



From the Editors

The New York City Writing Project today is different from the Project of 1978. Years of monthly meetings, presentations at conferences, in-service workshops, retreats and publications like this one have revolutionized our thoughts and actions. We should think of ourselves as being in the tradition of Tom Paine and Walt Whitman, as people seeking truth through discussion and democracy.

The Project is often referred to as a model of professional development. Our experiences with it over the years are part of our ongoing learning process. We have come together and grown through the experience of writing, enjoying ourselves as teachers among teachers while learning that creating a unique form of professionalism is exhilarating. We want to avoid becoming stagnant, hackneyed, cliched, and worse still, an institution seen as having the answers like a textbook. Now, after all of the time we have shared writing, reading, talking, and listening to one another, we have decided, individually and collectively, that we're ready for change. But this change cannot occur without our thoughts, time, contributions. As we should know, revision is hard work.

It's the end of another year for the Project, and time now to trumpet some of our successes. In the middle of things, we often forget what there is to celebrate and be proud of. This year we had a total of ten series of in-service workshops, including our very first forays into Brooklyn and Queens high schools. There were ongoing meetings of the elementary school teachers group. A number of Project members participated in major city, state, and national writing conferences. For the second year in a row, there was a Project retreat to discuss where we've

been and where we're going. Also for the second time, there will be an advanced seminar to extend the knowledge of Project members. All in all, it has been a wonderful, productive year.

What else? Wistfulness. A mixture of happiness tinged with bright tears. Sondra Perl and Richard Sterling are taking leaves as directors of the Project. Sondra has received a Guggenheim Fellowship and needs time to write; Richard is taking on a new position as Executive Director of the Literacy Assistance Center, Inc. Then, too, Marcie Wolfe, an original participant from the summer of '78, possessor of one of the first New York City Writing Project tee shirts, and associate director of the Writing Teachers Consortium, leaves her position as an associate director of the Project to become a director of programs for the Literacy Assistance Center. Sondra, Marcie, and Richard will still be with us, but in different roles. Their "farewell" is not goodbye; it means "go far," "live well."

Don Gallehr, Director of the Northern Virginia Writing Project, says, "We write. That is truly who we are." Enjoy the summer. Write a novel or a postcard. Or a letter to the editors. Catch up on books. The New York Times Book Review thinks you should read--if you feel like it. We'll see you in September. When the summer's through.

Michael Simon, Literacy Center
Toby Bird, Nassau Community College

Colleagues

It was September of 1967. "Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band" had been issued that summer and by then everyone knew what "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds" really meant. Anti-Vietnam demonstrations were becoming more virulent and by that winter lighted candles in windows would bind together neighboring strangers. Simon and Garfunkel's "Mrs. Robinson" dominated the air waves and plastics was on everyone's lips. Two major assassinations were on the not too distant horizon; by April, Senator Kennedy poignantly mourned King's; by June, a heat-oppressed line shaking through St. Patrick's was mourning his.

Me? I was moving into my first apartment--a studio atop a five floor walk-up on Manhattan's not quite fashionable West Side. I was busy trying to coordinate eggs, bacon, toast and coffee and learning all about the myriad uses of chopped chuck. The demystification of the stick-shift on a '58 Volkswagon as my principal goal after realizing that hills couldn't be avoided indefinitely. I was also beginning a career.

I loved the anonymity Manhattan offered, but the Bronx was still not ready to release its grip. I was assigned to District 9, covering a portion of what had not as yet been labelled the South Bronx.

"Junior High School 145, 145th Street and Third Avenue, 2 math, 3 science, 4 English, who wants to go?"

The room at district headquarters was overflowing with youthful recruits, scrubbed and polished: the only things missing were packed trunks, name tags and buses to cart us off to camp. Rather, we were parceled out like so much fish into the arms of awaiting schools. Keep it moving, keep it moving!

"How do I get there?"

"What kind of a school is it?"

"What type of program could I expect to teach there?"

The questions bubbled out of anxious faces usually ignored, occasionally told:

"That's all I know. You want to go, go. You want to stay and wait, stay and wait."

"Junior High School 117, 175th Street and the Grand Concourse. 2 French, 3 English, 4 social studies, who wants to go?"

Like most of my major life decisions this one was frivolously made. I had earlier on spotted an attractive girl I decided that where she goes, I shall go as well. I would later blame Virginia for not making a better choice.

I was 23 years old, fresh out of the Intensive Teachers Training Program at New York University, completely unaware of, unprepared for what I was to meet within the hallowed halls of Junior High School 22 on 167th Street and Morris Avenue in the Bronx. Mickey, Jean, Virginia, Harry, Joe, Bill, and I held each other together. My program was the bottom of the worst, my classes located in the building's darkest recesses during the time of student over-crowding and teacher shortage. Chaos reigned throughout the school and within my classes. I look back wondering how I survived. My youth was a key factor, but more important were my colleagues who were also fresh fodder for this battlefield of a school.

