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15005

from patterned sentence practice through model essay construction

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THE RIGHT BOOK from patterned sentence practice through model essay construction

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To Wilma, Donald, Brandon, Lori, and Henry

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PREFACE: to both student and teacher

It is our belief that you should not be lied to. Writing is hard work. If you are going to build a doghouse, you are in tough shape if you do not have a hammer or any nails. In The Right Book, it is our intention to give you that hammer and those nails so that by the time you have worked your way through this text, you will be able to construct well-designed essays. Yes, writing is hard work, but it can be an interesting, rewarding experience if you are armed with the right tools.

Although the majority of people have been exposed to writing situations in school and in the "real" world, few seem to enjoy the writing process. This is unfortunate, but true. What people fear is the unknown and making fools of themselves. When you write, you are putting the inside of your head down in black and white. When this happens in an English course, students often fear the return of their papers, for they assume all they will see will be their thoughts mutilated in blood-red pen by some crazed grammarian. Let's hope that *The Right Book* will help you feel comfortable about expressing your ideas in writing.

The Right Book presents a plan for learning to write. The paragraph and essay models which are presented can be used for either exposition or argument. Because many of the paragraph and essay examples used in The Right Book are of a controversial nature, reference is sometimes made to argumentative writing, but the models presented can serve equally well for noncontroversial topics.

People who want to tackle writing come to the material presented in *The Right Book* with many competencies which will make learning the writing process easier. To begin with, people understand the need to adjust their levels of language to meet the needs of their audiences. You automatically make vocabulary choices. The language you use in the pool hall is quite different from the language you use when talking to Grandma. Another point in your favor is that the number of errors you

make when speaking is considerably less than the number you make when writing. Exercises in *The Right Book*, particularly Copy Assignments, will help you transfer your oral facility with the language to the written word. An additional competency you possess is an understanding of argument. Whenever you have effectively persuaded a friend, you have used classical rhetorical appeals: logos, pathos, and ethos. You may not be familiar with these terms, but you have certainly persuaded someone using logic (logos), emotion (pathos), and self-image (ethos). Also to your advantage is your understanding of ethics or fair play. You know a priest should not spend the money from the collection plate in Acapulco, but you will buy a twelve-year-old car from a used car salesman who said it would run beautifully for years. Thus, you come to *The Right Book* with an awareness of the need to adjust your level of language to your audience, an oral fluency with English, a knowledge of argument, and an awareness of ethical responsibility. All of this knowledge you use whenever you explain or persuade.

But how can Sally write a paragraph if she cannot write a sentence? How can Brian be expected to write a well-developed essay if he cannot write a paragraph? The answers to those questions are the reasons The Right Book is organized as it is. The first exercise in this text leads to the creation of a writing sample, the Diagnostic Essay. Using Section Thirteen, Criteria for Writing Correctly, a teacher can quickly assess a student's high-priority or most frequently occurring errors. It becomes clear to both teacher and student what areas need particular concentration. From this point on, the book explores the writing process: beginning with the sentence, the student learns how, grammatically and mechanically, to create a number of paragraph and essay structures that contain logical progression. The material is presented in the order of priority. Subject-verb agreement and commonly confused words are dealt with in the early sections as the student works on patterned sentence practice, whereas dangling modifiers are dealt with in a much later section as a student learns the Inversion Paragraph and Essay Models. This pattern of progressive difficulty is evident also in the order of presentation of the various models. The first model studied is the Claim-Support-Conclusion Model, a valuable basic organizational structure; the Inversion Model, studied last, is a more versatile, sophisticated structure. Comparing a student's beginning Diagnostic Essay to his or her Inversion Essay is a treat for student and teacher alike. Truly, it is often difficult to believe the two essays were written by the same person.

It is important for both teacher and student to be familiar with the basic assumptions upon which the material presented in *The Right Book* is based:

Assumption One

Students can best learn an acceptable written dialect by imitation of good prose, including copying and generative exercises, rather than just analysis of errors. To explain, if a student has to complete an exercise which contains errors, he* can learn errors. Given "The boys (is, are) going," what happens is the student thinks: "The boys is are going. The boys is going. No, not the boys is going. The boys is

*Let it be known that the authors have occasionally used only the masculine pronoun. For the sake of our sanity, please realize that when you read he, she is also there.

going doesn't sound right." So the student circles "are" and goes on to the next question. The student has spent at least four times as much time ingraining the wrong pattern in his head as he has the right pattern. It is a matter of chance whether the right answer appears first. Thus, the end result of having students do exercises in which they analyze errors is that they may learn errors. Analytical exercises are not considered to be teaching tools by the authors of *The Right Book*. The analytical exercises which do appear are usually used as diagnostic tools to assess whether or not a student has a problem. Other teaching tools are employed to eliminate the error.

