrictive modifier establishes the identity of the element it modifies, it is not set off by commas.

All sophomores *who threw tomatoes at the police* were suspended.

(Setting off the modifier in the example above would change the meaning of the sentence: it would indicate that *all* sophomores threw tomatoes, and that *all* sophomores were suspended.)

Run-together sentences. Independent clauses, capable of standing as separate sentences, which are carelessly run together with only a comma, or with no punctuation, between them.

It was a brisk autumn day, the boy walked along the street shuffling the fallen leaves.

Run-together sentences are generally considered to be a serious error in writing.

Semicolon. See **Punctuation.**

Sentence. In general, a group of words which contains a subject and a predicate and which makes an independent assertion.

Shoptalk. The verbal short-cuts, generally a form of slang, used by people in the same trade, business, or profession. Within the group, shoptalk may be exact and meaningful; outside the group it is often unintelligible. It is, therefore, avoided in formal English, and in informal communication with people who may be unfamiliar with the vocabulary of a particular occupation.

Simile. A figure of speech in which one thing is directly compared to another. A simile is usually introduced by *like* or *as*.

He shall come down *like rain upon the mown grass.*
Set me *as a seal upon thine heart.*
fought *like a lion* lithe *as a panther*

Simple sentence. A sentence which contains only one clause.

The house was painted gray.

Slang. In general, language below the level of cultivated speech and writing. Some slang is frequently used, however, in the informal speech and familiar writing of educated people; and some expressions, once considered slang, have become established in good informal usage.

Slanting. The selecting and emphasizing of material with the purpose of creating a favorable or an unfavorable impression.

Spelling. In Chapter Three some of the remedies for poor spelling are suggested: the poor speller should use his dictionary conscientiously; he should keep a list of words he misspells; he should write and visualize these words in their correct spelling to fix them in his mind; and he should check his pronunciation to be sure that the addition or omission of syllables or letters ("athaletic," "suprise," "goverment") in his speech is not responsible for faulty spelling of the word. Careful pronunciation of words which have a similar sound will often prevent the confusion of those words in writing:

then, than; accept, except; allusion, illusion; affect, effect; lose, loose; weather, whether; quite, quiet.

Also, the student who spells badly should memorize and apply certain basic rules of English spelling. There are exceptions to nearly all of them, but a sure grasp of the rules will eliminate many common misspellings. The most useful rules are those which guide the writer in the spelling of *ie* and *ei* words, and in the spelling, when a suffix is added, of words ending with a consonant, with *y*, or with a silent *e*.

1. *Words spelled with "ie" or "ei"* are nearly always spelled correctly according to the old rhyme:

I before *e*
Except after *c*,
Or when sounded as *a*,
As in *neighbor* and *weigh*.

Believe, relief, grieve, chief, piece, niece, field are examples of *i* before *e*. The reversal of the letters when they come after *c* is shown in *receive, deceit, perceive, conceive.* (Some exceptions to the rule are *weird, leisure,* and *seize.*)

2. *Words ending with a consonant* double that final consonant before a suffix beginning with a vowel when the word has only one syllable, or is accented on the last syllable, and when the final consonant is preceded by a single vowel:

begin, beginning, beginner
stop, stopped, stopping, stoppage
control, controlled, controlling
occur, occurring, occurrence

The final consonant is not doubled when it is preceded by a double vowel or two vowels, when the word is not accented on the last syllable, or when the suffix begins with a consonant:

Preceded by a double vowel: need, needed, needing
Preceded by two vowels: treat, treated, treating
Word not accented on the last syllable:
offer, offered, offering
benefit, benefited, benefiting
Suffix beginning with a consonant: ship, shipped, shipping, [*but*] ship*m*ent

3. *Words ending with "y"* change the *y* to *i* when a suffix is added, if the *y* is preceded by a consonant:

lovely, lovelier, loveliest
mercy, merciful, merciless
pity, pitiful, pitiless
copy, copied, copies

An important exception: the *y* is kept before *ing* endings:

copy, copying
try, tried, tries, [*but*] trying
carry, carried, carries, [*but*] carrying

The *y* remains *y* when it is preceded by a vowel:

play, played
gay, gayer, gayest
joy, joyous, joyful

Important exceptions are *said, laid, paid* (*not* sayed, layed, payed).

4. *Words ending in silent "e"* drop the *e* when they add a suffix beginning with a vowel, and keep the *e* when they add a suffix beginning with a consonant:

Suffix beginning with a vowel:
love, loving, lovable
guide, guiding, guidance
dine, dining
become, becoming
desire, desirable

Suffix beginning with a consonant:
immediate, immediately
force, forceful
sincere, sincerely

Exceptions to the rule of dropping the *e* before a vowel are *changeable, noticeable, courageous.* (The *e* is kept to preserve the soft sound of *g* and *c.*) Exceptions to the rule of keeping the *e* before a consonant are *argument, truly, awful.*

The following list contains two hundred and fifty words which college freshmen often misspell. Mastering these two hundred and fifty words will end most of the spelling difficulties of the student whose spelling is poor.

absence
accidentally
accommodate
achieved
across
address
advice
affect
aggravate
all right
almost
already
altogether
anxious
apparent
appearance
argument
around
arrangements
ascend
athletic
attendance
awful
awkward
before
beginning
believe
benefited
business
cafeteria
candidate
capital
carrying
changeable
changing
choose
chosen
clothes
coming
committee
comparative
compel
competent
completely
compliment
confident
conscience
conscientious
conscious
consistent
controlled
convenience
copies
council
counsel
countries
courteous
criticism
deceive
decided
definite
definition
dependent
descent
describe
desirable
desperate
device
didn't
different
dining
disappear
disappoint
disastrous
discipline
dissatisfied
dissipation
divided
divine
doesn't
don't
dormitory
effect
eighth
embarrassed
emphasize
environment
etc.
exaggerate
exhausted
existence
experience
February
fiery
finally
forcibly
forehead
formerly
forty
fundamental
genius
government
grammar
grievance
guard
hadn't
height
heroes
hindrance
hoping
humorous

hurrying
imagination
immediately
incidentally
independent
interested
interpreted
irresistible
its
it's
knowledge
laboratory
laid
later
latter
led
leisure
library
lightning
literally
literature
livelihood
loneliness
loose
lose
lying
marriage
meant
merely
minutes
misspelled
murmur
necessary
niece
ninety
ninth
noticeable
occasion
occurred
occurrence
o'clock
omitted
opportunity
optimistic
paid
parallel
parliament
pastime
perform
perhaps
permissible
perseverance
persistent
personally
planning
pleasant
portrayed
possession
possible
preceding
preference
prejudice
principal
principle
privilege
probably
procedure
proceed
professor
prominent
prophecy
prophesied
psychology
pursuing
quantity
quiet
quite
really
recede
receive
recognize
recommend
referred
relieve
religious
repetition
representative
restaurant
rhythm
salary
scarcely
schedule
seize
sentence
separate
shining
shone
shown
similar
sincerely
sophomore
speak
speech
stationary
stationery
stretched
studying
succeed
successful
supersede
suppression
surely
surprise
temperament
tendency
their
together
too
tragedy
transferred
tries
truly
twelfth
unnecessary
until
usually

valuable
vegetable
vengeance
villain
weird
whether
who's
whose
woman
won't
writing
written
you're

