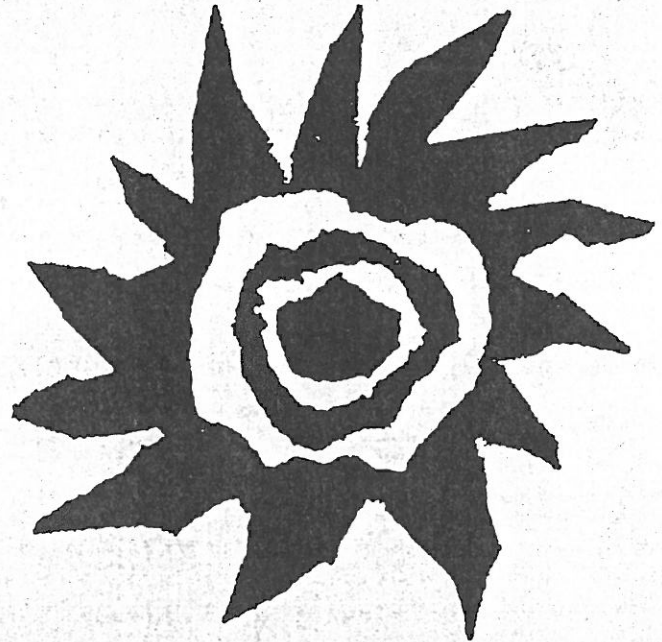


COLLEGE
COMPOSITION
AND
COMMUNICATION

OCTOBER, 1976
VOL. XXVII



Leaves for the October Tree

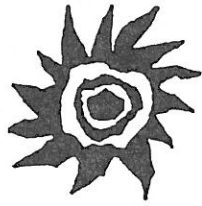


Table of Contents

Volume XXVII

October, 1976

No. 3

- 234 Diving In: An Introduction to Basic Writing *Mina P. Shaughnessy*
- 240 Sexism in Language and Sex Differences in Language Usage: Which Is More Important? *Carol Weiher*
- 244 The Language of Negotiation *Joan Huddleston*
- 248 The Lord's Shout: Varieties of Pauline Rhetoric *Dwight Hilliard Purdy*
- 253 When Is a Paragraph? *Arthur A. Stern*
- 258 Plus ça change . . . *Ken C. Burrows*
- 261 Teaching Writing: Some Encounters *Lawrence S. Owen*
- 264 Not Back to the Pedagogenic Basics *Dale T. Adams*
- 268 Grading: Blessing, Bane, or Balderdash? *John Rachal*
- 271 The Sense of Nonsense *David Siff*
- 278 Clichés, Trite Sayings, Dead Metaphors, and Stale Figures of Speech in Composition Instruction *Don L. F. Nilsen*
- STAFFROOM INTERCHANGE
- 283 From Tape to Type: An Approach to Composition *Helen Houser Popovich*
- 285 How to Build a Composition Slide File *Russell J. Meyer and Barton W. Galle, Jr.*
- 287 The CAWS Statement on the College Board's Test of Standard Written English *Committee of CAWS*
- 289 Classical Rhetoric and Technical Writing *Andrea A. Lunsford*
- 291 Debate Write: An Approach to Writing Arguments *Katharyn Crabbe*
- 293 A Graduate Practicum in Composition *Gerald J. Schiffhorst*
- JEU D'ESPRIT
- 295 Some Answers *Paul Wray*
- 296 A Student Guide to Messing Up Your First Paper *Charles Bazerman*
- 297 Linguistic Sickness & Health are Well in Ill. *John R. Clark*
- 298 Phideas' Farewell *Gary G. Sloan*
- COUNTERSTATEMENT
- 300 Response to Daniel J. Kurland, "The Student's View of the Text: Implications for Reading and Writing," *CCC*, 26 (December, 1975), 341-346. *Betty Cain*
- 301 Response to Richard Beach, "Self-Evaluation Strategies of Extensive Revisers and Nonrevisers," *CCC*, 27 (May, 1976), 160-164. *Daniel Dieterich*
- 303 Secretary's Reports
- 272 A-D Random House Publishing Insert

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*.

A STUDENT GUIDE TO MESSING UP YOUR FIRST ENGLISH PAPER

The Mess-up Attitude

Panic. Forget that you have a whole semester ahead of you to improve your composition skills. Forget what you already know about writing. Just think that you can't think of anything to say and that you have to grind out so many hundred words to have something to hand in.

Do your own thing. Don't pay any attention to the specific assignment the teacher gives you. Figure the teacher will be happy just to get anything vaguely related to the subject. Don't consider the idea that the teacher might be trying to get you to work on some very specific skills.

Assume you already learned everything about writing in high school. Why are they making you take English again when you have done it all? Don't think that writing is a complex art that can be done on many different levels. Forget that as your knowledge gets more sophisticated you need a better-developed language to communicate your ideas.

The Mess-up Method

Just write from the top of your head. Do the paper a few minutes before class. Don't think through your ideas. Don't try different ways of saying what you want to say. Don't think about the best way to get your point across. (Of course, if the teacher tells you to write whatever is running through your mind, so that you can loosen up, then refuse to write, saying "My mind's a blank.")

Don't bother to focus your paper on one specific idea. Say that you have so much to write about that you can't just write about one thing at a time. Write about all religions, the whole world, the meaning of everything. Assume that some vaguely connected ideas sort of around the same topic are close enough to a central idea.

Don't relate what you write about in the main part of the paper back to the central idea which you didn't bother to state in the beginning. Figure the reader will see the connection. Besides, why should things always be logically connected? The mind doesn't work that way, so why should writing?

Ramble. Talk about anything interesting

that comes up. Forget your main idea to follow up on a curious or fact-filled side issue. Don't worry about the organization of the paper, the best order to put your ideas in, or the connection between ideas.

Just mention your idea and go on. Why develop your point? You've said it. Why waste time explaining yourself or going into details or giving examples? One idea is pretty much like another. And the teacher knows what you are trying to say. The reader, especially a teacher, can read your mind.

Write only about big, general ideas. Nobody cares about nitpicking details. Besides, if you talk about big enough ideas with big enough words, who can argue with you?

Don't bother to go over your paper. You've already written it; why spoil the spontaneity by changing things? You have something to hand in; why worry if parts are unclear, out of order or irrelevant? It won't hurt your grade that much. Anyway, it's too hard to be objective about your own writing.

The Mess-up Grammar

Any thought being a sentence. Subject, verb. Isn't important. Parts not joined together. Just a fragment. Because you think that way. Sentences seem to go together, connect them with a comma, this is called a comma splice. Fuse sentences together don't use punctuation don't use connecting words. Very clever people can learn to tangle sentences go in two directions at once.

The teacher don't care if verb agree with subject or if you will switch verb tense or if wrong form of verb is use. A person drop final s's and d's just like he talk yesterday.

Don't let us know who he or she is. He writes to him and her about it. Do you think they care? Not unless he tells her about him. But what about it?

Who cares about spelling?

The Mess-up Follow-up

Don't look at corrections the teacher makes. They'll just remind you how bad things are. Besides, they just mean the teacher doesn't like your work and you just can't hack it. Just go straight for the grade, then shove the paper in the back of the notebook. Don't even ask where you went wrong. It's all too depressing.

Forget about the rest of the semester. There's no hope: you can't do it, and the teacher is set against you. You are stuck with low grades. But if you happen to get a good grade, you're set. Take it easy: you've got this teacher's number.

CHARLES BAZERMAN
Baruch College, CUNY

LINGUISTIC SICKNESS & HEALTH
ARE WELL IN ILL.

The Illinois Public Aid Department recently sent a letter to a dead man in Freeport, Ill. The letter said, "Beginning Feb. 1, 1976, your medical assistance will be discontinued. . . . It has been reported to our office that you expired on January 1, 1976." It then continued, "This action will not be taken if you can show that it is wrong. You can meet with a local representative from our office to question this action. . . ." John Dotzel, a regional director in the department, said the letter, Form DPR 157, is sent routinely. "It is possible," Mr. Dotzel said, "that the wording of the letter could be improved or changed."¹

The wording here distinctly *cannot* be improved or changed or altered one iota, Mr. Dotzel. Keep it—and tell it—like it is. We, for one, savor and love it.

As a devotee of the national entirety of Public Doublespeak, we enthusiastically endorse your commitment to this Business, and we'd e'en like to lend your idea to Ourselves, for everyday use in Higher and Higher Education. We can think (for the moment) of certain particular pertinent pragmatic Uses for such letters in this, Our Oldest Profession.² Academia could readily do worse than to support such meaningful verbal demurrage. Let us immediately present some pertinent and tender examples:

1. LETTER FROM A PROFESSOR TO HIS PERISHED STUDENT:

Dear Robert,

It is my understanding, from innumerable sources, that you are utterly dead. As you may perfectly well comprehend, this circumstance is preventing you from meeting the due (as it

were) "deadline" for your Milton Paper, and must inevitably cause your absence from my very important Final Examination.

Although I am a man of feeling, as you know from experience and from other informants, I am a Professor—first and foremost—of the Most Rigorous Standards. I will not brook deliberate recalcitrance on the part of any Student Body, regardless of race, color, or creed. I wholly submit to the propositions of Equal Opportunity. Your work must be completed according to schedule, and I must take appropriate measures.

Consequently, I regret to inform you that I am submitting to the Registrar for your English 475 course the grade of "F" in your behalf. I have also informed the Dean of these developments and desiderata, and regrettably and forcibly urge your expulsion from this University.

With cordial best wishes,

Most sincerely,
Mortimer Shrike
Associate Professor
Department of English

2. LETTER FROM THE BOARD OF REGENTS TO A UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT, DECEASED:

My very good President Carthage:

It has been brought to the Board's attention, over the past seven months, that you have taken into your heart and mind to have expired. In making such a decision for yourself, we believe you to be extremely ill-advised, and possibly rash. You have refused, steadfastly and increasingly of late, to meet with students, to crush riots, to encourage bureaucracy, to proliferate committees, or to cow the professors.

Perhaps most tellingly of all, you have ceased to solicit and to acquire procurable college funds. Absolutist State Normal University cannot tolerate these lapses of sound administrative behavior. Therefore, although with hesitancy and remorse, the Board, at yesterday's meeting, voted 5-3 that, of your own free will, you will immediately tender your resignation. Should

¹From the *Des Moines Register*, February 1, 1976.

²*I.e.*, Teaching.