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## Introduction

*Ye know ek that in forme of speche is change. . . .*

MANY changes in educational theory, some changes in educational practice, and much new educational terminology mark the years since 1931, when the first edition of this text was printed. The major changes in these twelve years seem to have arisen from five conditions—conditions which had long existed, but which finally reached public consciousness and aroused rather general discontent. These were: narrow departmentalism, rigid courses of study, undemocratic classroom procedures, submergence of the individual pupil, and separation of school and community. Little by little departmental lines were blurred in numerous communities by timid introduction of materials from science or social science—readings and discussions foreign to the conventional work in literature. Then in many of the more progressive communities appeared those courses termed “fused” or misnamed “integrated.” Later the “core” curriculum and the “experience” curriculum banished content courses based solely upon academic attainment. In these schools half of the school day was devoted to the exploration of the pupils’ needs, abilities, ambitions, home environment and responsibilities. Here pupil-teacher planning was substituted for authoritative instruction. In many schools this exploratory course approximated and extended the orientation and self-examination formerly to be found in the most successful “home rooms.” Or these courses might concern themselves with man’s development and advancing state of culture; but such study was for the primary purpose of acquainting the pupil, indirectly rather than directly, with himself and his own environment. In these courses the pupil was no longer submerged, but was an active participant, consciously and voluntarily co-operating with the members of his group. In many

towns and cities the ideal of the school as a community center has already been attained, largely through various war activities, so that an increased interrelation of school and community now exists.

Yet, in spite of these changes and this educational ferment, much school life has remained static. There are hundreds upon hundreds of schools in our forty-eight states where, with community approval, strict discipline is imposed upon pupils, and where traditional-minded teachers offer traditional courses in literature and the history of literature, regardless of the community level of culture or the needs and interests of the students. In such schools the "progressive" teacher is still regarded as an unsafe faddist, a troublemaker, usually weak in discipline.

But in the English departments of less conventional schools, and, to some degree, in practically all departments of English, eight changes are now obvious. These are:

1. *Disappearance of many of the older classics.* Those works which held their place through tradition and eminent respectability rather than through their intrinsic interest and value to twentieth-century youth are gradually disappearing.

2. *Increase of wide reading rather than intensive study of single books.* Intensive study of one text, even to the point of dislike on the part of the student, so that he might learn how to enjoy other books has little by little given way to wider and more varied reading.

3. *Appearance of much modern material dealing with present-day problems.* The day when no pupil might read fiction in study hall is long since past, and today magazines, newspapers, plays, biography, semiscientific and historical books and articles, modern drama and verse, and translations from many foreign writers all find a place in our English classrooms.

4. *Recognition of the teachers' duty to create a democratic atmosphere and to awaken students to the privileges and responsibilities of citizenship in a democracy.* Discussion of the rights of minority groups, the dangers of race or religious prejudice, the problems confronting the world today, find their way into the interpretation of both classics and modern books.

5. *Organization of all material around centers of interest.* In more and more schools several interests (such as English arts, social studies, music, drawing) combined into a core curriculum built upon the general idea of understanding man's social, political, spiritual, and artistic life have replaced the traditional courses in history, English, art, and so on.

6. *Instruction in library use to further individual research.* Individual research, particularly in the thirty experimental schools, has played an important part in decreasing the lock step in classroom teaching. The reading ability and interest of each individual pupil determine the material which he reads. Anthologies and simplified books have also increased in number and in use.

7. *Introduction of language study not primarily to secure correct usage, but to picture its history, its method of development, its numerous pitfalls for the uninitiated.* This study of semantics and propaganda, practically unknown in the majority of high schools twelve years ago, reflects significantly our recognition of the need for national and international understanding.

8. *Instruction in the science of reading, in the last dozen years, perhaps the most universal change.* Those schools and those teachers not offering skilled instruction in remedial reading are at least aware of their omission, and are now apologetic for its absence.

Various forces, in part responsible for these changes, have been brought to bear upon high-school English departments. For example, the Progressive Education Association has awakened teachers to the necessity of considering the pupil as an integral part in planning and carrying out any program. It has stressed the idea that educational development of the individual pupil does not rest solely upon his acquirement of facts and skills. But, above all, the National Council of Teachers of English, founded in 1913, has provided a constant stimulus through books, pamphlets, the *English Journal*, and the *Elementary Review*. It has kept teachers aware of the possibilities for service and for accomplishment. To illustrate this new freedom and the development of each pupil according to his own ability and interest, the National Council has provided such studies as *Pupils Are People*,

such guidance as *Basic Aims in English Teaching* and the *English Journal*, filled with experiments and theories by classroom teachers.

The present text, addressed to those students in normal schools and colleges who intend to teach English, presents the problems which later they will face in their classrooms. Since they must be both *informed* concerning literature and composition (both written and oral) and *awakened* to the problems in the teaching of English, the text is so planned that:

1. It states the problem in composition or literature as a challenge demanding original thinking.
2. It tests the prospective teachers' knowledge and ability in oral and written expression.
3. It requires them to make and to present orally exercises and assignments planned for and discussed by the class and then solved and presented before the class by the individual. By means of these class presentations—given in class hours or in special meetings termed "laboratory" periods—prospective teachers are led to test their ability of awakening interest in a subject, organizing it, and lucidly explaining and presenting the idea in such a way as to solicit co-operative activity.

These three steps should awaken prospective teachers from the passivity of the usual college "learner" and stimulate the creative attitude necessary for the teacher-pupil participation of the modern schoolroom. In order to make the work as realistic and practical as possible, all material is illustrated by actual class situations. In order, however, to avoid repetition of the work in college courses termed Educational Theory and Methods, no discussions of the general theory of education and of different curriculums have been included.<sup>1</sup> In the "Foreword," however, in

<sup>1</sup> For those readers unfamiliar with the curriculum of a modern experimental high school, the following books would serve for a quick summary: Spears, Harold: *The Emerging High School Curriculum and Its Direction*, American Book Company, 1940; Joint Committee in Curriculum: *The Changing Curriculum*, Appleton-Century, 1937; Educational Policies Commission: *Learning the Ways of Democracy*, National Educational Association, 1210 Sixteenth Street N.W., Washington, D.C., 1940.

spite of the possibility of repetition, there are a few illustrations of progressive practices and theories drawn from various experimental high schools. They may be the means of arousing question of, and perhaps discontent with, the all-too-familiar regimentation of pupils and of subject-centered teaching still found in many of our public schools. These illustrations may also serve to suggest to the young teachers placed in a departmentalized high school how, little by little, they may bootleg into their own classrooms many of the attitudes and practices found in more progressive schools. By this method it is hoped that prospective teachers may avoid the disillusionment which overwhelms many enthusiastic beginners when, unwarned, they are confronted by small-town conservatism and hostility toward change. Hence the whole text is carefully balanced between what is desirable and wholly possible in some schools and what may be done in a small, conventional high school.

With this text go my appreciative thanks to those who have from the results of their research or teaching experience added to the theories and practices that I should like to call my own. Grateful acknowledgment is due my many students in both Montana State University and the Bread Loaf School of English, Vermont, and the many librarians and teachers and high-school pupils who have given me aid and suggestions. Elsewhere many of their names appear in connection with their various contributions. Throughout years of enthusiastic co-operation, Miss Winifred Feighner, Assistant Librarian, Montana State University, and the library staff have been of invaluable service. To Dr. H. G. Merriam, Montana State University, and to Miss Edith R. Mirrielees, Stanford University, who have aided me in the writing of the original text and the two revisions, I am most deeply indebted.

L. B. M.

*Missoula, Montana, 1943*

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TEACHING  
COMPOSITION  
AND LITERATURE

*in Junior and Senior High School*

LUCIA B. MIRRIELES, PH.D.

*Revised Edition*

HARCOURT, BRACE & WORLD, INC.

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## FOREWORD

### Some Experiments in Present-Day Teaching

#### I. EARLY EXPERIMENTS IN TEACHING JUNIOR-SENIOR HIGH-SCHOOL ENGLISH

EVER since the appearance in 1917 of the bulletin *Reorganization of English in Secondary Schools*<sup>1</sup>—a challenge to college domination, fixed curriculum, and pupil regimentation—the creative teacher of English has suffered from an uneasy conscience. In the 1920's some programs encouraged pupil activity. By 1930, chosen "experimental schools," released from college and school-board restrictions, attempted pupil-centered programs. In these carefully planned courses, the individual pupil's ability, need, and interest determined the type of material given him. He was treated as an individual, but also as a class member. Today (1952) this concept is an accepted ideal, though perhaps "more honor'd in the breach than the observance." Yet with the publication of *The English Language Arts*,<sup>2</sup> Volume I, a new understanding of this ideal and of practical schoolroom procedures should do much to widen the scope of individualized instruction. The teaching of English, like all teaching, is still experimental. Does this statement discourage you? As you recall the thousands who have taught, it may seem to you that some few should have discovered a *best way*. If so, they might, perhaps, have patented it and proclaimed it to the world. Such procedure would seem sensible, economical, humane—but, also, impossible.

When conservative folk scoff at the constant experimentation

<sup>1</sup> Department of the Interior: Bureau of Education. Bulletin No. 2, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., April, 1952. This book from the N.C.T.E. Commission on the English Curriculum is the outcome of a six-year study, and the work of more than 176 experienced teachers, directed by Dora V. Smith and others.

In text see page 572.

#### 4 SOME EXPERIMENTS IN PRESENT-DAY TEACHING

in modern teaching of English and complain of the "fads and frills" (why a "fad" has necessarily a "frill" attached has always interested me) they forget one important fact. How can the resultant output remain unchanged when one combines three constantly changing ingredients? In school there are changing groups of children from changing groups of parents with varying backgrounds. These changing groups of children, as years pass, are brought up under changing religious, social, political, and economic conditions. In this educational experiment the most slowly changing entity is the teacher, but even she, particularly if she began her own high-school study since rather than before 1914, is not an unchanging factor.

Creative teachers of English have always experimented. I remind you of their experimentation for two reasons: (1) to emphasize that though you can provide yourselves with a few principles and much information, you cannot find a ready-made pattern for your own teaching; and (2) to bespeak a sympathetic attitude toward the new-type courses in English. These courses are not perfected. The teachers in the experimental schools are themselves the first to point out defects. (But the principle upon which experimental courses are built) appears a sound one. It is this: A teacher of English must aid each pupil to develop himself at his own rate and must assist him to integrate what he learns at school, at home, and in his community. Many teachers add a second principle. *Teachers of English must attempt directly and indirectly so to form the minds of their pupils that these potential citizens will uphold rather than menace those democratic ideals we assert but as yet have failed to achieve.* Various educators in discussing the experimental school have said that the ideal teacher for them would be one who holds the archeologist's point of view. Ideally at least, when an archeologist studies prehistoric man, it is not grammatical man, literary man, historical man whom he seeks to know, but man with all his learning and ability integrated into one rounded personality, a member of a

social group. Of course analogy is often misleading. If you embalmed your pupils, you, too, in the restful quiet of your classroom could regard each "rounded personality" undisturbed. But they would be dead. Your question is a more difficult one: "How can I help my all too active twentieth-century boys and girls to fuse the various materials acquired at school, so that school, home life, community life, and later their lives as citizens may be saner, happier, and perhaps more altruistic?"

How have some teachers of English, in co-operation with teachers of other departments, attempted to answer this question? You are accustomed, in both college and high school, to speak of the Department of History, the Department of English, the Art Department, or the Music Department. Have you familiarized yourself with the experiment now being made at the University of Chicago or with the work carried on in any one of those numerous universities utilizing the Chicago plan? If you have, you will recall that freshmen in these institutions no longer take Freshman English or Freshman History, but that they all enroll in a course given some such title as "Humanities." There they are asked to consider certain aspects of man's history: events which have occurred; ideas that have dominated men's minds; and literature, sculpture, painting, music which throw light upon man's spiritual and intellectual life. In some of the universities where such a course is offered, the students are free to attend lectures or to remain away. They may read as widely or as narrowly as they choose. When ready, they attempt a comprehensive examination upon this panorama of man's artistic, social, and political ideals and accomplishments.

Contrast such a course with your own freshman work. The difference is probably striking. In this newer-type curriculum, students are responsible for their own learning. The slow and the brilliant are not shackled together by hours and credits, but each may progress at his own rate. And most significant of the changed attitude is the fusion of material. Departmental lines

## 6 SOME EXPERIMENTS IN PRESENT-DAY TEACHING

are broken. Students are not registering for four hours of literature, unrelated perhaps to the life and thought of the time; or for three hours of history, minus the literature, philosophy, and art of the period. Material from four departments is so correlated that not four courses with similar objectives, but one course with four phases, each motivated by the same objectives, is offered the entering freshmen. (The attempt—as yet often unsuccessful, often confusing—is to assist the freshman to integrate the history, literature, philosophy, art, and music of certain periods of the past.) If the whole is intelligently fused, it should present to the entering student a balanced picture of certain epoch-making periods in the life of our race.

Look at the other end of the educational ladder. In kindergarten and in the first two grades fusion such as that just described has long existed. The teachers in these early years center their attention upon the child, not upon the specific departmentalized information that each child must obtain. The pupil tells stories (English) about his number work (mathematics) and illustrates with a picture or cutting that he has made (art). Part of his tale he acts or pantomimes (dramatics). Or he brings a polliwog to class and displays it (biology) as a prologue to the “Polliwog Song” (music) in which the class joins. Whether or not these kindergarten teachers have an archeologist’s attitude of mind is open to question, but you will note that their pupils work with thoroughly fused material which both teacher and pupil use quite innocent of departmental boundaries.

In this new tendency in college and the old in kindergarten you will recognize a certain likeness. What is it?

1. The pupil must be seen as a person, as a mind reaching out in all directions, regardless of departmental boundaries, not as a sponge which merely absorbs, more or less permanently, specific information poured into it.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Featherstone, W. B.: “The Place of Subjects in an Integrated Curriculum,” *California Quarterly of Secondary Education*, Vol. 9 (1933-34), p. 235.

2. The individual must be an active and creative participant. He must assume responsibility for himself, and, in so far as he is able, direct his own activities.

3. The teacher must see not only her own subject but that subject in relation to the pupil and in relation to present-day society. She must seek material to enrich her course or must discard it according to the needs of the student, regardless of departmental boundaries or of past conventions.

Having glimpsed college and kindergarten, you might now consider your own years in junior-high-school work; then, if you are interested, read *Western Youth Meets Eastern Culture*.<sup>1</sup> It is not only delightful reading, but it will give you a glimpse of what knowledge and skill, plus resources, can do to revitalize the often dry husks of junior-high-school English, history, geography, and art. Perhaps in this course, as in a course called "The American epic," offered by certain Los Angeles schools in the seventh and eighth grades, the outstanding qualities are the teacher's dramatic presentation of a large quantity of related material and her imaginative approach to that material as shown in part by the creative activities of the pupils. Below are given the general objectives of the course in which English (consisting of literature, mechanics, oral and written work), social studies, geography, art, and music are fused.

#### A. "*The American Epic*," an Integrated Course

##### GENERAL OBJECTIVES

1. The acquiring in socially helpful ways of a partial appreciation of what our forefathers did for us.

2. The beginning of an understanding of how the life about us has evolved out of the life of the past.

3. A recognition of the more important present-day American trends and problems.

4. The cultivation of a taste for reading worth-while literature and the development of skills in oral and written expression. (You

<sup>1</sup> By E. F. Barry, F. G. Sweeney, and A. E. Schoelkopf.



## 8 SOME EXPERIMENTS IN PRESENT-DAY TEACHING

will note the pageant-like quality, the dramatic element, in the topics listed for the first unit of work.)

### UNIT I<sup>1</sup>

#### THE CURTAIN RISES

##### Introduction (Aims)

- A. Prologue
- B. In Search of Gold
- C. Trappers and Traders
- D. Looking for the Northwest Passage
- E. For Queen and Country
- F. Terminal Group Activities

This unit of work may well occupy two periods a day for the first ten weeks of the B7 semester. The time should be carefully allotted to Approach, Individual Activities, and Terminal Group Activities. The period of Approach should be one of general reading and discussion for the purpose of creating or broadening the pupils' interest. (Aims: (1) to learn why America was rediscovered; (2) to become somewhat familiar with the kind of people who came to America; (3) to understand why these people came to America.) Several days should be allowed for the Approach to each of the subtopics and two to three weeks may not be too much to give to the Terminal Group Activities.

(To illustrate more fully the work done here, note the readings and the activities that accompany one of the five subdivisions of this unit of work. The history and geography and literature, the oral and the written work, are all motivated by one topic of interest. Do not be misled by the fact that no grammar and no drill upon sentences appear on the chart. It is taken for granted that the teacher in charge will stop whenever it seems wise to give the necessary spelling drill on those words that pupils need to know in order to do the work suggested, or will spend time on

<sup>1</sup> Prepared by the Secondary Course of Study Committee from materials furnished by Helen Lucille Berg, Emily Rice Huntsman, Evelune Naomi Warder, and Mary Bernice Young, of the John Burroughs Junior High School; quoted from the February, 1934, pamphlet by permission of Mr. Arthur Gould, Deputy Superintendent of Los Angeles City School District.