Split infinitive. See the entry *Split infinitive* under **Usage.**

Subject. A word, phrase, or clause that acts as a noun, and about which the predicate makes an assertion.

Life is real.
To know all is to forgive all.
That experience is the best teacher is hard to deny.

Subjunctive mood. Mood is the way in which an action or state described by the verb is presented. The subjunctive mood expresses wish, doubt, or a condition contrary to fact.

I wish he *were* willing.

Subordinating conjunction. See **Conjunction.**

Subordination. Expressing in dependent clauses, phrases, or single words, ideas which are not significant enough to be expressed in a main clause or an independent sentence.

Tense. The form of a verb which indicates the time of its action. English verbs have six tenses: Present—*I see;* Past—*I saw;* Future—*I shall see;* Present Perfect—*I have seen;* Past Perfect—*I had seen;* and Future Perfect—*I shall have seen.*

Titles. Titles of books, magazines, and newspapers are italicized in formal writing. This conventional practice should be followed by college students in their writing. Italics are represented in manuscript by underlining. Capital letters are used for the first word of the title and for all other words except articles, conjunctions, and short prepositions:

The Short Stories of Henry James
The Naked and the Dead
How Green Was My Valley
the *Atlantic Monthly*
the New York *Times*

The titles of short pieces—articles, stories, essays, poems—are put in quotation marks. Usage varies on the titles of long poems and plays; usually they are italicized if they are being discussed as separate units, and put in quotation marks if they are regarded as parts of a larger work.

In writing the title of his own theme, the student should center the title on the first line of the first page, and capitalize the first word and all other important words. He should use neither underlining nor quotation marks for this title.

Topic sentence. A sentence which states the central idea of a paragraph. In narrative and descriptive paragraphs, the topic sentence is sometimes implied rather than stated directly; such paragraphs are said to have a *topic idea* rather than a topic sentence.

Transitions. Words, phrases, or sentences, which make a smooth and orderly passage between sentences and paragraphs. Examples of transitional words: *furthermore, therefore, however, yet, also.* Examples of transitional phrases: *on the other hand, at the same time, in addition to.* Examples of transitional sentences: *Meanwhile another development was taking place; Let us consider now a second problem.* Clear pronoun references to words in the preceding sentence or paragraph, and the repetition of key words are other common devices of transition.

Triad. A group of three parallel words, phrases, or clauses, often found in formal writing, and infrequently in informal writing.

Studies serve *for delight, for ornament, and for ability.*

Underlining. In formal writing, underlining in manuscript corresponds to italics in print. Conventionally underlined (italicized) are (1) titles of books and magazines; (2) foreign words and phrases; (3) locutions to be emphasized; and (4) words considered as words, used for their illustrative value rather than for their meaning.

(1) David Copperfield
(2) requiescat in pace
(3) Context is a very important consideration.
(4) Honor, truth, love are abstract words.

In student writing, underlining is frequently overused as a means of emphasis. The skillful writer is able to get emphasis by his choice of words and sentence structure, and so does not need to rely heavily on the mechanical device of underlining. For additional information about underlining, see **Titles,** and *Italics* under the heading **Punctuation.**

Unity. The quality of a sentence, paragraph, or composition when it has a central purpose or intention, and when all of its parts are relevant to that central intention.

Usage. Good usage may be defined as a use of words or forms considered acceptable by reputable authorities, students of language who study the actual practice of cultivated people in speech and writing. The best way to develop a knowledge of good usage and a feeling for it is to read widely in good literature and to listen attentively to the speech of cultivated people. Dictionaries are, of course, invaluable aids if one knows how to use them (see Appendix B, Using the Dictionary). Points of usage not treated in dictionaries are fully and clearly treated in H. W. Fowler's *Modern English Usage.* Porter G. Perrin's "Index" in *The Writer's Guide and Index to English* supplements Fowler and treats modern American usage.

Most college students have little difficulty in recognizing and avoiding expressions which clearly belong to the vulgate level. *Ain't got no, he done, a orange, hisself, he seen, yourn, had went,* and the like, seldom find their way into college papers. There are, however, a good many less obvious unacceptable usages below the informal level which students need to recognize and avoid, and there are expressions appropriate in speech and informal writing but inappropriate in formal

communication. It is with expressions on the fringes of good informal usage or of good formal usage that college students have most difficulty. In dictionaries, expressions below the level of informal English are usually omitted or labeled as *dialectical* or *illiterate*. Expressions which are not vulgate but are below the level of formal English are labeled by the term *colloquial* or by some other term describing limited usage, and expressions acceptable in formal English are given without a restricting label.

Since college students are most likely to own *Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, Fifth Edition, or the *American College Dictionary*, or the *College Standard Dictionary*, Emphatype Edition, it is worth while to call attention here to the way these three dictionaries define or comment on the term *colloquial* and to the fact that the three dictionaries use the word in slightly different ways. (All three definitions, of course, correspond roughly to the meaning of the word *informal* as it is used in this book to describe informal usage.)

Webster's Collegiate Dictionary defines *colloquial* as follows: "Pertaining to, or used in, conversation, esp. familiar conversation; hence informal."