Most of us lived on the West Side and in the mornings I would, in my Volkswagon, pick each one up at appointed stops and drop each one off in the early evening. The laughter, the jokes, the seething frustration, even the tears that occurred within those rattling confines allowed us all to somehow make it through. Gatherings were planned, dinners out, movies, weekend walks; Virginia and I even fell in love for a while.

Sixteen Septembers have followed since then. That year of 1967-1968 is well behind me. I've learned most of the harsh lessons it had to teach. The others--Virginia, Jean, Joe, Bill, et al-- have subsequently left, left New York, left teaching, left each other, and, despite early tenuous attempts to remain, left my life.

They were the "best" and the "brightest." If it can be said with any accuracy that one loves a group of people, then I loved them with their youth, their enthusiasm, their hope. I wonder how they'd react to, how they'd feel about, the fact that I'm still here--17 years of teaching. What would their estimation be of me? What would mine be of them? Would we be able to cut through the awkwardness of the moment and reach back to what we were and to what we had before?

The opportunity doubtlessly and perhaps fortunately will not arise.

John Browne
H.S. of Art and Design

Diary of a Writing Unit

1/3/84 (1st period, 1st term English)

I'm a little nervous. This morning I started the lesson plan, Persuasive Essay. I announced to class, first make a list of people they know. "How long?" Ginny wanted to know--(I don't know). My nervousness dissipated as the students got into it. "As long or short a list as you want to," I coached. They took about 5 minutes to finish. Next, list any bad or destructive habits each person may have. "Like my mother yells a lot?" "Exactly," I answered smiling, "go to it..." Next, some of the students read their answers aloud. Here's a partial sample from one list: Mother-- nosy; Father-- trouble-maker; Boyfriend-- brags a lot; Cousin Terry-- stuck-up; Maria-- eats too much; Tasha-- "Hot Mama" (trouble-maker, it turns out, upon clarification). Other "bad" habits--

"cuts a lot," "butts in," "smokes," "drinks," "drugs." We voted on one we'd like to act out-- "gossip" won. I played the gossip and Renee tried to convince me to stop. She mostly told me to stop when I went on and on how I saw this person with that, doing this and that. I asked Renee to step out-of-role and give some reasons for people to stop gossiping, and then go back into character--which she did: it could be harmful to another person's reputation and also to my self-respect for spreading rumors. We also did a role play on the disadvantages of taking drugs. Then, I asked the girls to pick out one person from their lists and write a letter, persuading the person to give up the bad habit (first, describing the reasons why it's bad) and how to give it up as well. Can't wait to read the letters tonight.

There was only about 15 minutes left in the period for the girls to start writing their letters, but they wrote animatedly until the bell (and several of them after the bell).

1/3/84 (8th period, 1st termers)

The motivation worked well again. Sample from one list: Brother-- sneaky and lies about it; Grandfather-- eats too much; Al (age 11)-- too much drugs; Carlos (16)-- spies on people; John (14)-- drugs; Wilma-- nosy; Olga-- likes to make fun of people; Eddy-- hands like to wander....

This time we took a poll of recurrent bad habits: drugs (4); smoking (6); alcohol (4); over-eating (8); gossip (8); cheating (3).

We role-played two of the situations-- drug abuse and alcohol abuse. This time I encouraged side-coaching from the "audience" (the class) on the reasons. Tricia was able to give some good reasons for stopping (screws up the mind; could lead to crime; destroys life). Everyone enjoyed the role-playing and hopefully, the scenes sparked ideas for their letters. Then, as in period 1, I asked the girls to write a letter to one of the people on their lists. I clarified

the assignment on the board: "Write a letter to a person on your list. Tell the person what he/she is doing wrong, and why it's wrong. Advise the person on how he or she can stop."

The girls wrote fast and furiously for about eight minutes. They clearly wanted more time. I mentioned that they'd have all period tomorrow to continue. I read over some of the first drafts from Period 1. Most were short, of course, but some as long as two pages. And many were written with quality from the heart. No wonder, when they have decided whom they'd like to write to. Most, obviously, did not get to the persuasive part, but I look forward to the continuation of their essays and the revision process.

I should mention that for the first time in all my teaching of English at Washington Irving H.S., I did not use red pencil/ink to comment on the papers. I used pencil, and I did not edit for punctuation. I will do that in the near final drafts.

I read over the first period letters. Since there was more time to write, the students were able to get more down. Some of the essays were profoundly heart-felt and personal, such as one girl's plea to her boyfriend to help assume responsibility for their baby.

I wrote phrases of encouragement on all the papers and such specific comments as "good reasons--can you think of two more and expand on them?" "What are other ways Tony acts like a child, and what can he do in the future to change his ways?" "How can she change, etc., etc". It will be interesting to see if the students can expand on the reasons and truly be persuasive in helping people they know (and care about) change their behavior. We shall see.

1/4/84 (second period, 1st termers)

Tried the lesson plan on Persuasive Essay again, and it worked like a charm. I'm getting more confident with the

success of the other two classes. Lingered more on the role-playing. Had a lot of fun with it, so did the girls. Role-played a person who can't give up smoking (me!). I took a few minutes to explain how I kicked the habit in real life. Grace really went to town giving reasons why I (playing the character) should give it up. An exciting class discussion ensued on how to kick the habit--all the way from chewing gum to Smokers Anonymous to "cold turkey." Then the girls were asked to write the first draft of their letters. I'll read them tonight.

1/4/84 (third period, first termers)

This is my most difficult class, and the one that has been the most successful so far with this lesson. The girls simply loved to make the lists, and were quite careful in describing their friends' bad habits. They got very involved in the role-playing, doing three spirited scenes and-- surprise! Toward the end of the period at least five girls wanted their peers to hear out loud what they had written so far, even though they were rough drafts. Latasha turned to Shirley, "You just gotta listen to this! Please!"

1/5/84

I've had a chance to read the first drafts of all the letters now. For the most part, they're really quite spirited. In previous years, the girls struggled with this assignment. With this experience, it appears the inner motivation carried them through (also, the announcement of the contest for Most Interesting Letter, Letter with the Biggest Heart, etc., etc.).

The letters varied greatly in subject matter. There were those dealing with betrayed friendships, advice to old boy-friends and to loved ones/friends on giving up smoking, drinking, and drugs. The letters also covered such topics as cutting school, overeating, bragging, gossiping and knowing-it-all.

I noticed that, when entrusted to their own inner resources, the girls would greatly improve upon each re-write or revision; and it wasn't merely a matter of editing but, often, restructuring--as did Susan when she wrote to a friend to give up both smoking and drugs. She started with one reason (body being destroyed) and then in a subsequent draft added two more good ones (eg., "for sake of others--future children"). And this from a girl who almost dumped her earlier draft in the class waste paper basket!

Other girls changed or modified their feelings in subsequent drafts. For example, Ellen wrote a heartrending plea to the father of her child to be more responsible. Her last paragraph of a first draft reads, in part: "Being with your friends now is something that you should not be doing and when you do something you're no (sic) supposed to, you end up in trouble." Signed: "Used to love you."

In the next draft received several days later, she wrote in the last paragraph: "Alvin, if you come back I'll help you. It's O-K. It'll be alright, just come back, you'll be O-K. I cry a lot, yes, but to me that just makes it a little easier to handle. Alvin, it's O-K to cry. Just come back." Signed: "Wanting to help you."

Talk about writing as a thinking and re-thinking tool!

So many of the letters were filled with love and caring, but with more and more writing, the feelings found form and half-articulated thoughts found pointed (and often poignant) expression: "I know you are 23 years old, and you're free to do anything you want but me, the 14-year-old girl wants you to stop or get in a program." "I know I'm not your mother nor a psychiatrist to give you advice, but I'm worried about you."

One of my favorites from an extremely shy girl from the Islands:

Dear President Reagan:

Our country, United States of America, is in bad condition. We poor are getting poorer and the rich getting richer. What kind of life is that?

Things are supposed to get better not worse. That's a very wrong image how the poor people feel about the crisis of being poorer. You must change your tune because we want to live in peace and better our lives. All money goes to war equipment, not human beings!...You don't understand because the life you're living is pure luxury, not so us. You may think you're doing good, come to visit the real world. Think!

We worked together fixing up her grammar and such, but not until the basic feeling was out, expressed and expanded in her voice. And Christiana sensed my enthusiasm and care about her work. It's great when the feeling is mutual.

I look forward to further revisions and the reading of the letters--and to trying more of these kinds of exercises and experiences in my English and Theatre classes next term.

Milt Polsky
Washington Irving H.S.

In My Mother's Classroom

It was an enormous green-grey classroom with high ceilings, suspended white globe lights, and large green noisy radiators near the windows. On the window sills of my mother's classroom grew an array of experiments: potatoes, carrot-tops, beans, cactus and non-descript green plants. Usually the milk and cookies were there too, until mid-morning snack. I particularly liked the small chocolate chip ones with a swirl pattern. I'd never seen such a big box of cookies and ten o'clock wouldn't come soon enough. It was my favorite time of day.

My mother always wore stout school-teacher shoes with thick heels and laces, and a smock with pockets. Sometimes she wore a whistle around her neck which always embarrassed me when she blew it.

I remember when she used to say, "Class, stand!" and everyone would face the flag and salute. She would then lead the class in "America the Beautiful." It was the only time I ever heard her sing and it was an indication of how different this place was.

Her teacher's closet was always filled with her stuff, and a bottle of cologne which she kept there because she smoked then and was conscious of the cigarette smell. Above the closet were large cardboard samples of Palmer Method handwriting, yellowing around the edges with age.

At lunchtime we'd eat in the teachers' room, a dark, stuffy lounge with an enormous white wicker chair. It was so big I was dwarfed by it, but I sat on it anyway because the cushion was soft. Across from this was a high teacher's chair, with a platform for feet. It was the most amazing chair I'd ever seen. The nuns didn't have any of them so I assumed only public schools could use them.

The best part of lunch was being sent to the luncheonette on the corner for a cream cheese and jelly sandwich on white bread. The bread was always so soft and squishy; the jelly thickly spread. Mom never made such a sandwich, as even then I was "chubby" and allowed indulgences only on special occasions. I never understood why I got a pickle in the waxed paper, attributing it to some sort of ritual I was too young to know about.

These days at my mother's school were usually parochial school holidays, and I'd accompany her to class when I was too young to stay home alone. She taught third and fourth grade, so I often sat in on the reading groups. The children accepted me and sometimes we'd laugh and mother would have to correct us. It was strange to have a teacher-mother at those times.

These children were from poor families. The loving stories I heard about them were part of my childhood: Billy, who wore his brother's huge sneakers, or Robert, who couldn't read until my mother told him he was a smart boy, the extra coat we'd give to a poor child. And looking back on it, I can easily see a pattern. I hadn't realized until now how much my life paralleled hers, how much those early memories meant to me. I may not wear a smock, or whistle, or stout shoes, but my mother's blood runs through my veins.

And on their school holidays, my children come with me to school.

Susan Bartolone
John F. Kennedy H.S.

Insight

Marlene Harding, a teacher participating in the Writing Teachers Consortium, experimented in her classroom by writing a piece for her students to use as a model for their own writing. Here is an excerpt from her evaluation of the experiment:

. . . I feel pleased with the results. It is gratifying to observe the extent to which these remedial students grasped the concept of revision and were able to use it. They are still somewhat slapdash and, alternately, hesitant by nature about their writing, and, especially, about revising, but it is rewarding to see how much they love their own writing and are proud of their hard work and accomplishment in process. Of course there is still much room for improvement in all aspects of student writing. I think further practice will produce added improvement in their comprehension and writing. Frankly, I respect them more now, because I see that they can produce good stuff; I respect their imagination, their insight and their honesty and I think they have gained more insight into and respect for each other and for me as their teacher.

I was surprised at the students' receptivity in responding to my model. I told a true story. I think the palpable authenticity of the teacher-model writing dramatized the aim and instructional objective of the lesson for my students. I will not hesitate to use teacher/model writing in future lessons.

The students were so eager to read and study and criticize each other's writing that I know I will use teams, whether it's partners or groups, again. This is the third time I've tried such peer-pedagogy and each time it gets a little better. This is not to say that it leaves me out. I as the teacher am still present, but more as a resource person and model and less as an authority figure.

Marlene Harding
Washington Irving H.S.

Short Films for Writing Classes

As I complete my tenth year of teaching-Film Appreciation, I am still surprised at the small number of teachers who use this dynamic medium in their classrooms. True, the projectors are heavy and temperamental, and the glamour of film study has faded in the wake of computers, video, and the demands of back-to-basics curricula. However, in the students' eyes, movies are still spell-binding: you can feel the electricity in the air when the lights go off, the bulb goes on and the countdown on screen begins. Films are not passe. They provide immediate motivation, galvanizing your brightest and slowest students, uniting them to focus on one subject that they will be eager to discuss as soon as the lights are back on. And youngsters are remarkably tolerant of new films: whether silent or subtitled, a good movie will hold an audience in its spell and open new doors of perception. For the teacher of writing, films should be a welcome companion. They provide a break from the rigors of mastering difficult skills and a power-

ful springboard to vivid personal feelings and observations.

Here is a list of short films that have worked well in my classroom. Of course, the longer, feature-length films can also be highly effective, but short films are especially valuable since they allow time for a brief introduction and a discussion or writing assignment immediately after the film is over. Also, the films described below are all free. They may be borrowed from public libraries, such as the Donnell Library (20 West 53rd Street) as long as you book them at least one month in advance and specify that the films are for your personal use. Besides providing a summary and the approximate running time for each film, I have also assigned symbols in the margin for the subject teacher who might find that film useful: E=English; H=History; A=Art; S=Science; and F=Foreign Languages.

- A,E. 1. The Andalusian Dog (Un Chien Andalou) 15 minutes. This surrealist classic of Luis Bunuel and Salvador Dali breaks every tradition of silent film-making: its eyeball-slashing scene still shocks us. Its free-floating story line is still mysterious and tantalizing.

Uses: Writing involving free association, or symbolism, stream of consciousness; a historical introduction to modern art, surrealism, dadaism.

- E 2. Boiled Egg 5 minutes. A short, quasi-science fiction tale of an egg who rebels against restrictions (he even breaks the camera lens!) until the egg cup catches up with him.

Uses: Analyzing symbolism; writing involving themes of conformity; personifying inanimate objects.

- E,F 3. The Chicken (Le Poulet) 15 minutes. A light French comedy about a young boy who saves his pet chicken by outsmarting his parents.
- Uses: Contrasting French culture with ours; narrative essays on deceiving parents or attachment to pets.
- E,A 4. Closed Mondays 8 minutes. Magnificent clay animation with a Twilight Zone ending. A drunk enters a museum, grows more and more sympathetic towards the paintings and ends up a sculpture himself!
- Uses: Motivation for young artists - the need to empathize, to "become" a work of art yourself, not to reject what you don't understand.
- E 5. Cops 15 minutes. Buster Keaton's comedy of errors leading to a monumental chase: Buster vs. the entire police force!
- Uses: Writing on alienation/existentialism. Ms. Spielberg successfully used it for its parallels with Meursault's experiences in Camus' The Stranger.
- E,A 6. The Critic 5 minutes. A Carl Reiner skit: we see abstract art on screen, while a raspy "critic" questions its validity and in the process, makes a fool of himself. Teaches openmindedness.
- Uses: Introduction to modern art, writing of ironic monologues where speaker unknowingly reveals his ignorance.
- E,F,
H,A 7. The Day Manolete Was Killed 20 minutes. Extremely powerful documentary of the matador's tragic death, emphasizing Manolete's nobility and the deadly effect of the pressure of public opinion on a "superstar."
- Uses: Spanish culture, narrative power of still photography, script writing. Writing about sports - the consequences of being "number one".
- E,A 8. Dream of Wild Horses 8 minutes. A slow-motion film poem of graceful horses running through water and fire.
- Uses: Writing of poetry, free association in journals, symbolism. Good motivation for surrealistic illustrations.
- E,H 9. Easy Street 20 minutes. My favorite Chaplin short. Easy Street is the roughest street in town - a perfect microcosm of every big city problem of 1917 and 1984. Chaplin reforms the street and makes us laugh at society on the verge of moral chaos.
- Uses: Writing about neighborhoods, analyses of humor with sadness below the surface. History: Corruption of city life, capitalism. Science: Analogy to Darwin's Survival of the Fittest idea.
- E,A 10. Hardware Wars 10 minutes. A delightful parody of Star Wars, guaranteed to raise smiles in the class.
- Uses: Parodies of popular films or TV series, similar to Mad Magazine's "A Mad Look at _____" spoof of a current serious show.
- E 11. Help! My Snowman's Burning Down! 10 minutes. A Monty Python-type skit involving a man in a bath-

room without walls trying desperately to maintain his privacy and sanity.

Uses: Absurdist sketches, narratives on big city helplessness, comic essays on the theme, "No Man is an Island."

- E,F, 12. La Jete 20 minutes. French science fiction using still photographs, posing the question: can we turn back time and change it?
A,H
- Uses: "Time Machine" - style stories, power of still photography, clear spoken French, all by a voice-over narrator with subtitles, theme of nuclear power misused by fascist government.
- E,H 13. Jade Snow Wong 30 minutes. Originally on Channel 13, the true story of a Chinese girl desperately trying to gain the approval of her father, who favors his sons over the daughters.
- Uses: Narratives on sibling rivalry, relationships with parents, the Oriental way of life. Inspirational motivation for the power of writing as a source of recognition.
- E,S, 14. Mammals 8 minutes. Roman H Polanski's parable of 2 men who each take advantage of friendship to make his partner do all the work.
- Uses: Symbolism. Science: exploring the definition of the term 'mammals'. Psychology: exploring selfish tendencies in friendship.
- E,H,A 15. Neighbors 8 minutes. Animated tale of two 'friendly' neighbors who kill each other in a territorial dispute over a flower.
- Uses: Writing original fables, obvious uses of irony; unusual use of animation for human actors; Social Studies: discussion of territoriality as cause of war.
- E,A,H 16. An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge 30 minutes. A genuine Twilight Zone episode about a Southern planter who seems to escape from his execution—but it's all a dream.
- Uses: Writing ironic "Twilight Zone" narratives, excellent contrast with A. Bierce's original story. Social Studies: Civil War.
- E,H 17. Shooting Gallery 8 minutes. Powerful little animated film about two puppets that briefly escape, only to be flattened into submission by the military marksman who runs the game.
- Uses: Writing about conformity or dictatorships. Social Studies: repressive nature of dictatorships or military.
- E 18. Skateboard Safety 15 minutes. One of many "how to" films in the library.
Uses: Note-taking and explanatory essays.
- E,H,F 19. The String Bean 20 minutes. Poignant tale of an old woman who conquers loneliness by growing a plant.
- Uses: Writing or discussion about loneliness, or old age. Discussion of French culture (no subtitles, no dialogue)
- E,S 20. Two Men and a Wardrobe 15 minutes. A masterful allegory of 2 men who meet with violence and rejection because of the wardrobe they carry, which is the

one thing that sets them apart from the rest of society.

Uses: Personal stories about alienation, prejudice, intolerance. Science: Darwin's theory of life evolving from the sea, survival of the fittest.

Bruce Jacobs
H.S. of Art and Design

Camaraderie

Experts have written numerous proposals for improving our nation's schools, yet they have failed to address two serious needs which contribute to mounting teacher frustration and ultimate teacher burnout. The first is the need for affirmation of the teacher's ideas and abilities and the second is the need for nurturing these ideas and abilities.

In today's inner-city school systems, most teachers deal with many students whose lack of basic skills prevents them from achieving success. These teachers, despite their best efforts, continually face the same poor student performance and their own frustration.

The Writing Teachers Consortium, in which I have participated during this school year, successfully addresses these two burning needs of teaching professionals: the need for affirmation and the need for nurturing.

The Writing Teachers Consortium has enabled me to get to know very creative and intelligent people, some of whom I had exchanged salutations with for more than twenty years! It has provided a professional support structure which had been sorely lacking in our school. Here is a place where teaching professionals can come and openly discuss concerns and frustrations and receive positive feedback. Here, new ideas can be tested out and refined. Here, we can be affirmed as creative, intelligent individuals.

Equally important, the Writing Teachers Consortium has motivated us to stretch and grow in many ways. Too often, teachers work so hard to educate their disadvantaged students that they lack the energy to continue on with their own intellectual and creative pursuits. By constantly prodding us, the Writing Teachers Consortium has enabled us to recapture that love of learning and quest for self-awareness that are so important to the emotional well-being of the whole person.

Although the Writing Teachers Consortium is ending its program here at Washington Irving this May, its legacy will live on. The camaraderie that has developed among participants will continue. The inter-departmental lines of communication that have been established will remain open. The friendships that have formed will continue to grow.

Since Marcie, Elaine, and Alan will not be here to prod us, we will have to continue to affirm and nurture ourselves and each other without their help. But... there is no going back...we will march forward...together.

Jane Case Einbender
Washington Irving H.S.

Footnotes to a Literature Essay Never Written

By: Professor Harold T. Hackelborg, Phd.

1. Professor Rosen is evidently quite mistaken. Ruth Devonshire never wrote that novel, in fact, she never wrote anything. Her entire output in prose developed over the telephone. The occasional poems, i.e. "Viva the Man Who Uses Mum," were dictated to intimates in corridors of the hotels she invariably visited while in Memphis. See Sneer, Natalie, Ruth Devonshire, A Life in Couplets, Grover Corners Press, Upcreek, Vermont, 1901. Professor Rosen should know by now

- that checking one's sources is the right and proper thing to do.
2. Again, the professor has erred. The State of Colorado was at no time in our history leased to Mexico, regardless of what Pancho Villa's biographer would have us believe. Professor Rosen - and again I remind him - should verify his "information."
 3. Ponzio, Pedro de Sanchez, Villa Villified, the Freeall Press, Denver, Montana, 1882.
 4. Ibid.
 5. Note: Professor Rosen's wife is named Rosemary, not Hildegard. He is evidently confusing her with the character in Sven Bjerk's novel Mud which he likes so much.
 6. Ah Rosen, wrong again! Fire Island was not the setting for South Wind. Even you should know better.
 7. South Wind was not made into a film, so how could Henry James be its script-writer?
 8. See Herzman, Rupert, "Fantasies of the Buried Man, an Essay on Teacher Misfits," Low Licks, October, 1974, Board of Education of Tidewater Penn L.I., N.Y.
In this paper Professor Rosen's theory of footnotes as a form of derisive commentary by chairpersons is meticulously analyzed. Allow me to insert, as a bit of biographia literaria, that both Professors Herzman and Rosen excelled at pan-handling on West Fourteenth Street, and made enough money to go to graduate school.
 9. Ibid. As usual. Professor Rosen neglected to consult the dietary chart. Albert Shanker never ate bananas spread on matzos in his entire life. It would be understandable if he were miffed at the accusation.
 10. At the end of the paragraph I cite, the inimical professor suggested I roared into McGuire's Tavern and cuffed Big Bill O'Lewd for stealing my jockstrap. This is a flagrant lie, even if only implied. I never roared into any tavern in my life. I never cuffed O'Lewd. The police have established beyond doubt that Bill, being somewhat in his cups, fell. When he made that remark those within earshot reported he really said, "I'm strapped, Jocko, pick up the check (not chick)." Professor Rosen should verify his bartenders.
 11. The incident in Professor Rosen's book which made so great a furor, is in my opinion the only sentence worth reading.
 12. No doubt Peter Pan was wrong about a great many things, Professor. That does not make her decadent.
 13. If Big Bill O'Lewd ever did punch Gertrude Stein in the nose, the incident certainly did not creep into Finnegans Wake. To my albeit limited knowledge, Mr. Joyce knew neither of them and only made reference to the nose three times in his book. I cite Professor Harry Snott's incomparable study The Nose at the End of Its Tether: Studies in Literary Transplants. The Bullseye Book and Rifle Shop, Park Avenue, New York City.
 14. In this chapter, Professor Rosen is doubtlessly trying to prove that he is a better man than Bill O'Lewd. I can only quote what Father Jamie Fitzrye, S.J., wrote in his review of O'Lewd's last novella, I Smell the Heather in Her Breast: "Out of Eire came this fierce young colt to frolic among the asses and cavort in the stable of the Wild Mare of poetry. Why, I would take one sentence of O'Lewd's - even half a sentence and the book is full of 'em - to all the pseudo-intellectual crap this crock of a critic, aye Posin' Rosen, ever

misfired at our Gaelic lovelies. It's a shame such unIrishmen are permitted to publish their mahoolahuh." The St. Myron Schoolboy Review, April, 1978.

15. Here again I am misquoted by Rosen. I never said Sidney Flash was a bad poet. In fact, I never said he was a poet.
16. For a detailed account of Professor Rosen's film-going habits, do not read Judith Crist.
17. I will not even cite his abusive sentence on my mother's cooking. It has little or nothing to do with what kinder critics have referred to as "our little tiff." In fact, that's a different can of beans altogether.
18. This is an editorial goof, as they say. My surname is Hackelborg, not Hockleback.
19. No. It was November 15th, not the 21st, that Rosen was arrested on a trumped-up charge. I know.

Robert Miller
Norman Thomas H.S.

Ecrivons Une Histoire

"What's a French teacher doing in a creative writing class?" I asked myself as I struggled with yet another paragraph. "Plenty!" I soon discovered. The decision to join the Writing Teachers Consortium was to change my entire professional outlook.

The New York City Writing Project's Writing Teachers Consortium made its appearance at my school, Norman Thomas H.S., in September, 1982. Dedicated to the concept of using writing to teach all subject areas, leaders of the group spend one full year at selected high schools to work with teachers. They do so both in groups and individually.

Once a week, teachers in all disciplines meet in order to write, to read, to listen, and to observe the writing process. Their common goal is to adapt the learned writing techniques for student use in the classroom.

After some initial hesitation, I at last decided to try the writing approach with my ninth-grade beginning French class. Here was a perfect testing ground for the efficacy of the program--since the students came to me with absolutely no previous knowledge of the language. Everything that was written in class would be an outgrowth of the Consortium's techniques.

Although the text we use is dated, almost obsolete, I decided to supplement, but not replace, the standard skills lessons it contains. In the usual traditional manner, verbs were conjugated, oral repetitions practiced, stories read, and vocabulary introduced. With this background of basics, I was ready to introduce writing--the real flavor of the lesson, the enrichment of the learned skills. Through writing, the language would transcend the pages of the textbook and become relevant and vibrant. Writing could make learning fun.

My method was simple and logical. First, came the nouns with their correct articles and then some verbs--whatever vocabulary the text introduced. From this handful of words, I constructed a sentence, which I had the class recite and repeat in the interests of practical application and aural comprehension. I then had them compose their own sentences, all of which would be variations on the new vocabulary. Soon one sentence grew into two, two into three, and voila, we had a paragraph. And so it went for several sessions.

Then one day I felt the students were ready for something a little more ambitious. "Let's write a story," I peremptorily suggested.

"Are you crazy? I can't write!"

A chorus of incredulity assaulted my ears from the four corners of the room.

"Why not?" I countered. "You have your vocabulary, you know your verbs, and you've written paragraphs. Why not stories? If you can't think of your own story, elaborate on the one in the text." (I was referring to a rather uninspired one we had just read about George and his mother.)

