A SELECTIVE DIGEST OF RECENT TRENDS
IN THE TEACHING OF SENIOR HIGH
SCHOOL WRITTEN COMPOSITION

by
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Contributions of the Graduate School
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Production of such a study as this necessitates the cooperation and aid of other individuals besides the investigator. The author feels greatly indebted to several persons. She wishes to express her thanks and appreciation to each one of them, individually, for their kindly cooperation, helpful criticism, and untiring generosity in giving useful service and counsel whenever the opportunity or need presented itself.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES ........................................................................................................... V
I. INTRODUCTION ......................................................................................................... 1-12
II. DIGESTS .................................................................................................................... 12-64

1. R. L. Lyman (1st) ................................................................. 12
2. S. C. Camanisch ................................................................. 12
3. C. S. Thomas (2nd) ......................................................... 16
4. R. L. Lyman (2nd) .......................................................... 19
5. L. B. Cook ............................................................................ 19
6. W. W. Hatfield .................................................................. 20
7. R. I. Johnson ........................................................................ 22
8. C. S. Thomas (1st) ......................................................... 23
9. H. Rand (2nd) ....................................................................... 26
10. J. H. Coleman ..................................................................... 27
11. P. Marks ............................................................................... 29
12. L. W. Pressey .................................................................... 30
13. H. C. Greenland ............................................................ 31
14. P. M. Symonds and E. M. Hinton ............................... 33
15. C. D. Thorpe ....................................................................... 34
16. H. A. Greene ........................................................................ 36
17. M. J. Herzberg .................................................................... 37
18. M. Rigg ....................................................................... 39
19. O. M. Clem ........................................................................ 39
20. C. P. Loomis and A. M. Moran ................................. 42
21. H. Rand (3rd) ................................................................. 45
22. S. Patterson ........................................................................ 46
23. H. Rand (1st) ................................................................. 48
24. M. Iser ............................................................................... 49
25. W. Blair .......................................................................... 52
26. G. L. Persons ........................................... 52
27. M. F. Grossman ........................................... 54
28. A. J. Stewart ............................................ 55
29. S. E. Kilgore ............................................. 56
30. M. Wright ................................................ 60
31. S. T. Muir ................................................ 62

III. INDEX ..................................................... 64-67

IV. APPENDIX .................................................. 67-78
LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Rank Values Based on Number of &quot;1's&quot; Received</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Rank Values Based on Average Valuations</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>III. Rank Values Based on Number of Times Read</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>IV. Final Ranking Order Based on Composite Sums of the Three Different Rank Values</td>
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I. INTRODUCTION

The problem involved in this study is the compilation of digests of selected articles published in 1931 and 1932, on the general subject of written composition in the senior high school, and also the presentation of a convenient index of this selective reading list for the use of composition teachers in the senior high school.

The method used in the selection of the articles was necessarily a subjective one, because no measuring devices have yet been developed by which the relative merits of such publications may be measured objectively. The criteria underlying the selection of the published articles were: first, the subject was definitely limited to written composition in the senior high school alone, and for the specific years of 1931 and 1932 only; secondly, the Educational Index was chosen as a guide for the compilation of the publication list for these particular years, because the Educational Index is recognized as listing only worthy and approved periodical literature.

A selected bibliography of sixty-eight articles was built up by using these two criteria as the bases. A letter and the bibliography were mailed to twenty-five different professional men and women in the fields of English and Education. These twenty-five individuals were selected by the head of the English department of the Indiana State Teachers College as authoritative persons capable of giving the best judgment on such a problem.

The letter instructed these individuals to check the bibliography in the following manner:

(I) Mark only the articles you know well enough to make judgment upon.
(II) Mark all known articles thus: If you consider an article exceptional and notably superior, mark (1) opposite it; if you consider an article poor, mark (3) opposite it; and if you consider an article of average value, mark (2) opposite it.

(III) Leave unmarked all articles that you are not fully familiar with.

Of the twenty-five persons to whom bibliographies were sent, thirteen responded with usable material for the research. All check marks on the articles were tabulated as given by these thirteen individuals. Then this tabulation was submitted to a statistical procedure whereby an authoritative and evaluated final ranking was worked out. Three criteria were used as bases for computing the final rank evaluation.

The first procedure employed was the method of ranking on the basis of "firsts", as exemplified by the research method W. W. Charters used. The procedure consisted of ranking the various articles from best to poorest according as they received many or few markings of "1" by the thirteen authorities who responded. The result of this ranking is shown in Table I. From an analysis of this table, it will be observed that eight markings of "1" were the highest that any article received. Two different articles received this marking, so that each has a rank of 1.5 among the forty-four articles included in the table. The number of "firsts" gradually decreases until the last fifteen articles have none at all, and hence are tied for last place with a rank of 37 each.

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Charter's method is, however, not as appropriate for the data of the present study as for those where he used it. Here the number of judgments are fewer, some of the articles were unknown to the judges, and several articles received tied rankings. Therefore, it seemed that "second" and "third" evaluations should be considered. Accordingly, a second method of ranking the forty-four articles, that of averages, was resorted to. The results of the use of this method are shown in Table II.

The method of averages consisted of assigning weights of 1, 2, and 3 to markings of "1", "2", and "3", respectively, multiplying the number of markings of a given article at each level of merit by the assigned weight, adding the products, and dividing the sum of the products by the number of judgments the article received. For example, Johnson had five markings of "1", two of "2", and one of "3". The calculation of the average judgments of this article, then, became as follows:

\[
\frac{(5 \times 1) + (2 \times 2) + (1 \times 3)}{8} = 1.5
\]

After the average judgments for all articles were found, the articles were arranged in order of the magnitude of their average markings, and this order became the ranking by this means of evaluation.
## TABLE II

### RANK VALUES BASED ON AVERAGE VALUATIONS

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<th>Author</th>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
An obvious weakness in the scheme of ranking on the basis of average judgments is that an article read by only one judge may rank higher than any other. To counteract this probable injustice, a third method of ranking was resorted to—namely, ranking of the articles on the basis of total number of times read by the various judges. The results of this ranking are shown in Table III. The largest number of judges who had read any article was 12, and the smallest was 1. The forty-four articles are arranged in Table III in order of the number of times read. However, since this basis for ranking is less worthy of consideration than the first two, its weight was arbitrarily divided by two. There resulted a "half-ranking", which was combined with the full rankings on the first two bases, in order to determine the final ranking or composite ranking on all three bases.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Number of Times Read</th>
<th>Ranking Value</th>
<th>Ranking Value Divided by 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cadenisch</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cook</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greenland</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johnson</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lyman (1st)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas (1st)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thomas (2nd)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thorpe</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wright</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hatfield</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lyman (2nd)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rand (1st)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rand (3rd)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symonds &amp; H.</td>
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<td>12.0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coleman</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ford</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grossman</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muir</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pressey</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greene</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hohn</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marks</td>
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<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parker</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>23.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Patterson</td>
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<td>23.0</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rand (2nd)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stewart</td>
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<td>23.0</td>
<td>11.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Persons</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>14.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rigg</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>14.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blair</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>31.0</td>
<td>15.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kilgore</td>
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<td>31.0</td>
<td>15.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Langdowne</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>31.0</td>
<td>15.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eason</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iser</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nemzek</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newton</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schroeder</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clem</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>41.0</td>
<td>20.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hirschman</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>41.0</td>
<td>20.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kinnick</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>41.0</td>
<td>20.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loomis &amp; M.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>41.0</td>
<td>20.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peairs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>41.0</td>
<td>20.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stevens</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>41.0</td>
<td>20.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuttle</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>41.0</td>
<td>20.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The obtaining of a final ranking based on all three criteria was the next procedure. To obtain this, each article's ranking based on number of "l's" received, plus its ranking based on average values, plus its ranking based on number of times read and divided by 2 was computed. This gave a composite sum for each article based on the rankings found in applying the three criteria. From this list of composite sums, a final ranking order was made for all forty-four articles. This is also the order in which the digests are taken up in the body of this report. Table IV shows this final statistical procedure.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Rank Based on No. of &quot;1's&quot;</th>
<th>Rank Based on Av. Times Read</th>
<th>Rank Based on No. of Sums Received &amp; divided by 2</th>
<th>Composite Sums of These Three Rankings</th>
<th>Final Ranking Order</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lyman (1st)</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>6.5</td>
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<td>Camenisch</td>
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<td>0.75</td>
<td>10.75</td>
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<td>12.5</td>
<td>3.</td>
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<td>24.</td>
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<tr>
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<td>8.5</td>
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<td>12.</td>
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<td>13.</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>3.</td>
<td>38.</td>
<td>15.5</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>20.5</td>
<td>48.</td>
<td>19.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>15.5</td>
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<td>25.</td>
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<td>Persons</td>
<td>25.5</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>14.</td>
<td>64.5</td>
<td>26.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grossman</td>
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<td>31.5</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>65.5</td>
<td>27.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>31.5</td>
<td>11.5</td>
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<td>Wright</td>
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<td>Muir</td>
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<td>8.5</td>
<td>77.</td>
<td>31.</td>
</tr>
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<td>Ford</td>
<td>37.</td>
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<td>85.</td>
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<td>Hohn</td>
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<td>86.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Schroeder</td>
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<td>31.5</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>86.</td>
<td>34.5</td>
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<td>20.5</td>
<td>89.</td>
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<td>20.5</td>
<td>89.</td>
<td>38.</td>
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<td>Stevens</td>
<td>37.</td>
<td>31.5</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>89.</td>
<td>38.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Landsdowne</td>
<td>37.</td>
<td>39.5</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>92.</td>
<td>40.</td>
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<td>17.5</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newton</td>
<td>37.</td>
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<td>97.5</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Peairs</td>
<td>37.</td>
<td>43</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuttle</td>
<td>37.</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>100.5</td>
<td>43.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The procedure described in detail above is the basis for calling the digest list an authoritative and selected list of articles.