In the *American College Dictionary* Mr. Charles C. Fries defines and discusses the term *colloquial* in a special section entitled "Usage Levels and Dialect Distribution":

> Many expressions occur primarily in conversation rather than in formal writing. The occasions for their use are chiefly conversational situations. These are marked *"Colloq."* Even teachers of English frequently misunderstand the application of the label *colloquial* in our best dictionaries. Some confuse it with *localism* and think of the words and constructions marked *colloquial* as peculiarities of speaking which are characteristic of a particular locality. Others feel that some stigma attaches to the label *colloquial* and would strive to avoid as incorrect (or as of low level) all words so marked. The word *colloquial,* however, as used to label words and phrases in a modern scientifically edited dictionary has no such meaning. It is used to mark those words and constructions whose range of use is primarily that of

the polite conversation of cultivated people, of their familiar letters and informal speeches, as distinct from those words and constructions which are common also in formal writing. The usage of our better magazines and of public addresses generally has, during the past generation, moved away from the formal and literary toward the colloquial.[2]

In the *College Standard Dictionary,* Emphatype Edition, Mr. Charles Earle Funk, the editor, defines the label *popular,* which is used in the *Standard Dictionary* instead of *colloquial:*

Because, through the influence of many factors, it is no longer possible to draw precise lines of distinction between the various forms of unconventional English now permissible in informal speech, no attempt has been made in these pages to distinguish between slang usage and colloquial usage. Much of the slang of yesterday has become the popular everyday phrase of today, and the slang of today may be the colloquial usage of tomorrow. Hence, such of these terms as have been admitted to these pages are labeled "popular," by the bracketed abbreviation [Pop.], the label serving to indicate that in the opinion of the editors and other competent observers the word or meaning so labeled may be used in ordinary conversation or writing but has not yet achieved the dignity of usage in formal speech or writing.

Sometimes dictionaries differ not only in the precise meaning of the labels that they use but also in the information that they give about the usage of particular expressions. Such differences in dictionaries occur either because one group of editors is more conservative than another or because one dictionary is based on a recent study of usage and another reports usage as it was a number of years ago. It is well to have in mind the copyright dates of the three dictionaries discussed here: *Webster's Collegiate Dictionary,* Fifth Edition, 1936; the *American College Dictionary,* 1947; the *College Standard Dictionary,* Emphatype Edition, 1947. At least partly because it has not been brought up to date, *Webster's Collegiate Dic-*

[2] From *The American College Dictionary,* copyright, 1947, by Random House; Text Edition, copyright, 1948, by Harper & Brothers. Reprinted by permission.

tionary, Fifth Edition, is more conservative on matters of usage than the other two, which are based upon recent studies of usage. In the following glossary, some of the entries dealing with controversial matters of usage contain the names of the dictionaries consulted and, in each instance, the word used by these dictionaries to label the expression.

The glossary of usage which follows is necessarily selective; it deals briefly with usages which occur fairly often in student writing. For fine points of usage and for exhaustive discussion of matters dealt with only generally here, the student should refer to Fowler's *Modern English Usage,* a reliable and entertaining guide for those who wish to use language with taste and discrimination.

Accept, except. *Accept* is a verb meaning *to receive willingly or with approval:* "He accepted the gift"—"He accepted the decision." *Except* may be a verb meaning *to exclude* ("He excepted Tom, but he invited the others"), or it may be a preposition meaning *with the exclusion of:* "Everyone was pleased except the instructor."

Affect, effect. *Affect* is a verb. In one sense it means *to pretend* or *to assume* ("He affected ignorance"); in another sense it means *to influence* or *to move:* "The tragic accident affected him deeply." *Effect* may be a noun or a verb. As a noun it means *result* ("The effect was startling"); as a verb it means *to bring about* or *to achieve:* "to effect the rescue of the trapped miners."

Aggravate. In formal English *aggravate* means *to make worse or more severe. Aggravate* in the sense of *to irritate* or *vex* is a colloquial expression inappropriate to formal English, and questionable in informal English.

All right, "alright." *All right* is the only generally accepted spelling, and *alright* is therefore a misspelling. The *American College Dictionary* lists *alright* but states that it is not generally regarded as good usage. It seems likely that someday *alright* will be an acceptable spelling; at the present time it is not.

All together, altogether. *All together* means *united. Altogether* means *entirely.*

The family will be all together this Christmas.
The injured man was altogether helpless.

Almost, most. *Most* as a shortened form of *almost* is labeled "colloquial" in the *American College Dictionary,* "colloquial" and "dialectical" in *Webster's Collegiate Dictionary.* In serious writing the expression is out of place.

Alumnus, alumni, alumna, alumnae. Latin forms kept in English and applied in strict usage to graduates of a school or college; loosely used, however, to refer to former students of a school or college.

Alumnus, masculine singular; *alumni,* masculine plural.
Alumna, feminine singular; *alumnae,* feminine plural.
Alumni is used as a collective term for men and women graduates.

It seems that there are two reasons for keeping the Latin words instead of using the English word *graduate:* (1) the Latin words carry the suggestion of group unity and loyalty to the institution and (2) they enable one to include all past students, whether or not the students are graduates.

"Anywheres," "somewheres." Vulgate for *anywhere, somewhere.*

As. Frequently used as a connective where *because, for, when, while, since* or some other more exact connective would convey the meaning more clearly.

I knew that he was there, as I saw him enter the door.
Improved: I knew that he was there because I saw him enter the door.

Awful, awfully. In formal English *awful* means *awe-inspiring* and *awfully* means *in an awe-inspiring manner. Awful* in the sense of *bad* or *ludicrous* and *awfully* in the sense of *excessively, very* are labeled "slang" in *Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* and "colloquial" in the *American College Dictionary. Awful* in the sense of *very* ("That's awful nice of you") is not appropriate in formal or informal English.

Bad, badly. *Bad* is an adjective and *badly* is an adverb. Choice between the two words is usually easy except when a linking verb

is used. Linking verbs (*appear, be, seem, become, feel, look, smell, taste, sound,* etc.) are followed by an adjective instead of an adverb, and hence *bad* and not *badly* is correct in the sentences below.

He looks bad.
He feels bad.
The apple tastes bad.

Because. *Because* in the construction, "The reason is because . . . ." is questionable usage. The accepted construction is "The reason is that . . . ." *Because* means *for the reason that,* and "The reason is because . . . ." therefore involves the needless repetition of an idea. Since usage often defies logic, "The reason is because . . . ." may someday become accepted usage. At present it seems to be acceptable in informal usage but not in formal usage.

"Being as," "being that." Misused for *as, because,* or *since.*

Because it was a hot day the men took off their coats. [*Not*—Being as it was a hot day]

Beside, besides. These words are sometimes used mistakenly. "There were three men *beside* him" means that there were three people *near* him. "There were three men *besides* him" means that there were three men *in addition to* him.

