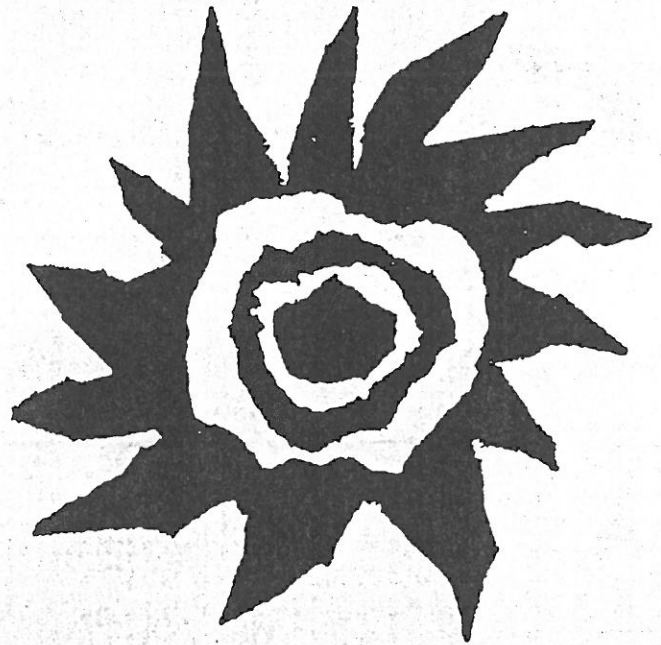
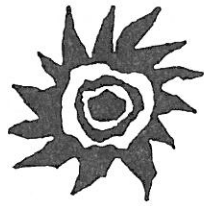


COLLEGE  
COMPOSITION  
AND  
COMMUNICATION

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*Leaves for the October Tree*



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The journal staff makes every conceivable effort to be honest with its readership. Accordingly, those submitting advertisements for American literature and world literature textbooks have been asked to include information which accurately describes the content and scope of the material, and to submit only those advertisements which truthfully describe the materials. Criteria for determining this standard of truth are available on request from NCTE.

Indexed by *Education* and *LLBA*.

(2) a copystand with at least two lights (use 100-watt bulbs); (3) Kodak Kodalith orthographic copy film; (4) Kodak Kodalith developer; (5) a 35-millimeter slide projector, preferably with remote control.

We experimented with several different films, lighting techniques, and typed copies before we settled on a combination which produces sharp, clear slides. Some further experimentation with preparation and photographing of the text may be necessary, but here is what we found to work.<sup>1</sup>

#### *Photographing the Text*

1. Type the text you want to copy on clean white paper. We found that bond paper works best, probably because it is a true white and allows a solid impression. Use a good (preferably electric) typewriter with a new ribbon. Cloth or nylon works better than carbon ribbon.
2. Place the text on the base of a copystand and adjust the lights (which should be on opposite sides of the text) so that they shine down at an angle of about 45 degrees. The lights should be 18-24 inches from the text and should give fairly even illumination.
3. Adjust the camera on the copystand so that the text occupies as much of the viewfinder as possible. Be sure that the camera is sharply focused.
4. Set the exposure of the camera for f5.6, the time for one second.
5. Take the picture, and go on to the next text.

In using the slides over a period of several quarters, we have concluded that they are most beneficial when they are used as *occasional* in-class exercises. In our initial burst of enthusiasm for our new-found technology, we attempted to use slides too often. Daily use diminished to weekly use, then to monthly. After a few quarters of experimentation, we finally settled on once every three weeks as a good compromise.

<sup>1</sup>The authors would be happy to correspond with readers who want more information about the preparation or the use of the slides.

Too much use of the slides put us right back at the beginning; they became too routine, too much a part of daily events.

We also discovered almost at the outset that we had planned too many slides for each class period, that we rushed from one to the next rather than allowing the students to absorb and comment on the examples before them. If the students are allowed sufficient time with each slide, a considerable amount of class discussion can be generated about even the more mundane matters of proper usage or punctuation. Using just a few slides a few times each term keeps them novel enough that they help revitalize the class by providing a welcome change of pace.

Slides which may be projected on the chalkboard are not, of course, limited to use in the composition classroom. Slides of poems could be used in the teaching of prosody; slides of linguistic or geographic maps could provide an easy and stimulating way to present material which otherwise must be dittoed or, worse yet, drawn freehand on the board. Photographs of, say, contemporary drawings of Elizabethan theaters or of variant texts could prove quite useful to teachers of the history of drama or of textual bibliography. The uses of such slides are limited only by the imaginations of those who use them.

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*University of Minnesota  
Minneapolis*

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#### THE CAWS STATEMENT ON THE COLLEGE BOARD'S TEST OF STANDARD WRITTEN ENGLISH\*

Last fall, the College Board added, on a two-year experimental basis, a half-hour Test of Standard Written English to the Scholastic Aptitude Test given to college-bound high school students. The test consists of fifty short-answer, machine-scored questions on grammar, usage, diction, and idiom. The students' scores on this supplementary test are not to be included in their SAT scores but are to be listed separately, presumably to aid colleges in the placement

\*CAWS is the acronym for the CUNY Association of Writing Supervisors.

of students into remedial English courses.

At the City University of New York (CUNY), supervisors of Writing Programs from four-year and two-year colleges inspected the test when a representative of ETS, Evans Alloway, came to speak to CAWS. Members of CAWS had a further chance to examine it when it was administered at one of the CUNY branches for validation purposes. After studying a copy of the exam, the Committee on Standards and Testing of CAWS concluded that the exam was not an adequate instrument for the placement of freshman students in remedial courses at CUNY and recommended possible changes that would lead to a more appropriate exam. The following statement, drafted by the Committee on Standards and Testing, was approved unanimously by the members of CAWS.