Out of the original bibliography of 68 articles, 53 articles received markings. Nine that had markings were discarded from the final digest list because the material in them did not deal solely with the limited and specific topic of the research. Fifteen articles received no marking whatever. Therefore, there were 44 articles that were incorporated in the statistical procedure and received final rank placement. These data can be found indicated in the original bibliography which has been placed in the appendix.

In the following section of this report there will be found the digests of 31 articles. These are the first 31 articles in the final ranking order as shown in Table IV. This number was obtained by looking at the final ranking sums and passing over the first 25, that number being considered absolutely essential to a problem such as this, and continuing until the first large break in ranking sums after 25 was reached. This break came between rank 31 and 32, for rank 31 had a composite sum of 77 and rank 32 had a composite sum of 85. This, then, was a break of eight points, the largest break occurring anywhere after rank 25.

The form used in the digest proper is the general summary, as most of the articles listed are of the expository type. Whenever an article is of a research type publication, then the form of digest used is that adopted by the National Education Association for such investigations, that of stating the problem envolved, describing the method of procedure used, and lastly, stating the findings, or principles deduced.
Following the thirty-one digests, is the convenient index to this digest research, with instructions for its use in helping teachers to find easily and quickly any article on this particular subject for the years 1931 and 1932 as summarized herein.
II. DIGESTS


"This series of articles presents a summary of objective studies in the language branches of English instruction that have appeared during the years 1928--30. The article supplements an earlier publication which reported the findings of studies made prior to Jan. 1929."

Pages 266--275 give an annotated bibliography of sixty-three articles on the subject.

Pages 352--363 and 426--434 review and classify under four general headings the objective studies named in the previous bibliography. The classification comes under these headings:

"(1) Investigations concerning the curriculum,
(2) Investigations in correct usage,
(3) Investigations in methods of teaching, and
(4) Investigations in the field of written composition."

Lyman's work is itself a summary of other people's investigations and reports, and he has done it so thoroughly that it needs no further comment here. One must read Lyman's summary if he wishes to read the best in this field.


The accompanying chart contains in condensed form the author's summary of a probable course of study in the mechanics of written English for the senior high school.
The study was made very systematically, covering a period of ten years' study, and has been submitted to the best critical authority. "It is believed that the chart embodies in condensed form all the best that has been discovered in this vexing field in the last twenty years." The author also gives charts for elementary and junior high school courses.

It is necessary to adopt and carry out a program of essentials in any school unit if the study of mechanics is to be sufficiently restricted for proper emphasis on effective communication.

Here, in brief, is the author's program of mechanics:

"Reasons for Trying to Determine Essentials"

1. Time should be devoted to "rock-bottom" items.
2. "Time spent on mechanics should be reduced to a minimum."
3. Only the most useful of specific skills should be dwelt upon.
4. Check in composition to see if skills have been mastered and can be applied in written work.

"An Interpretation of Essentials"

1. The items included in the chart "are those that have been found to be practically universal problems."
2. These should be practically mastered by all, through pedagogical emphasis on pupils' needs only.
3. In the correction of compositions and tests, primary emphasis should be given to these items.
4. "Instruction and drill should be adapted to the majority."
5. "All items needed by the group as a whole will be taught though not considered minima."

6. "Previous items are to be held for cumulatively," for "only by cumulative holding can correct habits be guaranteed."

"General Plan of the Chart"

1. The items are arranged in three charts: elementary, junior high school, and senior high school.

2. This is a summary presented by one study of the problem. In local situations, items should be adapted according to the needs of that particular school or city.

3. Emphasis is heavy on errors in grammar and usage, "because in the first six grades much attention must be given to eliminating the errors, in satisfactory ways."

4. "There is an attempt to present items in sequences."

"The Use of the Chart"

1. It "gives a bird's-eye view of the whole field of mechanics. It is up-to-date in eliminating items that are not universally accepted as errors."

2. "It furnishes a standard for checking any local course of study."

3. "It helps to insure a mastery of essentials."

4. "It prevents the teaching of advanced material before the earlier is taught."

5. "Only by some such means as this, with a program carried on by a school as a whole, can any real advance be made."
ESSENTIALS IN THE MECHANICS OF WRITING

III. Not before the Senior High School Mastery of

All Items for the Elementary and Junior High School Should be Required

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentence Recognition</th>
<th>Usage and Grammar</th>
<th>Punctuation</th>
<th>Capitals</th>
<th>Miscellaneous</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compound--complex</td>
<td>Lie--lay, most--</td>
<td>Comma:</td>
<td>East, West, etc.,</td>
<td>Proper noun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sentence</td>
<td>almost, like--as,</td>
<td>Problem of restrictive and non-restrictive</td>
<td>when sections of country (not in directions)</td>
<td>ending in s:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divided quotation</td>
<td>shall--will,</td>
<td>Punctuation with &quot;that is,&quot; &quot;for example,&quot; etc.</td>
<td>Personification</td>
<td>Dickens,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noun clause</td>
<td>(only in simplest cases); in--into</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Burns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shift in sentence plan</td>
<td>Eliminate: John and myself</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective nouns</td>
<td>Everyone did their best</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shift in person, number, tense</td>
<td>I didn't scarcely know</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sequence of tenses</td>
<td>If I was he, like for as, try and go</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parallel structure</td>
<td>Quotation within quotation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mastery of connections</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The prevailing attitudes toward examinations are represented by three groups: (1) One group would do away with all examinations in English; (2) a second group would accept the examination as conventional in the educational system and instruct the pupils in such a way that the tricks of the examination can be met successfully; (3) a "third group would attempt to understand the potential educational worth of the examination and try to discover how the entire curriculum in English can be systematically strengthened by intelligent use of intelligently constructed examinations, given at suitable intervals."

Our entire English curriculum can properly be based on two fundamental elements: (1) "automatisms in English," which principle emphasizes drill and accomplishment in correct mechanical response; (2) "creative work in English," which principle emphasizes constructive thinking in productive reading and expression.

Through the recognition of these lines for development, any English program may be formed on the following plan:

"I. Reading: the interpretation of the printed page.

A. Developing automatisms--the mechanics of reading.

B. Creative reading.

II. Composition: the pupil's thought and expression in English.

A. Developing automatisms--the mechanics of English composition.

B. Creative thought and expression."

I will pass over point I and take up point II for further
discussion as it deals particularly with the subject of this manual.

"The major phase of English that entirely complements reading or interpretation is expression, oral and written." The process of expression can be divided into "(A) automatisms and (B) creative thought and expression."

In the development of the oral and written word many processes gradually become automatic. Soon one learns the spelling and pronunciation of simple words. Correct forms in the use of simple verbs and pronouns unconsciously become a habit and cause little trouble. However, in the secondary schools, there is marked individual differences among pupils as to the amount of acquired skill they hold in the usage of correct forms; therefore much careful diagnostic work must be done by teachers so as to reveal the defects and, thereafter, develop a method that will cure the faults.

"To our task of teaching the language conventions, we must link that sort of instruction which places enduring emphasis upon the processes of original thinking, upon the effective way of generating original thought, and upon those methods that will subject our thinking to the higher types of discipline."

There is no real thinking or reasoning until it has been expressed in some outward form, either oral or written. To be able to do this, students must know certain elements in language. They are: "(1) words, (2) sentences, and (3) paragraphs and complete compositions. Mastery of these elements in the case of individual students will be clearly revealed by carefully constructed tests or examinations."

From the foregoing, it is possible to deduce certain princi-
ple that will help us to select intelligently materials and methods for use in giving a general English examination, such as would come following the secondary-school period, in order to ascertain the student's ability to do college work. Some are:

1. Test for a "reasonable mastery of the mechanical skills in English."

2. Test for "constructive thinking and power in effective phrasing" by means of providing a selection of theme topics, annotated, so that the student will be stimulated to express himself individually upon his choice, thereby showing his powers in composition achievement.