"Can't hardly." Since *hardly* means *barely, almost not at all,* it is certainly illogical to say "He can't hardly walk" when one means "He can barely walk." People who use language precisely are therefore likely to avoid *can't hardly,* except when they slip into the expression in conversation. Although the expression is frequently used, it has no standing in formal English.

"Can't help but." A questionable usage. The combination of *can't* and *but* is said to produce a double negative. Instead of "I can't help but argue with him" it is better to say "I can't help arguing with him."

Case. *Case* is a much overworked word and is responsible for many wordy expressions. Students should not be afraid to use it, but they should avoid it when it is merely padding or when a more exact word is called for.

In the case of a word that is difficult to spell, students should consult a dictionary to be sure that they have the correct spelling.

Revised: To insure correct spelling of difficult words, students should consult the dictionary.

"Complected." Misused for *complexioned.* Write *dark-complexioned,* not *dark-complected.* The *American College Dictionary* labels *complected* as "dialectical" or "colloquial"; *Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* labels it "dialectical."

Contact. *Contact* as a verb meaning *to get in touch with a person* is labeled "colloquial" in the *American College Dictionary.* Because the word grows out of business slang, one should use it with judgment if one uses it at all. In other senses, of course, *contact* is entirely acceptable.

Contractions. Contractions (*don't, won't, he's, they're,* etc.) are appropriate in conversation and in writing that is personal and informal. In formal writing and in most impersonal writing, they are out of place.

"Could of." Vulgate for *could have:* "He could have won." [*Not*—He could of won.]

Couple. Used colloquially in "He ate a couple of oranges." *Couple* in the sense of "married couple," or "young couple" is a usage not limited to colloquial expression.

"Different than." *Different than* is questionable usage. *Different from* is accepted American usage. *Different to* is accepted British usage, but is questioned as American usage. The student who wants to be sure he is following American idiom will write: "My book is different from yours." Perhaps students of usage should know that *different than* is defended by Robert C. Pooley in *Teaching English Usage* and is listed without comment as an occasional usage in the *American College Dictionary.*

Due to. *Due to* in the sense of *because of, owing to* has long been condemned in books on usage, and many careful writers avoid using it. Some authorities on modern usage—Perrin in *The Writer's Guide and Index to English* and Pooley in *Teaching English Usage*—take the view that though some people object to it, it should be accepted as established usage. Since *owing to* and

because of are unquestionably good usage, it seems advisable to use one or the other in place of *due to.*

"Due to the wreck, the train was late." [questionable usage]
"Because of [*or* owing to] the wreck, the train was late." [established usage.]

Due as an adjective is established usage: "His failure was due to his neglect of his studies."

Effect. See ***Affect.***

Either. *Either* is properly used to mean *one or the other of two.* It is misused in the following sentence: "She would not eat either of the three desserts."

"Enthuse." Not an acceptable substitute in formal or high informal English for *be enthusiastic about. Enthuse* is labeled *colloquial* in the *American College Dictionary* and in *Webster's Collegiate Dictionary.*

Etc. An abbreviation of the Latin *et cetera,* meaning *and so forth. And etc.* is poor usage because the Latin expression already contains the *and. Etc.* is a useful expression when it saves the continued enumeration of the obvious: "Let *A* equal 1, *B* equal 2, *C* equal 3, etc." Sometimes, however, writers use it as a way of avoiding thought. The student who writes, "I came to college to prepare for medical school, to get an education, etc.," has given the reader no definite information by the use of *etc.,* and one suspects that he had nothing definite in mind. It is better to omit *etc.* when the expression is vague or meaningless.

Fellow. *Fellow* used in the sense of *man, boy, suitor, person* is colloquial usage, and is inappropriate in formal and in high informal language.

Fewer, less. *Fewer* refers to *number; less* refers to *quantity.*

When people have less money, they buy fewer luxuries.

Field of. The expression *in the field of* is often wordy. "I am majoring in the field of English" is a wordy way of saying "I am majoring in English" or "I am an English major."

Fine. In informal speech *fine* is often a convenient word. It is widely used in the loose sense of *good* or *admirable.* In writing, however, especially in formal writing, it is better to use a more

exact word. *Fine* meaning *exact, precise* ("fine distinctions," "fine measurements") is of course appropriate in formal English.

Foreign terms. Frequent use of foreign terms in writing or in speech is likely to be regarded as a mark of poor taste and poor manners rather than as a sign of learning. As a general rule it is best to use foreign terms only when there is no English equivalent and when the reader can be expected to understand them.

Get, got. The principal parts of *get* are *get, got, got* or *get, got, gotten*. Some people object to the use of *gotten*, but it is clear that both *gotten* and *got* as the past participle are now accepted forms in American usage.

Get or *got* meaning *to kill,* or *to irritate,* or *to understand,* or *to be obliged to* is colloquial usage.

Get across as in "to get across an idea" is at best a colloquial expression.

Good, well. *Good* is an adjective. Expressions in which it is used as an adverb ("He runs good") are vulgate. *Well* is an adjective or an adverb.

The child is good. [*Good* is an adjective.]

The child is well. [*Well* is an adjective.]

That apple looks good. [*Good* is an adjective following the linking verb *look*]

He runs well. [*Well* is an adverb modifying runs.]

"Had of." The *of* is superfluous.

I wish I had [*not* had of] gone.

Hanged, hung. In formal usage a man is *hanged* and a non-human object is *hung:* "He hanged himself with the rope on which his wife had hung the clothes." The principal parts of *hang* in the first sense are *hang, hanged, hanged;* the principal parts of *hang* in the second sense are *hang, hung, hung.*

"Have got." In many uses *got* is superfluous.

Formal and high-level informal: I have to be there at five.

Colloquial: I have got to be there at five.

Healthy, healthful. *Healthy* means *in good health. Healthful* means *conducive to health:* "a healthy man" *but* "a healthful climate."

Human. *Human* used as a noun ("Humans live longer than dogs") is colloquial usage. In formal English *human* is an adjective ("To err is human") and *human being* is generally used when the noun form is called for.

Imply, infer. To *imply* is to suggest without stating directly; to *infer* is to draw a conclusion, to make an inference, from what someone else has said.

> In talking to his daughter the father implied that she was spending too much money. The daughter inferred from her father's words that he would be opposed to her buying a new evening gown.