After some gentle persuasion on my part, the students very gingerly began. Before long, many had come up with simple anecdotes, while others-- encouraged by my stopping at each desk to suggest, "Tell me in English what you want to say"--had written at least a few sentences. Soon, my enthusiasm caught on. To their amazement, students began writing more entertaining versions of George and his mother. One even essayed a little joke. Some consulted the glossary for additional vocabulary words and some even discovered how to conjugate irregular verbs from the chart. Virtually all of them were able to take a verb out of the infinitive and correctly place it in the present tense. Not surprisingly, students now wanted to read their stories. They were engaged, as I had been, in writing, reading, and finally, listening.

Before long, they were ready for the next step: dialogue. Here was an invaluable technique I had learned at the Writing Consortium. Since the textbook chapter centered on George's problems in getting up in the morning, we were presented with a classic situation for conversational improvising. George could discuss his problems with his mother, then with his teacher, and then perhaps with a friend. In fact, each student could play a role. I thus paired off the students, always putting a stronger with a weaker. One student, acting as George, wrote a line to his partner, who answered him on the same sheet of paper. It was then passed back and forth until the dialogue had become a mini-play. Students became very excited. The room resounded with "How do you say this? How do you

say that?" While being careful not to dampen their enthusiasm, I attempted to simplify their thinking so that they could stick to the vocabulary they already had: "Why don't you say it like this?...."

Students soon wanted to compose other stories with other characters, and before long we had the adventures of Marie and Anne and Charles and Jean. Sentence structure became more complex. Students began consulting the dictionary in the back of the book and used the contents of the text as research reference. With very little assistance, they also learned how to use the verb charts for conjugation of irregular verbs.

At this point, I began conventional instruction in grammar and vocabulary and found the students eager to learn so as to improve their little essays. I was surprised and delighted, incidentally, to note that by writing in French, students who had weak English skills (notably foreign-born Chinese) were able to better grasp the concepts of English grammar and sentence structure.

Since writing stories is, after all, a medium of expression, it can even capture the fancy of a student who is doing little classwork or no homework. A failing student, for example, suddenly decided to write a story about a girl and her boyfriend. With encouragement, it did not take long to "hook" her into the classwork. Best of all, most students began thinking in French because they were writing it. They took pride in their papers, which they dated correctly and gave titles. Almost invariably, they wrote stories of more than one paragraph.

For me, the rewards were even more tangible. Instead of carting home reams of papers with the grim prospect of an evening of red penciling, I was able to correct the stories on the spot in the presence of the student. While walking around the room, I stopped at each desk to correct grammar, check syntax, and offer encouraging ideas.

The effectiveness of the writing technique is summarized by my chairman, who, in observing a lesson, noted in his observation report, "Here is a first-year language class doing work geared to a three-year Regents class." Merci bien, Writing Consortium!

Susan Rosler
Norman Thomas H.S.

Project Notes

Sondra Perl became the mother of Sara on April 24 and mother, father - Arthur Egendorf - and daughter are doing fine. Sondra reports that this "has been keeping me busier and happier than I imagined was possible" Barbara Gurr has assumed the position of assistant principal of English at Grover Cleveland High School. It is pleasing to note that she participated in the first summer institute of the New York City Writing Project, and is the first teacher-consultant to assume an administrative position within the New York City school system..... David Zucker, a New York City Writing Project teacher-consultant from Brandeis High School, was granted a study sabbatical this past year to investigate the impact of the Writing Teachers Consortium in various schools. He is now at work writing up his findings..... In April, veteran members of the Writing Project went on their second annual retreat sponsored by the Writing Teachers Consortium this year held at the Mohonk Mountain House. Here we wrote about and discussed theoretical articles about teaching and writing, as well as the possible future directions of the Project..... Also, in April, at the annual Conference on College Composition and Communication, Toby Bird and Meta Plotnik co-chaired an all-day pre-conference workshop on Commenting on Student Writing. Sondra Perl and Richard Sterling acted as consultants and Sondra, Elaine Avidon, Ann Humpherys and Bob Whitney also participated in the presentation..... This summer, the New York City Writing Project is offering three summer institutes:

one for high school teachers from all boroughs sponsored by the Writing Teachers Consortium (to be taught by Christine Kissack and Peter Medway), an open institute for teachers of all grade levels (to be taught by Ed Osterman and Bob Whitney), and a writing project for high school students (to be taught by Carla Asher and Marcie Wolfe)..... In July, Peter Medway, a British educator, is going to lead a three-day advanced institute so current Project members can further explore ways of using language in the classroom.

Note to Subscribers

This issue of the newsletter is our last for the 1983-84 academic year. If you wish to continue your subscription for 1984-85, please send a \$5.00 check to renew your membership in the New York City Writing Project. Remember that this membership entitles you to at least 3 issues of our newsletter, 3 issues of the National Writing Project newsletter, and announcements of special Project seminars and events. Make your check payable to the New York City Writing Project and mail it to:

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