3. Test for a "fair mastery of English vocabulary."

4. Test for student's ability in oral English by supplementing a written test with an oral one. This will not only be a test of knowledge, but, better still, a test of a student's oral powers in expressing himself effectively and clearly.

Principles 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10 deal with the following test items: reading; literature; details of plot, characters, and settings in novel, short story, and play; literary history; biography of authors; and style in writing.

11. Individual differences should be recognized, so alternative questions and some "honor questions" should be provided in the examination.

12. Use some "objective" tests, as these are effective in some phases of English work. However, but 20% of the total examination should be of this type.

13. "Examiners should, after a general form of paper has been established, guard against an unwarranted radical departure
and at the same time avoid a stereotype that invites a superficial cramming scheme."


"The investigations reviewed in this chapter are limited to those made or published in 1929 and 1930."

The reviews are the same as those in Lyman's first article that precedes this one, with the exception that not all of the former reviews are presented here and also that two given here are not to be found in the former list of reviews--those by Klopp and Ash. Klopp's investigation was in regard to "intensive formal grammar drill method" and the one by Ash dealt with "the effectiveness of the stylistic approach in teaching written composition."


There is a misconception in the minds of the majority as to what creative expression truly is. One group bases its function upon the assumption of innate powers--"Poets are born, not made." Another group takes the fundamentalist's point of view that there must be obvious, tangible results in production or creativeness does not exist.

There are two phases to intelligence--one, instinctive, doing as the group does; the other, creative, which is truly individualistic, an acquired ability. "The ordinary individual differs from the artist only in the 'degree' to which his intelligence operates."
Two difficulties enter into the development of conscious individuality in pupils. First, there is a natural hesitancy on the part of the mind to be specific. When we can teach or learn to express our thoughts specifically, then we are creating. A second difficulty that inhibits creative intelligence is that we try to describe scenes lying out of our actual experience.

There are three ways in which we can help develop the creative intelligence in the classroom. First, strive to arouse the student's interest in situations that are different. The gregarious instinct of youth is opposed to this type of thing, and it must be overcome before he will be free to think creatively. Second, use classroom experience to stimulate individual thinking. All see it; therefore, it is of the best for laboratory material. Third, "set pupils at work upon their own actual problems of induction."

"Creative writing seems to me to be just creative thinking on paper," although "made up of many elements, it can be taught in varying degrees to all pupils."


Several examples of classroom incidents leading to composition activity are given by the author. Then, the point of view is discussed, showing that personal incidents that come up in everyday classroom life can easily be made the basis for composition activity.

In using such incidents, the students were not writing merely because the teacher told them to do so, but rather, be-
cause they were interested, had something to say, and felt they
could do someone else some good. Our best conversation and
writing is not done just because we must, but rather, because
we desire to, see a need for expression, wish to entertain, or
help someone else, etc. This is real life, so should the compo-
sition class be. However, there must be guidance used by the
teacher so that students will not waste energy and time.

Reality in composition is a main essential; so the teacher
must be wise in directing and stimulating interest in topics
that actually affect the lives of the students. Along with
this, the teacher must not fail to arrange for the learning of
good usage in English. Originality and reality will be of
little value if written in very poor English; hence here will
be shown the necessity for learning how to express one's self
so that others can understand what he wishes to tell them.

In the procedure used, one very important essential is
the arousing of pupils so that they "see" and "feel" that there
is a need for them to learn how to express themselves well.
Several ways of stimulating them to action can be used. An
example would be to direct their attention to a situation that
demands action, such as cheering up a pupil who is absent be-
cause of illness. Let the pupils suggest what they could do.
This can then be used as an oral lesson in English or one in
writing letters. So there are many, many other incidents that
exist in the social life of the pupil that the teacher can use
as a basis for stimulating his interest to act, orally or in
writing.

Another method to use is that of imitation, the showing
of the achievement of some other class. This will stimulate the students to wish to do in like manner.

Another way to stimulate for spontaneity is to arouse their memories and imaginations so that they will "just want to talk." The use of the picture poster as a stimulus for writing about what it portrays is another good method for the teacher of composition to employ.

After stimulation, the teacher must so direct the class that a purpose is adopted with a definite goal clearly pointed out. Time used in developing this phase of social composition is never lost, as the results in written work will prove its decided value in quality of work produced.

"Class planning, individual planning, and rehearsal of oral compositions, or criticisms of first draft all come before final speaking or writing, which usually should not be followed by further criticism."

The author ends with the statement that he has no further space for the discussion of these vital matters.


"The functional idea in composition involves two things: first, the definition of the course in terms of 'things to be done'; and, second, the organization of instruction around expressional activities common to social experiences."

Functional centers of expression include specific activities in these fields: "letter-writing, conversation, group discussion, making a talk, reporting experiences (direct or indirect), giving directions or explanations, telling a story,
keeping personal memoranda." These functional centers offer numerous expressional activities. To make the composition course functional, correlation with other subjects and departments is essential.

It has been found that types of activities called for in school life correspond to the degree of 80% with activities developed in out-of-school life. There will not always be "life-situations" occurring in the term's work, yet this can be taken care of by imagining "life-situations" and the pupil playing the role which is demanded. This will involve situations set up on the play level. Important here is the requirement that the training situation be like a "life-situation."

"Evidence is abundant that our courses of study, our textbooks, our classroom practices, are more and more responsive to the functional idea." An example of this is the English course of study adopted by the Denver public schools. Those that advocate creative writing do not need to fear the functional program, for it does not hamper, in the least, creative expression.

Today, the teaching of English is being looked upon as a cooperative problem in which every department should have its share. "The gradual extension of English training into every phase of school life and the adoption of the functional centers of expression as the chief determinants of instruction in the composition courses are mutually complementary trends in modern English practice."

The English examination can be made a useful instrument in the school room if the proper attitude is created toward it, both on the part of the teacher and on the part of the student. There are two significant requisites upon which this attitude should be built: "(1) a cooperative attitude between teacher and pupil; (2) care in formulating and administering all our examinations."

On the part of the teacher three things should be kept in mind in applying the cooperative scheme. First, the teacher must know that the fundamentals of English instruction are divided into two distinct parts: "(1) the part that seeks automatic control over mere mechanics of English and produces correct habits in English and (2) the part that creatively utilizes these mechanical skills in productive reading and in productive expression." Formulating a program that will take in these phases of English instruction, necessarily will find a proper place for examinations which will reveal acquired achievement and also stimulate pupils to greater effort in learning.

Second, the teacher should carefully plan each term's work ahead and fit in examinations, both oral and written, always keeping the pupils aware of coming tests but subordinating the tests to a steady progress in English proficiency. Let the tests be a stimulus to higher achievement in the knowledge and use of English.

Third, the teacher should maintain a poise of ease and freedom while an examination is being given. Let it be made clear to the pupils that an examination is constructive, something that will help them in their learning and achievement of good English expression.
The pupil also plays a part in this cooperative endeavor: (1) he must be willing to master facts and understand clearly why they are essential; (2) he must accept the responsibility of "accuracy in reproducing memory assignments."

In regard to the formulating and administering of English examinations, six principles may guide us in the choice of material and method to use.

1. The examination should be "fair" in the eyes of the students. Only matter that has been assigned, discussed, or emphasized in class should be included in the test.

2. "The examination should provide for various abilities and tastes that necessarily exist in any typical group of students. Several alternative questions, and perhaps a few 'honor questions' offered as options, should be provided." It has been demonstrated in many schools that "honor courses" prove alluring, that the examination which has "honor questions" in it attracts the student, and that his attitude toward the examination develops into a constructive one.

3. The examiner should use some "objective" or "new type" examinations, as they are valuable in trying to set up correct standards. "They should be sparingly used as they do not allow opportunity for organization of thought and synthesized expression, as do the essay types of question."

4. "A teacher should make every possible effort to keep the class well poised." Create a feeling of cooperation and comradeship and prevent any disturbance or distraction in the room, also "guard against any marked innovation."

5. Examinations should be placed in the year's schedule
so that pupils will know in advance when they are to come. These results follow such a procedure: "It will tend toward cooperation between teacher and those taught; it will further the conception of fairness; it will serve to keep the class well poised and free from the sense of nervousness."

6. Create the feeling within the class that the teacher in giving examinations is offering an opportunity to the pupil to prove his personal value as a student to the one who has taught him, thus giving the pupil a "privilege and an incentive to do his best."


The main purpose in teaching students to get a command of their language is to help them express their ideas.

There are six ways suggested whereby the teacher can help the student in his development and expression of his ideas.

1. In teaching, use illustrative sentences; sentences that say something, that are interesting and stimulating to the students, so as to hold their attention and to further their development of ideas.

2. The aim of good composition work is "to talk, write, and think concretely." All assignments in composition should be made concrete, not vague and hazy.