"In back of." At best a colloquial expression. It looks as if *in back of* should be acceptable, for *in front of* is good usage. Since usage is not necessarily based on logic, however, it is wise to avoid *in back of* and to use *behind, back of,* or *at the back of.*

"Inside of." Colloquial when used to mean *in less than:* "He will be here in less than [*not* inside of] an hour." *Inside of* is also colloquial when it is used as a substitute for *in* in such sentences as "The children were inside of the house." [in the house]

"Irregardless." Since *regardless* carries the meaning intended in *irregardless, irregardless* has no justification. The *American College Dictionary* labels it "colloquial" and notes that it is "not generally regarded as good usage." *Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* does not recognize the existence of the word.

Its, it's. *Its* is the possessive of *it* ("The tree lost its leaves") and is spelled without an apostrophe; *it's* is a contraction of *it is* or *it has.*

It's me. Many authorities on present usage regard *It's me* as an acceptable substitute for the formal and often unnatural *It is I* or *It's I. It's him* and *It's her,* however, are not acceptable usage.

Kind. Formal English requires the use of *this kind, that kind, these kinds, those kinds.* The expressions *these kind* ("I like these kind of oranges") and *those kind* ("He buys those kind of shoes") are therefore not acceptable and should be avoided, even though good writers do occasionally slip into them.

"Kind of," "sort of." Colloquial for *somewhat* or *rather:* "I am kind of tired today." *Kind of* and *sort of* in this sense are fairly common in speech, but should be avoided in writing.

Lay, lie. The misuse of *lay* and *lie* is a mark of vulgate English. *Lay,* a transitive verb, takes an object: "Lay the book on the table." *Lie,* an intransitive verb, does not take an object: "He likes to lie in the sun." The principal parts of *lie* are *lie, lay, lain.* The principal parts of *lay* are *lay, laid, laid.*

Lead, led. The principal parts of the verb *lead* are *lead, led, led.* The past tense is spelled *led:* "He led the man across the street."

Lend, loan. In formal English *lend* is a verb; *loan* is a noun. One *lends* money or one asks for a *loan.* Although there is some authority for the use of *loan* as a verb, best usage seems to restrict its use to the noun function.

Like. In formal and in high-informal English *like* should not be used as a substitute for *as* or *as if:*

Do as I do. [*Not*—Do like I do.]

He acted as if he wanted to escape. [*Not*—He acted like he wanted to escape.]

Like is, of course, properly used as a preposition: "He acted like a hero." In this sentence *like* is a preposition, and *hero* is its object. For a full treatment of *like,* the student should see "Like," in H. W. Fowler's *Modern English Usage.*

Line, "along the line of." The use of this expression frequently produces wordiness. "Next summer I expect to do work along the line of salesmanship" is a wordy way of saying "I expect to work as a salesman next summer."

Loose, lose. *To loose* is to set free; *to lose* is to suffer loss: "The man who loosens his collar may lose his collar button."

"Lots of," "a lot of." Colloquial for *much, a large amount.*

May, can. The important difference between *may* and *can* is that *may* is used to *request* or *give permission* and *can* is used to express *ability.*

May I have this dance?

Can I find your name in the telephone book?

Most, almost. See ***Almost.***

Myself. In strict usage *myself* is a reflexive pronoun ("I cut myself") or an intensive pronoun: "I myself am unable to go, but I shall send a representative." It is accepted usage to limit *myself* to these two uses in writing. In familiar conversation, however, cultivated people may sometimes use *myself* where strict usage would call for *I* or *me:* "The news was quite a shock to Father and Mother and myself." People who are very careful of their language follow the strict usage in writing and in conversation.

Nice. In conversation, *nice* used to indicate general approval often serves as a convenient expression when a more exact word does not readily come to mind. In writing, when one has time to choose words carefully, more exact words than *nice* are usually preferable. "He is nice" gives less definite information than "He is well mannered" or "He is friendly" or "He is interested in students and easy to talk to." Words like *nice* and *fine* are so general in meaning that they often blur communication.

None. *None* may be either singular or plural.

None of us is [*or* are] willing to go.

"Off from," "off of." *From* and *of* are superfluous.

He stepped off the platform.

"On account of." Vulgate when used instead of *because* to introduce a clause:

I sold my book because [*not* on account of] I need money.

One. Some authorities on usage insist that the personal pronoun *one* should not be followed by *he* or *his* as it is in the sentences: "One should choose his words with care"—"When one is asked what he thinks, he should give an honest answer." These authorities would substitute *one's* and *one* for *his* and *he:* "One should choose one's words with care"—"When one is asked what one thinks, one should give an honest answer." In present day usage, however, the use of *one . . . he* (or *his*) is common among reputable writers, and is in good standing; the choice is therefore a matter of individual taste. Sometimes the *one . . . one* (or *one's*) usage requires a very frequent repetition of *one* and suggests affectation. The use of *he, his,* therefore, can also be justified on stylistic grounds.

Or. When *or* is used to join two or more subjects, the general rule is that the verb is plural if the subjects are plural ("Axes or saws are used to cut the logs") and singular if the subjects are singular: "An axe or a saw is used to cut the logs." If some of the subjects are plural and some are singular, the verb agrees with the subject nearest it: "A tractor or several horses are used to pull the machine"—"Several horses or a tractor is used to pull the machine."

This last sentence follows the rule, but sounds awkward. It is best to revise such sentences or to rearrange them so that the plural subject is nearest the verb. For a fuller consideration of the use of *or* see "Or" in Fowler's *Modern English Usage.*

Plenty. In formal English the use of *plenty* as an adverb is not acceptable. *Plenty tired, plenty angry,* and *plenty good enough* are colloquial expressions.

Preposition at the end of a sentence. There is no recognized rule of usage which forbids placing a preposition at the end of a sentence; in fact, idiomatic and direct English sometimes requires that the preposition come at the end. Students can concentrate on writing clear, emphatic, rhythmical sentences and can let the prepositions fall where they may.

Proved, proven. Both *proved* and *proven* are acceptable as the past participle of *prove. Proved* is more commonly used.

He has proved [*or* has proven] his point.

"Quite a." Colloquial usage in such expressions as *quite a few, quite a number, quite a while.* The equivalent expressions *many, a large number, for a long time* are, of course, established usages.

Real. *Real* is properly an adjective and is misused in the sense of *very.*

He was very [*not* real] tired.

Seem. *Can't seem* ("I can't seem to understand this problem") is colloquial usage, probably because it is inexact expression of "I can't work this problem" or "It seems that I can't work this problem." *Can't seem* may be appropriate in informal speech, but it is out of place in serious writing.

Set, sit. *Set* is a transitive verb and so takes an object: "He set the vase on the table." The principal parts of *set* are *set, set, set.*

Sit is an intransitive verb and so does not take an object: "He often sits before the fire." The principal parts of *sit* are *sit, sat, sat.* An exception to the rule is the use of *set* in reference to fowls and the hatching of eggs, where *set* is used as an intransitive verb: "The hen is setting."

Shall* and *will. Authorities on usage observe, sometimes with relief and sometimes with sorrow, that the distinctions between *shall* and *will* are breaking down. The college student, however, should understand at least certain basic distinctions, and he should be conscious of them as he writes or speaks. These basic distinctions are stated succinctly in the *American College Dictionary:*

> **shall,** . . . *v.t., pres. sing. 1st and 3rd pers.,* **shall,** *2nd* (*Poetic*) **shalt,** *pl.* **shall;** *past 1st and 3rd pers.* **should** *2nd* (*Archaic*) **shouldest** or **shouldst,** *pl.* **should;** imperative, inf., and participles lacking. **1.** (used, generally, in the first person to indicate simple future time): *I shall go today.* **2.** (used generally, in the second and third persons to indicate promise or determination): *you shall do it.* **3.** (used interrogatively, in questions that admit of shall in the answer): *Shall he be told? He shall.* **4.** (used conditionally, in all persons to indicate future time): *if he shall come.* [ME *shal,* OE *sceal,* c. Icel. *skal;* akin to G *soll*] —Syn. SHALL, WILL are two distinct and separate verbs but the confusion between them is of such long standing that certain arbitrary rules for usage were established. According to those, SHALL is used in the first person (both singular and plural) to indicate futurity, and simply foretells or declares what is about to take place: *I shall go to town tomorrow.* Used with the second or third persons, SHALL implies authority, command, threat, promise, determination, or inevitability: *thou shalt not steal.* With the first person, WILL denotes consent, promise, determination, or resolution: *we will meet you at noon.* WILL in the second and third persons (sing. or pl.) indicates simple futurity: *they will come by train.* Interrogatively, SHALL is used when SHALL is expected in the answer; WILL when WILL is expected: *Shall I tell him? (Yes, you shall.) Will he go? (He will not.)* The tendency now is for all forms to level to *will.*[3]

[3] From *The American College Dictionary,* copyright, 1947, by Random House; Text Edition, copyright, 1948, by Harper & Brothers. Reprinted by permission.

Students who want a fuller explanation of the use of *shall* and *will* (or *would* and *should*) should consult Fowler's *Modern English Usage* for advice or the *Oxford English Dictionary* for full information.

***Should* and *would*.** The usage of *should* and *would* is, of course, closely related to that of *shall* and *will*. (See ***shall* and *will*.**) *Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* has the following statement under *should:*

> **should**, . . . *past tense* of SHALL. [AS. *scolde, sceolde.* See SHALL.] As auxiliaries *should* and *would* are used: 1. To form a tense expressive of action, etc., as impending in the past; as, I said that I *should* go. 2. To form the conditional mood (as, I *should* go, I *should* have gone), used esp.: a In the conclusion in sentences of rejected condition; as, if I had tried, I *should* not have failed. b In conditional clauses expressive of uncertainty or reserve; as, *should* you come, I shall meet you. c. In statements, requests, etc., which it softens; as, so it *should* seem; *should* you like tea? In these uses the choice between *should* and *would* is based on the distinctions between *shall* and *will* (see under SHALL). 3. *Should*, esp. when stressed, is also used to express moral obligation; as, you *should* be sorry.—**SYN.** See OUGHT.[4]

"Should of." *Should of* is sometimes misused for *should have.*

He should have [*not* should of] answered my letter sooner.

So. Careless or inexperienced writers tend to overuse *so* in joining two independent clauses, and also to use *so* in contexts where *so that* or *and so* are needed to make the meaning immediately clear. *So that* indicates purpose ("He is saving money so that he can marry in the fall"); *and so* indicates result: "He has saved money and so he will be married this fall." The use of *so* as an intensive ("She was so tired" or "She was so angry") is more appropriate in conversation than in writing. Most students can improve their writing by scrutinizing their use of *so* and by substituting a more exact or a more complete expression whenever it is needed. This treatment of *so* is not intended to induce students to avoid the word; it simply recommends discrimination.

[4] By permission. From *Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, Fifth Edition, copyright 1936, 1941, by G. & C. Merriam Co.

Split infinitive. The term applied to an infinitive in which a modifier is placed between *to* (the sign of the infinitive) and the verb: "to industriously work." Split infinitives should be avoided whenever they can be avoided; usually the modifier can with advantage be placed either before or after the infinitive. The split infinitive is not, however, the sin against good usage which it has sometimes been labeled. Now and then it is necessary to split an infinitive in order to preserve exact meaning; an authority on usage, George O. Curme, gives this example of an infinitive which must be split for the sake of exact meaning: "He failed to entirely comprehend it."

Sure. Sure is an adjective and is not properly used as an adverb.

He surely [*not* sure] knows what he wants.

"These kind." See ***Kind.***

"This here," "that there." *This here book* or *that there book* is vulgate for *this book* or *that book.*

Thru. The *American College Dictionary* lists without limiting label *thro', thro, through, thru; Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* lists only *through;* the *College Standard Dictionary* lists without limiting label *through* and *thru.* The student should at least keep in mind the fact that many people think that *through* is the only accepted spelling. Of the shorter forms, the present writer has seen *thru* most frequently.

Too. Expressions like "He is not too handsome" and "She isn't too eager to go" are slang and are not appropriate in serious writing. Usually in such expressions *very* should be used in the place of *too,* or the expression should be revised to make the meaning more exact.

Till, until. There is no difference in plain-sense meaning between the conjunctions *till* and *until,* and both are established as good usage.

Titles of books and articles. See **Titles.**

"Try and." Colloquial usage for *try to,* and more appropriate in speech than in writing: "Try and come to see us this week end" is colloquial for "Try to come to see us this week end."

Want. *Want* for *had better* or *ought* is colloquial: "You want to [had better] come in before it rains." *Want in,* and *want out* are, at best, colloquial for *want to come in* and *want to get out.*

Way. *Way* for *away* is colloquial: "Way over there among the trees" for "away over there among the trees."