We must address three questions in weighing the College Board's Test of Standard Written English:

I. Is the test as written and administered appropriate to the skill level of entering freshmen at CUNY branches? In other words, can our students take the test?

II. Does the exam focus on the kinds of skill problems we wish to detect? Will it tell us what we want to know?

III. More fundamentally, does this kind of short-answer editing exam indicate the ability to generate grammatically correct sentences in the student's own writing? Is the test valid?

I. We find the skill level necessary to take the test inappropriate to our students on the following bases:

1. The content of the questions is difficult and foreign. A student cannot begin to answer questions of grammar unless he has at least an approximate grasp of the meaning of a sentence. The question sentences on this exam refer to concepts in archaeology, sociology, political science, biology, history, literature and other subjects which our entering students are often unfamiliar with. Consider the following question sentence from the test:<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Directions and sample questions reprinted by permission of Educational Testing Service, the copyright owner.

44. The heart of an amphibian is much less intricate than the mammalian heart and, as a result, is easiest to investigate experimentally.

Understanding this sentence demands not only knowledge of biological terms, but also familiarity with the concept that lack of intricacy aids experimentation. We would recommend content familiar to urban students who have not had exposure to essentially college subjects.

2. The diction is Latinate, scientific, and legalistic. The example quoted above is typical of the use of specialized, Latinate vocabulary (e.g., *amphibian*, *mammalian*, *intricate*, *experimentally*). We would recommend a prose at an eighth-grade reading level. After all, this is an exam on grammatical skill, not vocabulary.

3. Too much effort is required to follow just the logic and argument of the sentences, even before the student can search for the error. The syntax is unnecessarily complex. The following example has, among its other sins, far too complex an argument merely to provide the setting for a diction error:

10. The importance for having worldwide refueling stations was considerably diminished when the fuel capacity of ships was substantially increased.

4. The rapid kaleidoscope of sentences with vastly different referents requires not just familiarity with a wide range of subjects, but also the ability to shift mental gears rapidly. This ability may be admirable, but not all our students have it, nor is it the skill being tested. We would recommend that the question sentences all be on the same subject, in the form of a continuous essay which gradually fills the student in on all the necessary content. This also would resolve our earlier objection to the foreignness of the sentence content.

5. The directions are complex and of the type that cause students problems both in knowing what is required of them and in filling out the computerized answer sheets. The following instructions would create sufficient problems for students previously unacquainted with this format to interfere significantly with their ability to answer the questions:



*Directions:* The following sentences contain problems in grammar, usage, diction (choice of words), and idiom.

Some sentences are correct.

No sentence contains more than one error. You will find that the error, if there is one, is underlined and lettered. Assume that all other elements of the sentence are correct and cannot be changed. In choosing answers, follow the requirements of standard written English.

If there is an error, select the *one underlined part* that must be changed in order to make the sentence correct, and blacken the corresponding space on the answer sheet.

If there is no error, mark answer space E.

We would recommend either simplified directions or, if this is impossible, a simplified format that would not require such involuted directions.

II. At City University branches, the discrimination between remedial and non-remedial students is often based on rudimentary errors which we find inadequately represented on this exam:

- a. incorrect pluralization of noun
- b. dropped verb endings
- c. incorrect subject-verb and pronoun agreement
- d. misuse of prepositions
- e. omission of words.

In the few instances that these errors are tested, complicating factors are frequently present, as in the following example where subject-verb agreement is complicated by an intervening phrase:

25. Insect-eating plants like the sundew reminds us that few kinds of behavior belong exclusively to plants or animals.

The majority of the questions test more advanced problems of grammar and diction. Typically, sequence of verb tense is tested more often than correct verb form. We therefore doubt that this exam will give us statistically significant and useful information about our students.

III. In addition to the specific inappropriateness of this particular exam for our students, the committee felt that the general use of this type of exam to measure writing skill was questionable. Although all mem-

bers agreed that there would be some correlation between the ability to spot errors and the ability to make statements without making the same errors, we did not assume that the correlation would be one-to-one or even reliable enough to place students in courses.

One skill in particular which we feel may be significant in writing competence and which is ignored completely on this type of exam is the ability to judge one's own sentences objectively. As English teachers, we are very aware that this objectivity is a distinct skill which some students have and many do not. In the long run, this skill may determine the student's ability to produce acceptable English prose. Can a test be devised to spot the presence or lack of this skill? If it can be, we recommend it be made part of any test of editing skills.

For these reasons, we do not find the College Board Test of Standard Written English as currently written and administered a fair and adequate tool for the placement of freshmen at the City University of New York in English courses. If a test of this kind is to be administered to students of colleges with open-admissions policies, it should be revised in accordance with the criticisms and suggestions made above.

*The Committee on Standards  
and Testing of CAWS*

CHARLES BAZERMAN,

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MARSHA CUMMINS

*Bronx Community College*

DIANA LIBEN,

*Borough of Manhattan CC*

WILLIAM LINN,

*Brooklyn College*

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#### CLASSICAL RHETORIC AND TECHNICAL WRITING

Lately, I have heard many colleagues say that technical and business writing is "the wave of the future" and that technical-writing programs are where jobs and salvation lie. Although I suspect that these statements are at least partially expressions of wish-fulfillment, I think we all agree that we are witnessing a growing interest in and concern for writing skills and that both interest and concern are often voiced by those in technical or non-literary fields. An ex-