3. Put the theory of composition into practice, and then students will more easily understand what is called for. "Students need guidance so that their writing will have unity, coherence, and emphasis." This is best done when the teacher guides the student in practicing these principles in relation
to the topics and ideas used in their compositions.

4. "Let the ideas, not the teacher's outline, stand out."

5. "Make drills similar to other life tasks." Be sure in drill work and assignments that the student understands just what is wanted and why it is being done; then he will not be confused and will more readily cooperate.

6. "Let students tell the teacher something she does not know." This tends to arouse interest and enthusiasm, along with a spontaneous expression of pupils' ideas.


The problem of this investigation centered around English composition interests of junior and senior high school pupils. Answers to the following questions would help solve the problem: "What topics do pupils prefer to write about? Which type of discourse do they like? Are there sex differences in these interests? If so, what are they? Do interests tend to vary among different grade groups? If so, what are the variations?"

Two procedures were used to find an answer to the problem. First, "pupils were asked to write a composition upon a topic proposed by themselves." Second, "pupils wrote compositions upon topics taken from three lists presented to them." The lists were similar in interests presented, but the titles were varied. Each pupil wrote a composition upon a topic chosen by himself from each of the lists which were presented on three consecutive days. He was supposed to choose according to his interest.

"Thirty-six broadly defined interests were represented" in
the lists. Pupils were to indicate on a form attached to each list, the title chosen for the composition, "the title liked next best, the title liked least, or disliked most, and the title liked next least." Medians were computed for each interest and from these, rank order lists by grades were formed.

"To determine the types of written discourse which pupils prefer, pupils indicate four choices of liked best, next best, least, and next least for the following ten types of written discourse: narration, description, exposition, argument, friendly letter, business letter, poetry, news article, editorial, for school paper, debate brief."

The following recommendations for teachers are based upon the results obtained in the research. "An assignment intended to conform to pupils' interests would include a variety of specific topics and would give the pupil the privilege of writing upon a topic suggested by himself. The investigation showed that pupils choose topics that are related to their own experiences; so a teacher must cover in her assignments the range of pupils' experience, suggesting topics not "too difficult and abstract for them to handle. The lists of interests common to all grades provide an objective check for the topics in an assignment," thereby helping the teacher to construct suitable lists for her individual classes. "For the teacher who would explore the interests of her class in the various types of discourse, the lists of pupils' interests give definite information. The majority of boys and girls prefer: (1) the friendly letter, (2) argument, (3) description, and (4) narration, in the order named."
that in constructive criticism, the result is almost always not the student's own thought and work but the critic's, because in his criticism he has shown the pupil how to do it by suggesting wording, method, or other improvements. On the other hand, if a student receives destructive criticism which is merely the pointing out of mistakes and errors and leaves the remedy to be found and executed by the student himself, then the resulting form is the student's own work, his own constructive learning expressed by himself in his own individual way. The result will be the student's own product, not the critic's.

"To learn to write, one must write, make mistakes, correct them, make more, correct 'them!', and repeat the dreadful experience over and over again until he writes no more." Students who wish to follow rules and formulas or to imitate noted writers
are not true writers themselves, for they are only looking for something to make the job easier. If they have ideas to express and a desire to express them well, they will far rather express them in their own way, which will be natural, original, and truly their own production, not an aping of someone else.

It is splendid to find out how great authors wrote, but that is not the same as trying to imitate their style. It is well to have acquaintance with many authors and their styles and methods, yet, when you wish to express your own ideas, let it be done in a manner and style solely yours, prompted by your own innate abilities, not a copying or imitating of someone else, for then it would be neither you nor the author imitated that would be speaking. "Teachers cannot give students creative power. What to do is always the student's problem. Solving is not only his duty but his privilege."


The problem of the writer's investigation was to compare errors in spontaneous writing with those made on proof-reading objective tests. Therefore, she had to create a situation where the same elements might be tested by the two methods.

The procedure used was the reading of a story to the class and then the class was asked to reproduce this by writing from memory, using as nearly as possible the words of the author read. Following this, the students were given an objective test of the "proof-reading" type wherein sentences were formed without punctuation or capitalization, taken from the story previously read to them. After this test, they were given another one of the
same type which consisted of sentences similar to the ones in the first test, and presented exactly the same mechanical difficulties. The scoring for all three forms was made as equal and balanced as possible. Thus the scoring of the spontaneous composition was more severe than for the objective tests.

The author summarized the results obtained in an elaborate table of comparisons, which showed the relationship between the composition and test 1; the composition and test 2; and between tests 1 and 2, for the number of items involved. The table shows that the amount of agreement varies. In Table II are found the percentages of agreement between two proof-reading tests and the composition. This shows that the highest agreements are between the two tests, which show an average agreement of 88% for capitals and 78% for punctuation. Comparison of the composition and test 1 shows an agreement of 82% for capitals and 58% for punctuation; for test 2, 81% for capitals and 54% for punctuation.

"The most outstanding feature of the findings is the variability and lack of consistency and habituation shown." The data also show that it makes less difference which form of measurement is used if the skills have been pretty well learned. The diagnostic value of the objective test seems to be lacking, yet the composition furnished little more prediction. "The need for a comprehensive program of research, on this whole field, is clear," declares the writer and her evidence in this investigation proves it.

It is now an accepted fact among English teachers that there should be a definite separation of composition-grammar instruction from literature-reading instruction in the English curriculum.

One thing must be guarded against in practicing this separation—namely, the tendency to let the English skills that have been studied and learned in the composition class be forgotten and "go to seed" in the term of literature work. This should not be allowed, yet it should be handled wisely so that it will not detract from the purpose of literature teaching.

"Opportunities for written composition in the literature class should consist of intelligently directed written reports, wisely limited experiments in imitations of highly individual styles, and a great deal of truly creative expression," all of which, should be based upon the literature they are then studying. The literature teacher should demand that all written work in the literature class be carefully done in respect to punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and grammatical correctness as has been taught them previously in their composition classes.

Oral reports and speeches can be taken care of in the literature class by seeing that every pupil gets a chance to make several oral reports in class on some topic related to the literature being read. Before the speech is to be delivered, the teacher must emphasize the rules of good speech making; namely, good voice, poise, position on the floor, correctness in grammar and pronunciation, etc.

Debates and dramatizations can occasionally play a part in the literature program. The use of the dictionary and the development of good diction and an enriched vocabulary need not detract from the study of literature, but rather give a
clearer meaning and picture to the poetry or novels studied. "Grammar, like word-study and all other language tools, should, of course, never be used for its own sake in a literature class. Whenever a passage in literature, however, may be clarified by study of its grammatical relationships, such study should always be made, and questions concerning the syntax of difficult passages should be assigned in advance. A more systematic and definite application of these tools to further the legitimate ends of literature would remove the most serious objection to the separation of literature and composition on a semester basis."


This is a study of grammatical errors as found in the analysis of 724 compositions. The authors used the same procedure as in four former studies. The tabulation is necessarily artificial and conventional, for the analysis depends upon arbitrary rules and assumptions that were laid down as a basis for the work.

Elaborate tables are provided, along with representative figures. Table I gives a tabulation of errors according to certain scale levels "so as to show the learning that takes place in the elimination of errors in grammar as one proceeds to composition of superior quality."

Table II is a detailed one of errors by grade ranking. It would help in the construction of textbooks and courses of study in "determining which elements deserve most emphasis and attention" at different grade levels.
Figures 1 and 2 show general and specific errors, respectively, "by level on the Hillegas Composition Scale."

They show that "as compositions improve in quality the number of errors in grammatical usage decreases. This decrease in number of errors holds not only for the total number of errors but for each category into which the errors are divided."

The investigation finally concludes "that errors in grammar are not so numerous or so serious as errors in sentence structure or in punctuation and capitalization. It also appeared that grammar is one of the least serious difficulties in the poorer compositions. The choice of words, incomplete, jumbled, and run-on sentences, little or no idea worth expressing, broad and uncertain reference, wrong use of words, and similar features often are more prominent by far than any errors in grammar."


"The first essential to the economical teaching of composition is a favorable setting." By this is meant that a school respects good English. It employs trained English teachers and sees that their teaching load is fairly distributed for efficiency and personal endurance. Too, the entire staff of teachers and administrators must demand good English in oral and written work for all students, no matter whether it is a science class, English class, or any other. If every teacher of every subject will demand of the students good English in the oral and written work for that subject, then economy can soon develop in the teaching of English composition.
A second consideration in the program of economy in the teaching of composition is a well-organized and definite, cumulative curriculum, so that teacher and pupil alike know where he is going and what is expected. In this connection, nothing is more wasteful than to teach composition one term or year and then lose sight of it entirely for several semesters or years to come. The speaking and writing of good English needs practice more than any other factor; so it cannot be lost sight of for too long a period, or what teaching was done previously will have been totally wasted. Of course, perhaps no continuous program would be in vogue, but rather a continual program interspersed with literature and other phases of English, so as to prevent the students from being "fed up" on composition and learning to hate it. "From the point of view of economy in teaching composition, then, the English curriculum may be thought of as favorably organized when due attention has been paid to the principles of conservation, application, and cumulation, and to the factors of continual practice and of variety and interest."

In an economy program, the efficiency of the teacher and the effectiveness of his method will determine the degree of success. A good teacher must have a definite goal, and interest and enthusiasm to accomplish it. There are many good methods of teaching composition, but, if misapplied, they will result in waste. A good teacher will try out many methods, and, in the end, find the one best adapted to her class. This is also the best method for that teacher, and economy in teaching will be a natural result.

"Interest, aroused and maintained through skilful motivation, through reading, through the teacher's ability
to keep a current of fresh ideas afloat in his class, through projects industrial, literary, or what not, is fundamental to an economical program in composition." Too, the teacher should try to have published, in some way, the written work of the class, so that interest and encouragement will develop better production all the time.


"This paper is a brief report of an attempt to establish a definite criterion for the guidance of those interested in setting up specific instructional units in one limited phase of language activity—the mechanics of written composition." It deals almost "exclusively with certain punctuation practices."

Prior to this, "specific standards which must be met by the criterion itself were set up," as follows:

"(1) This criterion must be defensible in terms of social utility.
(2) The resultant instructional units must be truly representative of best practice.
(3) The criterion must be reasonably specific and objective.
(4) It must set up in definite form standards of practice.
(5) It must afford a basis for the evaluation of the relative importance of these instructional items."

The editors of twenty-six well known publishing houses were selected as most fitted to give an opinion as to what practices in tool skills of English would be most desirable to set up as standards. They were asked to supply the names
of the manuals of style that they used.

Twenty-five editors returned material that could be used and out of this "seven manuals of style were selected as best representing the guides used by these editorial departments." Then, the manuals were analyzed carefully so as to show which specific practices were most emphasized. "A summary of this tabulation shows the punctuation practices which are of major importance in terms of their frequency of mention in the seven handbooks." This fulfills the demands of item (3) of the standards, already mentioned, for a "specific and objective" criterion. Item (2) is taken care of in this also, for it represents the practice of specialists in the field and they very likely influence most of the prevailing practice.

Practices that occur with high frequency in these handbooks surely, represent material of social utility, as under point (1). "The relative frequencies with which specific usages are mentioned afford a direct basis for the evaluation of the importance of certain items." This conforms to point (5). Definite form standards of practice can be formulated from this tabulation; thus point (4) is fulfilled in this way.

This proposed criterion does not give a best method of attack for all English curricular problems, but it seems as if it will be useful to those who wish to increase efficient teaching of certain mechanical phases of English composition.


Creative writing should not be neglected in the field of prose. Much has been done in the field of poetry, but creative prose is just as essential.
There are four main kinds of creative work in prose. The most popular form of prose is the short story. The subject-matter best suited for students is that which is within their own experiences, in their own school and home life, or that of the community in which they live.

When fancy and imagination are allowed to play their part in developing lively stories, another type of truly creative writing is produced.

The writing of plays is a phase of creative prose. Simple one-act plays should be the first attempted, as even this is no easy undertaking.

In business letters and advertisements, creative work can be outlined by the teacher. Here, let the pupils examine newspapers and magazines for the better type of business literature, and then, using their imaginations, try to produce similar writings.

There are five criteria by which creative writing may be judged. They are: "the release of personality, increase in productive power, a growth in the ability to reach verbal suggestiveness, emotional quality, and the growth of a dynamic vocabulary."

Many good results come to those who engage in creative activities. One derives a natural pleasure from creative work; moreover, it frees one so he can express himself, and that is a relief in many ways. Besides this, it gives an increased appreciation of good literature and art, and leads to increased reading and investigation which helps to broaden one's life. There are many social contacts to be gained from creative writing when it is done in the right environment and setting. Best of
all is the time when someone has produced a work truly worthy and it is recognized by the public.

"No work that the English teacher does pays him such dividends of personal satisfaction as does this encouragement of creative activity, or brings him so close to the real interests and needs of students."


Diagnostic tests have been accepted in progressive educational circles. However, Willing's study showed that they did not predict accurately, that it might give a gross measurement of groups, but it was totally lacking in finer analysis for diagnostic purposes.

The writer himself tried testing, and the figures shown indicate about the same results as Willing's. However, he maintains that formal tests are worthy for diagnostic purposes, depending upon how the word "purpose" is defined. If it means just to use the test as a prediction of how many errors the pupil may make in a definite future length of time in composition work, then it can be termed valueless. However, if the formal tests point out to the teacher errors and weaknesses which need to be stressed and given special attention, then such tests are valuable diagnostic aids for the teacher in improving and guiding her methods of teaching.


"It is the writer's thesis that to speak and write a
clear-cut English sentence should be the major objective in
the teaching of English composition in the secondary school."

There is a theory current "that the only objective of
English composition is communication." However, this is too
narrow and undefined, for anyone knows it is easily possible
for most folks to communicate their ideas to another, yet this
does not always mean that they have done it in the best of
language expression or in a "fitting way". Therefore, the
communication objective should be broadened "to include the
element of fitness."

Teachers will wonder how they can interest students,
especially boys, in the use of proper English and make them
see the "propriety" of it. Yet, one can easily remember that
boys, as well as girls, possess a sensitiveness about their
personal appearance at parties and elsewhere, and do not wish
to appear socially "green". So, "the resourceful English
teacher capitalizes this sensitivity for the realization of
desirable social objectives in teaching English composition."

"If teachers of English composition are to be effective,
they must place first things first." This means "to recognize
that worthy goals can be attained in English composition when
pupils really have something to say and want to say it force-
fully and effectively. This statement should be the loadstone
for the motivation of work in composition. It presumes that
the pupils should have considerable part in the selection of
theme subjects. It presumes that an oral theme is to be spoken
to an audience, and that a written theme is really to be read
by someone; that in the case of either the oral or written theme,
the resulting sentiment or action is important."

Progressive English teachers encourage pupils to select
theme topics from their own everyday experiences. This is a fine practice. However, there are great possibilities growing out of classwork in other departments than English. The University of Chicago High School has used this plan with splendid results. In its plan "English composition is taught in conjunction with the social studies. In this way, the process takes on the characteristics of the laboratory technique. The sentence becomes for English composition what the formula is to mathematics--the basic instrument for thinking and expression."

Although main emphasis should be placed "on having something to say, and a motive for saying it forcefully and effectively," still it has been shown through experience that mechanics cannot be altogether neglected if the best results are to be obtained. The writer proposes the following suggestions in this respect:

"1. The teacher should have on hand certain general error standards such as the list developed by Charters in his Kansas City study, or the one developed by Richards and Cornell in the New York State English study.

2. The teacher should keep, or have each pupil keep, an individual error list.

3. Practice exercises of the type recently presented by such writers as Symonds, Webster and Smith; and in commercial workbooks, may be used effectively.

4. Such standardized tests as the Briggs English Form Test may be used effectively for both teaching and testing purposes."

Most progressive English teachers accept the responsibility for teaching spelling, in varying degrees. Major teaching
activities in spelling consist of:

1. The selection of words to be spelled.
2. The teaching of the words selected.
3. The measurement of results.

"In selecting the words to be spelled, individual word lists developed from errors in the pupils' written work, or well-established or accepted word lists may be used." Some good examples of the latter type are: "Thorndike's Word List, Five-hundred Junior High School Demons, Pressey's Technical Vocabularies."

The present tendency in teaching spelling is "to minimize the teaching of rules. In general, one learns to spell by spelling."

Generally speaking, two techniques may be followed in measuring the results in spelling:

1. The application of Morrison's Mastery formula: pre-test, teach, test, etc., until mastery is gained.
2. The use of such well-known standard scales as the following:

1. Ashbaugh--The Iowa Spelling Scales.
3. Terman and Others--Stanford Achievement Test.
4. Teachers College Sixteen Spelling Scales.
5. Morrison--McCall Spelling Scale."

The problem of the study was "to discover the relationship between the proportion of different parts of speech in writing vocabularies of individuals and their mental ability."

A brief review of past experiments in this field with the main results mentioned is given by the authors. All of the material seems to point to the fact that mental ability is related to speech abilities in more or less degree.

The data were obtained from eighty students of the New Raleigh High School. There were 326 compositions analyzed, making an average number of composition for each student of 4.075. They were allowed to write on any subject of their own choice.

The procedure for the classifications of speech was: "(1) nouns and pronouns; (2) verbs and verb forms; (3) adjectives and adverbs; (4) conjunctions and prepositions; and (5) the articles 'a', 'an', and 'the'.'"

"Table II shows the averages and deviations of individual percentages of different parts of speech used."

Next the relationships between uses of different parts of speech and intelligence were found, and certain measurements of mental abilities for the students were established. Measurements used were: first, the mental ages computed from the Terman Group Test of Intelligence, Form A; second, results from a "Sentence Vocabulary Test"; third, the average grade in all thought subjects made by pupils during certain period of time; fourth, an index of home environment, using the Barr Scale Rating of Occupational Status to give rating to father's occupation. The results were shown in Table III.

Table IV shows comparisons of the percentages of different parts of speech used by the girls and the boys.
Table V shows a comparison of mental ages, vocabulary test scores, and average school grade by sex.

In Table VI the relation between different parts of speech and mental age, vocabulary test scores, and average school grades were computed. The results show in general that:

1. The use of the articles 'a', 'an', and 'the', is a better index to mental ability than is the use of any other part of speech.

2. The use of connectors next to articles shows the highest positive correlation with measures of mental ability, but the coefficients are not high.

3. The use of many verbs indicate lower mental ability with low coefficient.

4. Other parts of speech do not indicate much relationship with the criteria of mental ability used in the study."

The intercorrelations between different parts of speech used in the written composition by these eighty students are presented in Table VII with the following generalizations:

1. The use of a great many works of any single part of speech, resulted in a less or nearly the same number of words of another part of speech (articles excepted).

2. The use of articles correlates positively with the use of modifiers, nouns, and connectors, but negatively with verbs."

Table VIII presents the relationship between the use of articles, connectors, modifiers, and the mental ability, vocabulary test scores, average school grades, and father's occupation rating. The results shown are:

1. Father's occupation rating correlates positively with the use of articles, which is the best measure of intelligence.
so far as parts of speech are concerned.

2. Father's occupational ratings correlate positively and significantly with mental age and vocabulary test scores. As here rated, father's occupation does not seem to influence school grades."

The authors' general conclusion follows: "A thoroughly quantitative method of measuring the correct and incorrect usages of different parts of speech, rather than the study of percentages of words classified as being certain parts of speech, would probably throw new light on the subject of the relation between use of different parts of speech and mental ability." They hope that such a method can be developed and applied.


"Children in high school are extroverts and should be encouraged in learning about the outside world and in writing about it." Let pupils write as if they were in the role of another person. This will take away self-consciousness and their response will be more natural and not warped by too much "self". In the writing of letters, for example, let them imagine they are someone who is applying for a position in a drug store or elsewhere, according to the type of letter desired.

Develop writing material by describing a situation where conversation is foremost, giving the trend of talk, and then let the pupils finish the lead in their compositions.

Newspaper material and devices can be used to advantage
also, such as letting the pupils play the part of a reporter in gathering news on a certain topic that the teacher outlines briefly.

Subjects in history can be used as material for pupil compositions. The teacher should direct the pupil to read, organize, and think out his topic before putting it down on paper in composition form.

Furthermore, the teacher can often begin a story with a few sentences, laying the framework of a plot to be further developed by the pupils.

All activities and people outside the pupils themselves interest them most, and it is from such sources, topics, and materials that compositions should spring.


Whether to maintain scholastic standards and sacrifice the welfare of individual students, or vice versa, is a vital problem in English teaching.

This laboratory experiment was undertaken in an effort to try to solve the difficulty without the necessity of sacrificing either point. Only students who had worked faithfully throughout the course to achieve the prescribed work, but who failed to comply with the standards set up, were allowed to come into the laboratory group. The only objective imposed was: "the expression of thought in satisfactory English."

In the course of study for such a group, the main problem was the selection and management of material for themes.
It was found that the best procedure for saving of time and for encouraging originality was for the teacher to read articles before the class and then call for themes upon what had been read to the group. In this way there could be no copying, the student would have to recall from memory the theme and express it the best he knew how in language of his own.

Worthwhile topics for reading should be selected by the teacher. This will develop a sense of good selection for reading in the student as he becomes interested and starts to read for himself in magazines and books.

After the themes are written, discuss them in class, both the good and the bad, so that standards for good usage can be formulated through this socializing process. Later, let the teacher collect the themes and tabulate the errors found, grouping them according to the basic principle which underlies them. Then, let this be a basis for drill lessons, having mimeographed sheets of these errors and the rules that apply to the correction of them, so that each student may have a copy. Most of the students will be weak in spelling, so that the teacher should collect words mispelled by them and formulate rules for correct spelling of certain types of words.

In developing subjects to be the basis for longer themes, the principles of unity, coherence, organization, etc. can be studied. Here outlines will become useful as well as discussion on sentence and paragraph structure. Let them practice and re-write themes until they can develop coherence and unity of a whole theme, regardless of length.

Individual attention should be given to the weaker students, especially where they have developed a special error
or weakness that is not common to the whole class.

Several examples of written material by students are given to show the contrast between the first efforts and later improvements. All of this demonstrates that the majority of these cases can be helped and improved. Too, a desire for better usage is shown among the students themselves and their interest in good magazines and books is stimulated, thus proving the experiment to be successful in many ways.


A composition class should offer a chance to each student to view the world about him, and, in so doing, enable him to place himself within the whole.

The main problem in life is to learn how to live. In composition classes five methods toward this goal can be used: "We learn to live in the world by doing, by observing, by reading, by thinking, and by writing."

We learn through experience or doing things. This is related to writing in composition wherein we can describe on paper what our experiences are or have been.

"Observation is the most important thing we can teach in English classes." If students are taught to observe what interests them, written material on such interests will more likely be original. Again, teach them to look for similarities, as this will help train their observation of things about them. Also, let them compare and contrast in regard to their observations.

"Reading is an opportunity to educate ability and in
that way help writing, and in reading students need guidance." A teacher should encourage students to read. Prepare a reading list which you think it well for them to select from and encourage them to read as many books or articles on this list as is possible. Check up on their reading, now and then, to see if they really are reading of their own volition. There should also be a required reading list, so that there may be class discussion of those books which the whole class has read. The more one reads the writings of others, the easier and more natural will his own writing become. "To read the classics for substantial sustenance and development is good, but the moderns are preferable for models."

"The purpose of Education is to teach thinking, and the English class, since it deals with intelligence applied to living by experienced authors in literature and by experimenting students in composition, should teach us how the wisest men in the past have thought and how those in the present may do so." We teachers should give at least as much attention to the thought content of student themes as we do to their punctuation.

"If you want to think a thing out, try to write it. If you want to understand how authors you read have worked and observed, try to write something similar. If you want to give practice to your observation habits, write down what you see. If you would find significance in what you and others do, write it out."


"Educators are generally agreed that the experiences of the child should form the basis of all our teaching," yet this
is a principle that oftentimes is easily misapplied or misconstrued.

To adults the experiences of childhood seem fascinating and of true enjoyment, but we must remember that "we are looking down to the child level." We have had years of living experiences from which we have learned to appreciate the simple, carefree joys of childhood. However, this is not the attitude of a child, for he has not years of experience with which to interpret his childhood experiences; so generally he feels that they are commonplace, dull, and uninteresting.

The old type theme assignments dealt mostly with topics based upon the child's experience, and as he saw nothing great or interesting in his own experiences, the themes turned out to be very mediocre or worse.

The author tried the following experiment four times in succession in a high school composition class where composition work was carried separate from literature work. The procedure follows. The first assignment was to read books on the Far North for home reading. The author chose this topic for three reasons: "first, young people are fascinated by the remote; second, new experiences--men struggling with the elements--would be brought home to those who had not dipped into such materials before; third, the beauty and fascination of the snow and ice would make a strong appeal to almost all who read."

The aid of the librarian was obtained so that when the class was assigned the topic and met in the library to select material, the teacher could direct and help in the selection of reading material which had been placed there for their use.

The assignment was made thus: "You are going to read a book whose background is laid in the lands of snow and ice. You
may have two weeks for your reading. Now read and enjoy."

When the class met two weeks later, they were asked to suggest topics on the Far North that would be appropriate for chapters in a book that might be written by the whole class on that subject. The author was aiming to get a list of expository subjects suitable for future composition themes. A splendid list of thirty-one different topics was suggested by the students.

They were then asked if they would not like to talk on one of these subjects the next day, a subject they had learned about in their reading. They eagerly responded in the affirmative.

Then the second day was given over to informal talks on the Far North. The aim underlying this was "to stimulate further interest in possible topics for written work." At the close of the period, it was announced that the next day's assignment would be to write a theme in class on one of the topics in the list that they had suggested already, which list was written upon the board. The work continued in this way for five more days.

On the eighth day, the author said to the class: "There must have been many interesting moments in those books you read on the North." The response came in the affirmative and when asked what they were, each pupil could mention a time or incident that was thrilling, but expressed it in a long sentence form. Then, the teacher suggested that if these sentences were narrowed down to a briefer and more attractive form, perhaps many good titles for themes could be worked out. Immediately, the class saw the possibilities and produced a list of twenty-eight "catchy" titles for theme writing.