Whose, who's. *Whose* is the possessive form of *who* ("I don't know whose hat that is"); *who's* is a contracted form of *who is:* "I don't know who's coming tonight."

Will* and *shall. See ***Shall* and *will.***

You. *You* is often used in speech and in informal writing as an indefinite pronoun in place of *anyone, one, a person,* but such usage is not appropriate in formal writing. In a sentence like "When you are in prison you are sorry that you broke the law" the use of *you* is incongruous; it is advisable to express the idea in another way.

Your, you're. *Your* is the possessive form of *you; you're* is a contraction of *you are:* "You're going to enjoy your English course in college."

Verb. The part of speech which states the occurrence of an action or expresses a state or condition: *run, ride, fly, is, feel, become, hope.*

Voice. A term used to distinguish verbs which express an action *of* the subject from verbs which express an action *upon* the subject. A verb is in the active voice when the subject accomplishes the action: "I read the book." A verb is in the passive voice when the subject is the receiver rather than the doer of the action: "The book was read by me."

Vulgate English. English which is not acceptable in the formal or informal speech or writing of cultivated people.

Wordiness. The use of more words than are needed to express one's ideas. Wordiness is produced by padding and jargon; by roundabout, inexact phrasing; and, above all, by vague, imprecise thinking about the thing to be communicated.

OUTLINING

In Chapter Eight we discuss the kind of outline most useful to students in writing informal themes—the rough outline which is simply an informal jotting down and logical grouping of ideas for the paper. The more formal outline, usually required for longer papers and sometimes for short ones, is a systematic and conventionalized way of representing the content and organization of a piece of writing. In the formal outline, the headings and subheadings are arranged, and numbered or lettered, in such a way that the order and importance of points in the paper and the relationship between those points is shown exactly and clearly. The formal outline is the skeleton of the paper. We say in Chapter Eight that its very formality and inflexibility sometimes bind the writer to an organization which is not the best for his material. To avoid being so bound, the writer should begin with a rough outline, and let the formal outline evolve from the material itself. The virtue of the formal outline is that it enables the writer, as well as the reader, to see in a glance the plan and logic of the whole paper.

Outlines usually follow a conventional system of alternating numbers and letters to show the relationships between sections of the material:

I. _____
   A. _____
   B. _____
   C. _____
      1. _____
      2. _____

II. _____
   A. _____
      1. _____
      2. _____
         a. _____
         b. _____
      3. _____
   B. _____

III. _____
   A. _____
      1. _____
      2. _____
      3. _____
   B. _____
   C. _____
      1. _____
      2. _____
         a. _____
         b. _____
         c. _____

IV. _____
   A. _____
   B. _____
      1. _____
      2. _____
         a. _____
         b. _____
   C. _____
   D. _____

There are two principal kinds of formal outlines: the *topical outline,* in which the headings are brief phrases or single words; and the more elaborate and less common *sentence outline,* in which the headings are complete sentences. The form adopted should be followed consistently; a complete sentence should not appear unexpectedly in a topical outline, nor should a sentence outline lapse suddenly into phrases or single words in its headings.

Whether the outline is sentence or topical, it should observe three main principles of correct outline form. These three principles are matters not simply of convention and form, but of clear thinking and logical arrangement.

1. *Headings and subheadings which are designated by the same kind of number or letter must be of approximately equal importance;* that is, points I, II, III, and IV must be equally important main divisions of the paper; points A, B, and C under I must be topics of equal weight, all similarly related to I, of which they are subdivisions. (Students should reexamine an outline with more than six major headings. Usually it represents poor division, because the major headings are unequal; some of them could better be made subordinate to a single, more inclusive heading.)

2. *Headings of equal importance must be expressed in parallel form.* This is the familiar principle of parallelism applied to the outline. If A and B are noun phrases, C must be a noun phrase too, since the three of them have the same relationship to I, and the function of the outline is to make such relationships clear.

3. *Any heading which has subdivisions must have at least two subdivisions.* This is simply a matter of logic and common sense. A subordinate heading in an outline indicates that a major heading is being divided into parts. Since nothing can be divided into only one part, correct outlines never have single subheadings.[1]

[1] The one possible exception to this rule is that one may list by itself an example which is used to develop a particular heading.

The outline below violates all three of these principles of good outline form. Its lack of logic may serve to clarify the principles:

MY TASTES IN READING

I. Westerns and detective stories
   A. Excitement and adventure
   B. Relaxation
   C. Quick and easy reading

✓(3) II. Biography
   A. Feel that I am learning something

✓(1) III. Lytton Strachey's biographies
   A. Eminent Victorians
   B. Queen Victoria
   C. Elizabeth and Essex

✓(2) IV. I most enjoy reading actual history
   A. Journals and personal accounts of the war
   B. Books on Russia
   C. Books on American life
      1. State of the Nation
      2. Inside U.S.A.

This outline violates the principles of logical outlining in these ways:

1. The four main headings are not of equal importance. Heading III, "Lytton Strachey's biographies," is not equal to the other headings, but is logically a subdivision of II, "Biography."

2. The main headings are not expressed in parallel form. I, II, and III are topical in form; IV is a complete sentence.

3. Heading II has a single subtopic; that is, the topic "Biography" is illogically divided into only one point. Making III into B under II, and rephrasing A so that A and B are parallel in form would remedy this defect in logic in the outline.

The following formal, topical outline of Chapter Four of this book illustrates correct outline form:

EXERCISING INTELLIGENT CHOICE

I. Introduction
II. The Appropriate Level of Usage
    A. Formal English
        1. Definition
        2. Examples
    B. Vulgate English
        1. Definition
        2. Examples
        3. Slang
        4. Illustration of the difference between vulgate and informal English
    C. Informal English
    D. Choosing the Level of Usage
        1. Examples of choice
        2. Too much formality: heavy words
        3. Too little formality: inexact words
        4. Developing an awareness of levels
III. Consideration of Place and Time
    A. Localisms or Provincialisms
        1. Definition
        2. Danger of misunderstanding
    B. Using Modern English
        1. Obsolete and archaic words
        2. New words
        3. Conservatism of dictionaries
IV. Concrete Expression
    A. Reasons for Writing Concretely
    B. Ways of Achieving Concreteness
        1. Substitution
        2. Expansion
        3. Figures of speech
    C. Concreteness and Emotional Meaning
    D. Concreteness in Good Writing
        1. Examples in great literature of the past
        2. Examples in modern writing
        3. Examples in student themes

Formal outlines are correct and useful when they accurately reflect the organization of the paper, and when logical subordination and proper parallelism show the relationship between sections of the material.