Generative exercises help students eliminate their errors. Students are provided with a pattern and must create their own sentences. Copy Assignments also help students cut down their writing problems. Students are asked to copy exactly what is on the page. The Copy Assignments all follow one of the models which are presented in the text. Not only do the students quickly realize how careless they can be, but they learn to proofread while they are imitating good argumentative prose.

Assumption Two

Students can best learn to structure and develop ideas by controlled imitation of models, rather than by analysis. Numerous studies have scientifically proven the effectiveness of model theory. Thus, The Right Book provides the students initially with very rigid structure models in which virtually all the components are mandatory. Students and teachers alike, on first looking at the Claim-Support-Conclusion Model, for example, say, "How boring! Why do I have to use a transition to introduce each support?" If students' writing automatically contained logical progression, if they did provide "bridges" between their ideas, there would be no need to stress transitions. However, our experience has proven that students do not use the transition concept as an integral part of their writing; consequently, few papers of beginning writing students contain logical progression. It is our contention that once logical progression can be internally developed by a student, the need for tag transitions becomes less, as is evidenced by the increasing sophistication of the models which appear in The Right Book. How can an individual make a choice if he or she is unaware of the options available? Thus, The Right Book teaches sentence, paragraph, and essay construction through the use of models.

Assumption Three

Students can progress more rapidly if they are consciously aware of the specific objectives of each assignment. Each exercise, pattern, or model in *The Right Book* is explained as clearly as the authors were able. However, even though we may think we have explained the purpose explicitly, someone attempting to comprehend that meaning may be confused. It is the teacher's responsibility to explain, to

paraphrase, to restate so the student can understand. But it is the student's responsibility to question if he or she is confused. The only way progress can be made in learning the writing process is if the "why's" are understood.

Assumption Four

It makes no difference how students learn how to write well just as long as they do learn how to write well. Although *The Right Book* is rigid in its model theory, it is flexible in its teaching approaches. For example, punctuation is taught through traditional rules, pattern practice, and the Intonation Method. The Intonation Method is based on listening to one's own voice. The four concepts which compose the method facilitate accurate placement of the four most frequently used marks of punctuation (, .; ?) after a very short period of instruction. It does not matter which road or roads you take to reach your destination just as long as you do reach that destination.

Assumption Five

Students can progress more rapidly if they are consciously aware of the specific criteria by which their work is to be evaluated. An aid to both student and teacher is Section Thirteen, Criteria for Writing Correctly. The Criteria section is a handy reference tool. It outlines the majority of common writing errors, but it also is an ever-present teacher. The Criteria outline numbers lead to a quick assessment of what error has been made; the mistake is explained through prose and example, and the writer is referred to additional explanations in the *Prentice-Hall Handbook for Writers*, 7th Edition. (A teacher could substitute page numbers in the Criteria to make it correspond to another handbook.) By using the Criteria, a student should no longer receive an essay with the comment "Reorganize this paper" and "awk" and "unc" written in the margins. Was that student to go home and "awk" and "unc" all over his or her paper in order to reorganize it? This dilemma will no longer exist. Use of the Criteria can eliminate the fear of the unknown for hesitant writers, for they always have a workable tool in their hands.

It is hoped that the explanations of the five assumptions upon which *The Right Book* is based will make your journey through the text even more enjoyable.

Knowing the historical background of *The Right Book* may aid you in using the text. Dr. Donald Larmouth and Dr. Thomas Bacig in the late 1960's coined the name Claim-Support-Conclusion and developed the model. Both were employed by the English Department of the University of Minnesota-Duluth at that time, as was Linda Griffin Hilsen, who, under Dr. Larmouth's guidance, coined and outlined Claim-Attack-Counterclaim a short time later by mimicking the CSC Model. This material was piloted in English X, a remedial/developmental English course. When English X was abolished, the material was used in Freshman Composition, and a subsequent *English 1-106 Manual* was produced. The same concepts were used to

develop How's Your Grammar? And Whatever Happened to Your unc? by Linda Hilsen, which was published by the Supportive Services Program at the University of Minnesota-Duluth for the developmental writing course on campus. Many valuable suggestions made by members of the English Department and Supportive Services Program who worked with this material have been incorporated in The Right Book. The model material which appears in this book is a direct outgrowth of Dr.Bacig's and Dr. Larmouth's innovative ideas.

Eleven years of development have shaped *The Right Book*. The models, explanations, and exercises are adaptable to the diverse needs of average students as well as those who do not have complete control of fundamental writing skills. This material has been used successfully in developmental, freshman, and English as a Second Language writing courses, and portions of the book were tested at the junior and senior high school levels. Literally thousands of students have benefited by using this material as a learning guide. And you can too! Yes, writing is hard work, but we hope *The Right Book* will make the process enjoyable for you.

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When a person has a physical examination, it is assumed the doctor will assess the patient's condition and offer a remedy if needed. For instance, a doctor may discover the patient has high blood pressure and warts, so medication for the high blood pressure and for wart removal will be prescribed. A similar diagnosis must occur for a student taking a writing course.