The teacher followed this up in this way: "Would you like to talk for about two minutes on some one of these topics--one
you especially like? Indeed they would; the principle of getting a student full of his subject was in operation. And so, without using technical language at all, we were learning to select suitable material for short talks; learning to condense, to limit, and to compose suitable titles."


It was impossible to locate this article, although the aid of several university libraries was employed.


Because of a complaint that composition in high school had no basic subject-matter of value, Dr. Charles Gaston of the Theodore Roosevelt High School of New York City devised "a plan for teaching composition by centering the work of the entire class for eight or nine weeks around a large subject of general interest to all."

In an exhibit of 1931, there were shown one hundred and twenty-five class books produced from using this plan and that testifies as to its success.

First-term work was represented by narration. One such book was titled, "The Freshman in Theodore Roosevelt High School," and it contained a collection of stories based on actual experiences.

Second-term books were descriptive and based on the general topic, "Environment." A typical book in this class was called, "Concerning Our Homes," and it consisted of five chapters.
Third-term work dealt with topics concerning the surrounding community—its industries, museums, libraries, parks, zoos, etc.

Fourth-term books were books on travel, describing trips throughout the United States, or books on vocations, sometimes books on prominent citizens.

Fifth-term work was given over to the study of newspapers and magazines, with discussion of authors, editors, policies of and establishment of the newspaper or magazine.

Sixth-term classes wrote short stories, and others studied and wrote about books and authors.

Seventh-term work grew more serious, working in the field of debate and argument.

Eighth-term students chose "ambitious topics of cultural value," such as a book on India, another was "Subjects of Interest (Hobbies); In the Realm of Books."

In the neighborhood of this high school, there was a junior high that specialized in book-binding; so these productions of the Theodore Roosevelt School were sent there to be bound. Real books were turned out.

Any reader will easily recognize that in the subject-matter suggested for the different terms of work the "Seven Cardinal Principles" have been kept in mind by the teacher guiding the students.

The method of procedure used in this kind of composition work is to have the class decide on a subject for a book, and then outline divisions of the subject that must be studied and later written upon. The entire plan and divisions of the book are outlined so that every student knows exactly what his own job is toward the production of the completed whole. The
teacher suggest methods of collecting information, how to
organize and arrange it, use of libraries, of interviews, etc.

Many good uses can be found for these books after they are
produced. Some were sent to hospitals, Homes for the blind,
social service centers, etc., thereby encouraging the students
to produce good books, and, at the same time, developing some
social contacts for them.

27. Grossman, M. F., "Interview as Composition Material," English

All teachers feel the drudgery of the old method in compo-
sition work and desire a more interesting and fruitful way of
doing it.

An introductory lesson in reading and discussing a group of
interviews that were assigned, will bring out interest in the
class, as well as, valuable criticism of the methods and rules
followed by the interviewer. Immediately following this will
come questions as to form, punctuation, choice of words, etc.
Then it is that the teacher can begin to teach the rules of
grammar as the need and interest of the students show a demand
for help, all the time giving them assignments that will in-
corporate the rules that have been agreed upon.

Keep the interest of the class growing by having them search
out interview material in newspapers, etc.; then in class dis-
cussion let them contrast and compare, and question as to best
usage and form, until a set of rules can be formulated. After
this, let them practice it in writing up imaginary interviews of
their own.

Soon this type of work will include oral English. Then
many new phases of good English can be brought before the class
for discussion, and rules may be formulated as the need presents itself. In connection with this side of composition, arrange for a student to have a personal interview with a particular person, always trying to consider the individual personality of the student as nearly as possible. Valuable results accrue to such interviews as they not only teach lessons in good oral English, but also give splendid lessons in the development of poise and social etiquette, and psychologically, they start the child upon the road of weaning himself from childish dependence.

Following interviews, a discussion of the experiences in class, for the benefit of those who have to make interviews later, is a choice lesson in oral English. The students, being totally unaware of the purpose behind such discussions, will respond with interest and spontaneity.

Later, demand a written explanation of the personal interview. The returns will show you how interested the pupils have been as well as how diligently they have tried to make it as nearly perfect as they had learned how. Even the dullest pupil's paper will show something of value--interest and effort. This method will become adventure for both teacher and pupil, taking "drudgery" out of teaching and learning composition.


Every teacher of composition desires to receive themes that incorporate both imagination and fancy, along with technical perfection, yet they seldom come to her hands that way.

Here is a little device that proves rather successful both for younger and older students. Write upon the board two columns of words, thirteen in each column; more or less could
be used depending upon the length of theme you desire. Call the attention of the class to these words, reading them off so there will be no mistake as to what the words are. Give the following directions: Write a story of thirteen sentences using these words. In the first sentence, use the first words in both columns. It makes no difference which word is used first, but always be sure to use words under number one in your first sentence, words under number two in your second sentence, etc. throughout your story.

Another vital point in your story is to make it interesting by using your imagination, and at the same time I want the theme to be correct in punctuation. So watch carefully each sentence. Do not leave a sentence until you are certain you have it punctuated correctly; then go on to the next, doing likewise to each sentence before starting another. Don't change the words in any way, such as making nouns plural or verbs a different tense and so on. Final directions are: Write a story using these words and your imagination, and at the same time watch carefully your punctuation. It is to be finished at the close of the period, now go to work.

This device has brought splendid results and never fails to interest pupils.


The subject of English in our high school programs has been sadly neglected; that is, it has not been given its proper ranking. Just the English teacher, using perhaps forty-five minutes a day, has tried to maintain a standard of good English for the high
school student. Other departments have given no help in preserving good usage of the mother-tongue. This article is directed at "those who, for sundry reasons, have forsaken their first duty as professional instructors and teachers by their failure to inculcate, improve, and perfect, insofar as it is humanly possible, the habits of standard English usage among those who are entrusted to them for instruction."

It is every teacher's duty, regardless of his subject, "to create and maintain a compelling English environment in our high schools." Because of this, there needs to be developed a cooperative plan of procedure so that every department will know its duties in regard to furthering good usage of English.

A plan suggested by Edith E. Shepperd, in the School Review of Oct., 1926, in her article, "The Attitude of Junior High School Pupils toward English Usage," is a good scheme for securing the cooperation of other departments with the English department. The following devices were suggested:

"(a) Sending papers from science, geography, art, and other classes to the English room for practice material.

(b) Using such papers in addition to English papers as a basis for securing evidence of pupil needs and pupil progress, and making sure that pupils know that their papers are being so used.

(c) Encouraging pupil to be interested in matters of usage in general and in their own problems in particular.

(d) Encouraging pupils to ask for help in matters that puzzle them—for example, in correcting mistakes marked by teachers of other subjects.

(e) Giving publicity to every phase of cooperation,
encouraging and commending it at every opportunity.

(f) Encouraging and commending efforts at self-correction as the prime evidence of approaching mastery, the goal of effort.

(g) Maintaining favorable writing and speaking conditions in other classrooms, especially:

(1) Time to write without haste.

(2) Time and encouragement to proof-read all papers.

(3) Requirement of no more than a reasonable amount of written work.

(4) Clear consciousness in pupils that careless or slovenly work will not be accepted by the teacher."

The English bulletin also emphasizes the need of cooperation on the part of all teachers in the high school toward maintaining a high standard of English usage in all classes, both in recitations and in written work, regardless of the department subject. Its recommendations are repeated here:

"In Oral Work in all Classes:

1. Insist on clear speaking. The student should stand erect, with head up, and speak with sufficient clearness to be understood in all parts of the room.

2. Insist on exactness. Require that the answer match the specific question asked.

3. Insist on full answers. Resist the temptation to accept piecemeal replies."
4. Insist on correctness.

In Written Work of all Classes:

1. Require the uniform heading (which should be agreed upon by the faculty).

2. Insist on neatness in both handwriting and arrangement.

3. Require correct spelling, not only of words in your subject, but of all common English words.

4. Insist on clear sentence structure. The student must exercise the same care in his other writing that the English teacher exacts in his themes.

5. Require such punctuation as will make the sentence clear at a single reading, especially the proper use of the period and the question mark.

6. Reject summarily all reports, papers, and notebooks obviously deficient in the elements of decent English and good form previously mentioned."

When complete cooperation on the part of all teachers in all departments becomes a reality, then the correct English environment will prevail in the school. English teachers are not wishing to shirk their duties nor burden other departments, yet they feel and know that every teacher must demand good usage of English in oral and written work in their individual departments if the student is really to gain much lasting benefit from his English class. Since in practically all classes, he must speak and write in the English language, it should be demanded by all teachers that he practice good usage of the mother-tongue.
The pupil-chairman project has been found valuable in arousing the interest of pupils in creative writing. The original purpose of the plan was to bring before the class all the material related to our English work that we could find, and also to encourage creative writing.

The teacher would appoint a pupil as chairman in each class to act for one week. At the beginning of the period, he was given ten minutes to present his own findings and to call on members who had volunteered some help. The chairman was given the teacher's plans for the week and then he organized his procedure accordingly. The success of a chairman depended largely upon whether he had the ability to get other members to cooperate and contribute material. If a composition was asked for, it always came at the beginning of the period so that interest would not be lost, and so that contributions might be received from pupils that had not been assigned any definite work.

"Another suggestion for arousing interest in creative writing is to read to the class several poems that might make them think of some experience of their own." Then, they were asked to write a sentence telling what picture, or thought, or impression the poem brought to their minds. They were to express themselves as vividly as possible in these sentences, so that all members of the class would comprehend what they tried to portray.

These sentences then would be collected and the best ones read to the class. Following this, the poem would be read again
and the pupils would be asked to write titles for poems or sketches of their own. These were discussed, grouped, and limited to one definite idea or picture.

Next in order was a discussion of types of poetry, mainly "noticing the number of beats to a line and various methods of rhyming." Once in a while, the class would attempt a group poem.

"Keeping classbooks of the best creative writing also increased the interest of the class in attempting original writing of their own." There were two types of classbooks, one for creative poetry, and another for creative prose. Pupils were very proud of classbooks. These books serve as stimulation and encouragement to classes that follow.

It is more difficult to select essays that will produce interest in the pupils. Ones will have to be chosen that have as their basis, topics that are within the experiences of the pupils. It is best in this type of work to narrow down the scope of work, telling the pupils to write upon one experience only, presenting it as vividly and concretely as possible. As in the poetry work, read to the class some of the best essays, pointing out why they are the best. In this way, they will learn "to improve their prose technique."

Another way of stimulating creative writing is "to give them a list of words and ask them to write what these words make them think of."

About the best length of time for intensive creative work is a period or unit of two weeks. This is difficult to arrange oftentimes because of the English program and requirement, but it is an important phase of English work and should be allowed
time for development.

"Guidance is an important feature of the creative writing class, for even if a person does not become a successful writer, he is richer for the training he has had in it."

A scrapbook should be kept in which poems and short prose selections, brought by the pupils as good models, will be included. Only the best should be included, yet each contribution should be discussed as to its merits. In this way, the teacher gives guidance in the developing of the pupils' judgment.

"This method of approach to creative writing by means of 'presenting' carefully selected poems and sketches" to classes is one that could be used with higher adult classes very successfully. The author is working on such a plan.

"In this method of approach to creative writing by putting before the pupil the very best art, the artist's work speaks for itself, and arouses in others the desire to create. It is this impulse to create which leads to new adventures in the field of creative writing."


With the right kind of guidance on the part of the teacher, students will rarely fail in bringing forth good material from personal interviews.

Three suggested preliminaries which teachers should always keep before them in preparing students for coming interviews are:

"(1) A clear aim in the teacher's mind; (2) a spreading forth of possibilities before the writers; (3) early suggestions at the hands of fellow-students or the teacher after the piece is
The teacher should know within herself what kind of resultant piece of work she considers acceptable. In order to bring about her cherished ideals, she must use skill in "dealing out appetizing subjects," ones that will produce interest and enthusiasm in her students, so that they will wish to write out their thoughts and experiences.

Many topics that heretofore we scorned as not worthy of recognition, now are being used and developed in the composition class. Speaking and writing upon such items as, "definitions, introductions of persons, directions for finding places or for doing work, notices for bulletins, plans for club meetings," are becoming the vogue in many a composition class, and much splendid composition work is resulting, not to mention the social etiquette that is being learned by the younger generation.

There should always be a place in the program of composition where the teacher prepares her students for future writing by the means of reading to them good examples of types of writing, and a place for the discussion of these and other topics that the students suggest for their own work. This procedure always lays a firm foundation from which students can then fare forth with some self-confidence, for then they are somewhat prepared—at least, they know where they are headed and are not groping in the dark.

Criticism of written and oral composition, both by the teacher and the fellow-students, is a splendid test-out of composition work. Read the composition to the class and let them offer criticism and suggestion. This brings about many fruitful results for future composition material and the presentation thereof.
III. INDEX TO DIGESTS

Below is a general classification of the topics of the digests. By using the classification titles, a teacher can easily locate any particular subject-matter about which he wishes to read. The authors discussing that subject are listed under the general title with the page reference opposite the name, so that the material can readily be found in the body of the digest section. Also the digest number is given with each author's name.

Teaching and Learning the Mechanics or Skills in English

Camenisch, S. C., ..... Number 2 ...............12
(Includes chart of proposed program)
Clem, O. M., ..... Number 19 .................39
Greene, H. A., ..... Number 16 .................36
Pressey, L. W., ..... Number 12 .................30
Symonds, P. M., and Hinton, E. M., .....Number 14...33

Examinations and Tests in English

Rigg, M., ..... Number 18 .....................39
Thomas, C. S., ..... Number 3 ..................16
Thomas, C. S., ..... Number 8 ..................23

Composition Ability and its Relation
to Mental Ability

Loomis, C. P., and Moran, A. M., .....Number 20...42
Creative Writing in English

Cook, L. E., ..... Number 5 .......................19
Herzberg, M. J., ..... Number 17 ...............37
Wright, M., ..... Number 30 .......................60

Composition Possibilities in the Literature Class and Cooperation of Other Departments

Kilgore, S. E., ..... Number 29 .......................56
Greenland, H. C., ..... Number 13 ...............31
Thorpe, C. D., ..... Number 15 .......................34

Socializing Phases in the Composition Class

Hatfield, W. W., ..... Number 6 .......................20
Johnson, R. I., ..... Number 7 .......................22
Rand, H., ..... Number 21 .......................45
Rand, H., ..... Number 23 .......................48

The Place of Criticism in Composition

Marks, P., ..... Number 11 .......................29

Expression of Pupils' Ideas and Interests and Their Relation to Developing Theme Topics

Coleman, J. H., ..... Number 10 .......................27
Grossman, M. F., ..... Number 27 .......................54
Iser, M., ..... Number 24 .......................49
Both of Professor R. L. Lyman's articles, Numbers 1 and 4, give summaries of numerous investigations that would fall under the classification headings made in this index; and, as his articles are not digested in this study, the author refers every reader wishing especially fine and thorough discussion of almost any English composition problem to Lyman's own summary articles.

W. Blair's article, Number 25, could not be located.
IV. APPENDIX

Authorities Who Furnished Usable Material for the Research

1. Professor W. Barnes
   New York University

2. Professor E. C. Beck
   Michigan Central State Teachers College

3. Mr. J. J. De Boer
   Assistant Editor of English Journal

4. Mr. H. C. Hill
   Laboratory Schools
   University of Chicago

5. Professor B. L. Jefferson
   University of Illinois

6. Professor Ida A. Jewett
   Columbia University

7. Professor R. L. Lyman
   Chicago University

8. Professor H. G. Paul
   University of Illinois
9. Professor C. S. Pendleton
   George Peabody College for Teachers

10. Miss Helen Rand
    Evanston Township High School

11. Mr. H. D. Roberts
    Harrison High School
    Harrison, New York

12. Professor C. S. Thomas
    Harvard University

13. Miss Ruth M. Weeks
    Paseo High School
    Kansas City
X. = Those articles which were marked, yet discarded from the final digest list because the material incorporated did not deal strictly with the topic of the research. Articles dealing with elementary, junior high, or college work, and ones that stressed grammar, literature, or oral composition alone were discarded.

0 = All articles that received no markings whatever.

All articles that have no mark in this bibliography are the articles that were used in the research problem since they applied strictly to the topic of the study.


( ) Blair, W., "Individualization of Instruction in English Composition," (In Institute Proceedings for administrative officers of higher institutions) pp. 125-131, 1932.


( ) Herzberg, M. J., "Creative Writing in Prose,"

( ) Hirschman, M. L., "Units of Remedial Work in Written
   Composition," Baltimore Board of Education,

( ) Hohn, M. T., "Vital Subjects for Composition,"

( ) Iser, M., "Knowledge through Enjoyment," Chicago

( ) Johnson, R. I., "Functional Centers of Expression,"
   English Journal, (H. S. & Col. ed.), Vol. 21,
   pp. 275-280, April, 1932.

( ) Kerr, M., "Now We Love to Write Stories," School,

( ) Kilgore, S. E., "Creating and Maintaining a Compelling
   English Environment in the High School,"

( ) Kinnick, C., "Composition, Teacher's Nightmare,"


( O ) McQueen, R. J., "Standards in Middle School English Composition," School, Vol. 20, pp. 730-733, April, 1932.


( O ) Parker, F. E., "Teaching Composition to the Low I. Q.'s," Junior - Senior H. S. Clearing House, Vol. 6, pp. 43-44, Sept., 1931.


( ) Thomas, J. E., "Elimination of Technical Errors in Written Composition through Formal Drill," University of Iowa, 1932.


( ) Tuttle, F. F., "Modern Objectives in English; with Special References on Teaching Composition," Grade Teacher, Vol. 48, p. 461, Feb., 1931.