USING THE DICTIONARY

MUCH OF THE VALUE of dictionaries is lost by the uninformed use or inadequate use which many people, including college students, make of these remarkable books. Although students have been, to some extent, familiar with dictionaries for years, they frequently do not know what kinds of information dictionaries contain; and they are frequently incompetent in the most common use of the dictionary—finding the pronunciation or the definition of a word—because they have not familiarized themselves with the methods and symbols by which information is conveyed.

Dictionaries differ, of course, in their size and completeness, their emphasis, their arrangement, and their symbols—chiefly the symbols by which pronunciation is indicated. Since we are primarily concerned here with the student's working knowledge of his own dictionary, we shall use one of the smaller dictionaries, *Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (Fifth Edition, 1936), as an example. Other dictionaries of desk and college size are similar in their methods.

In addition to the dictionary proper, that is, the vocabulary of words and terms used in the English language, *Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* contains these sections of information:

A guide to the pronunciation of modern English, including symbols of pronunciation used in this dictionary

Rules for spelling (both American and British)
An explanation of the methods used in this dictionary
Abbreviations used in this dictionary
Conventional abbreviations used in writing and printing
Signs and symbols used in astronomy, chemistry, mathematics, commerce, music, and other fields
A pronouncing gazetteer of more than 6000 names of places
A pronouncing biographical dictionary containing more than 3000 names
A list of foreign words and phrases, including mottoes of states and leading nations
A vocabulary of rhymes
A list of colleges and universities in the United States and Canada
Rules for punctuation and capitalization
Instructions about preparing copy for the press

The student who uses his dictionary well is familiar with these reference sections and is able to turn to them when he needs the kind of information they contain.

The information which the dictionary gives about words can best be shown by examining a typical entry.

fin'ish (fĭn'ĭsh), *v. t.* [OF. *fenir* (F *finir*), fr. L. *finire* to limit, finish, end, fr. *finis* limit, end.] **1** To arrive at the end of; to bring to an end. **2.** To complete; accomplish; also, to perfect. **3** *Colloq.* To dispose of completely; to overthrow or exhaust utterly. — *v. i.* **1.** To come to an end, terminate. **2.** *Rare.* To die. — **Syn.** Conclude, consummate. See CLOSE. — **Ant.** Start, begin. — *n.* **1.** The conclusion; end. **2** That which finishes, completes, or perfects. **3** The result of completed labor, as on the surface of an object; manner or style of finishing; as, a rough, dead, or glossy *finish*. **4.** Cultivation in manners and speech; social polish. **5** *Arch* **a** The joiner work and other fine work required for the completion of a building, esp. of the interior. **b** The higher grades of lumber used for this work. **6.** *Painting.* A material used in finishing; as, oil *finish*.

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First we are given the spelling of the word, and are shown that it is broken into two syllables and accented on the first syllable. In parentheses the word is respelled, and its pronunciation is indicated by symbols which are explained at the bottom of each page. *v.t.* tells us that the word is a transitive verb, that is, a verb which takes an object. The material

in brackets gives the derivation of the word, from the Old French (OF.) *fenir* which was in turn derived from the Latin (L.) verb *finire.*

Three definitions of the transitive verb *finish* follow. The third, "to dispose of completely," is labeled colloquial (*Colloq.*); that is, this usage of the verb is, in the opinion of the editors of the dictionary, more common in speech than in writing.

The abbreviation *v.i.* tells us that *finish* is also an intransitive verb, a verb which does not require an object. Two definitions of the intransitive verb follow; about the second definition, "to die," we are told that this use of the word is rare.

Next come two synonyms (*Syn.*) of the word, and a reference to the word *close.* (Under the definition of *close,* the differences between *close, end, conclude, finish,* and *terminate* are discussed.) Two antonyms (*Ant.*)—words opposite in meaning—conclude this section of the definition.

The abbreviation *n.* tells us that *finish* is also a noun. Six definitions of the noun follow. In two of them, the usage of the word is illustrated: "as, a rough, dead, or glossy *finish,*" and "as, oil *finish.*" Two of the definitions are labeled with the special fields in which the word is used in special senses—Architecture (*Arch.*) and Painting.

It is important for students to know, and to note as they use their dictionaries, these labels indicating usage in special fields, and also labels like colloquial, dialectal (*Dial.*), slang, and obsolete (*Obs.*) which describe the general usage and status of words. Too often, in looking up a word, students seize indiscriminately on any one of the definitions, ignoring the informative label which would tell them that this is not the definition they are looking for.

The dictionary designation of a term as colloquial, dialectal, or slang is not necessarily a condemnation of the term. Colloquialisms, dialectal expressions, and slang are out of place in formal writing; but the fact that the expressions

appear in the dictionary is evidence of their wide usage and acceptance in informal English. The writer must judge whether or not they are appropriate in the situation in which he wishes to use them. The dictionary label is not a prohibition, but simply an aid to him in judging.

Some kinds of information about words the dictionary cannot give. It cannot, for example, define—that is, give "the meaning" of—an abstract word. It can only indicate some of the ways in which this word-symbol is used. The meaning of the word in a particular situation must be derived from the context and the communicator's intention. Nor can the dictionary adequately give the emotional charge or the subtle connotations or suggestions carried by many words. Dictionaries do give some valuable information about the different uses of words which are closely related in meaning, or which are likely to be confused. For example, here is part of the definition in *Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* of the word *conjecture:*

> **Syn.** Suspect, imagine, fancy, presume, think, suppose — **Conjecture, surmise, guess** To **conjecture** is to form an opinion or judgment on what is recognized as insufficient evidence. To **surmise** is to imagine, or to indulge a suspicion, on still slighter grounds To **guess** is, properly, to hit on (or to attempt to hit on) either at random or from uncertain or ambiguous evidence, as, to *guess* a riddle.
>
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But shades of emotional or attitudinal meaning cannot be well conveyed by brief definitions of words out of context. For this reason, it is wise not to use a word one finds in the dictionary (or in word lists) until one has heard or read the word in contexts which further establish the shades of meaning it may carry.

These limitations, however, are slight in comparison with the varied, valuable, and interesting information which dictionaries give. The dictionary is the most useful of reference books. The student is seriously handicapped who has not learned to use it well.

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