Instructor: Well, student, the diagnosis reveals your writing is quite healthy. However,

comma, you seem to have an ailing dangling modifier or two and a few misplaced semicolons. Through explanations and exercises, we will definitely be

able to eliminate those problems quickly. So, forge ahead!

Student: Write on!?

Instructor: You appear a bit apprehensive. I prescribe a good dose of The Right Book!

Take the first section, and you will quickly see how your condition can improve!

SECTION 1

- 1.1 HOW TO USE THE RIGHT BOOK RIGHT
- 1.2 GENERATING IDEAS FOR THE DIAGNOSTIC ESSAY
- 1.3 SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT: DIAGNOSTIC EXERCISE

1.1 HOW TO USE THE RIGHT BOOK RIGHT

The Right Book is designed for classroom consumption. The presentation of material lends itself well to consecutive assignments for students. It flows logically from a Diagnostic Essay to discovery of error to correction and elimination of error, from diagnostic grammar exercise to practice exercise to tests on grammar concepts, from sentence pattern explanation to sentence pattern practice, from paragraph model explanation to paragraph model example to paragraph model writing, from essay model explanation to essay model example to essay model writing. Concepts are presented through a variety of activities; as a result, a student's interest is held while he learns.

In *The Right Book*, grammar and writing are not taught as separate entities but as integral parts of the same whole—composition. For example, the student will be working on grammar exercises at the same point as he is learning how to develop a paragraph.

The material in this text has been arranged by priority. The most "killing" mechanical errors are diagnosed and worked with first. The paragraph and essay models progress from basic to more sophisticated.

The Right Book contains a number of invaluable tools:

- 1. The Criteria, Section Thirteen, is a correction guide for student and teacher alike. It outlines the majority of common writing errors, is an ever-present teacher because errors are explained through prose and example, and is a referral source for additional help in the *Prentice-Hall Handbook for Writers*, 7th Edition (henceforth called PHH). Using the Criteria, a teacher can effectively assess a student's writing; the student knows from the beginning of the course, then, what areas he needs to work on. Also, see p. 324 for practical paper-handling and correcting procedures.
- 2. Additional Working Outlines, Section Eleven, is included for the student's convenience in completing essay assignments. It contains outlines for each of the essay models studied in *The Right Book*.
- 3. Topic Suggestions for Exercises and Essays, Section Twelve, is a place to look for subjects to write on when "the well runs dry."

What is truly rewarding about using *The Right Book* is evidenced in comparing a student's Diagnostic Essay with his Inversion Essay, the last model presented in the text. Often the improvement in the writing is so great that it is hard to believe the two essays were written by the same person.

1.2 GENERATING IDEAS FOR THE DIAGNOSTIC ESSAY

The objective of this exercise is to give you practice in selecting a topic, formulating a thesis, and discovering supporting material necessary in coherent development.

This exercise is preparation for the Diagnostic Essay.

I.	First, study the Prentice-Hall Handbook for Writers, Section 13a-c, pp. 148-159. Then list any ten topics which you feel could be considered as subjects for controversial discussion. For example, the handling of international terrorists, kidnappers, or his control of the cont
	hijackers has stirred debate; nationally, the existence of an energy crisis has caused disagreement; or you may know of local issues which have created controversy. You are not required to state your topic choices in complete sentences. List your topics as succinctly as possible.
1.	
2.	
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5.	
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8	
9.	

issue. You issue you	qualified to discuss. Then list arg must list, at a minimum, five po have chosen to work with. Supply ment in a complete sentence .	ints on both	the pro and con sides of the
CON	TROVERSIAL TOPIC:		AT (AU CENTE MANAGEMENT AND AU CENTE MANAGEMENT AND AUCTUAL AND AU
	<u>PRO</u>		CON
1		1	
		2	
3		3.	

10. ____

4.	4.
5.	5.
. Do not skip this step. Now that w	ou have provided supporting evidence for both
favor. State your stance on the issue statement, the position which your chosen the topic of alcoholic bevera	n, you must decide which side of the issue you are in one sentence; this sentence is your thesis essay will develop. To illustrate, if you have ges on campus, your thesis statement might be everages should be allowed on campus."

- IV. Once you have formulated your thesis, list the three reasons which you feel are the most convincing, the ones which would most easily persuade the reader to agree with your stance. Draw upon the material you provided for step II. Use complete sentences. For instance, if you have chosen alcoholic beverages on campus as your topic, you might list the following claims to support your thesis:
 - 1. Establishments serving alcoholic beverages should be allowed on campus because the University's alcohol policy has been changed to allow drinking on campus.
 - 2. In addition, such establishments should be allowed because the majority of students on campus are of legal age; consequently, there would be adequate trade for such establishments.
 - 3. Also, these establishments should be allowed because they would be conveniently close to student housing.

THESIS STATEMENT: