

The
MACMILLAN
HANDBOOK
OF ENGLISH

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THE MACMILLAN HANDBOOK OF ENGLISH

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THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
NEW YORK

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*Published January, 1939
Third Printing September, 1939*

*Set up and electrotyped by T. Morey & Son
Printed in the United States of America ·*

PREFACE

The Macmillan Handbook of English is designed for use in college courses in English composition. The technique of using a handbook, either as a basic text in the classroom or as a reference book, is so well known that nothing more need be said about it here. The author of a new handbook, however, should be permitted to call attention to certain special features in it.

This book is a rhetoric and a handbook combined. It may be used as either or as both. The first part of the book attempts to give the beginner the sort of helpful, common-sense advice about writing that he needs the most when he is a beginner. This section is followed by chapters on grammar as a tool of effective writing, on the building of good sentences, on paragraph structure, and on the writing of the research paper. The material of the second part of the book—the handbook itself—is organized under seventy-seven rules. An index and a theme-correction chart help both the student and the teacher to find any rule easily and quickly.

It is most difficult for any author to speak of his own work with appropriate objectivity. If this book has merits, the students and the teachers who use it will find them soon enough. What I can say here will not add to their total. Yet I wish to explain a point of view which I have tried to keep throughout the book. I have tried to treat the student as a mature person. I have tried to speak to him as one learner would speak to another. A learner must be guided by rules until he knows enough about writing to be superior to rules. If I were learning to skate, or to dance, or to play tennis, I should submit myself to a discipline, knowing well that there is a freedom

PREFACE

beyond rules. There is a freedom in writing which comes as a result of discipline. The student will understand, I trust, that although every rule in the book is based on strictly contemporary usage, this usage has been interpreted with discretion and a reasonable conservatism. The rules are the discipline of learning.

But the student should also see that scattered throughout the book there are numerous references to more comprehensive and scholarly discussions of English usage. These are the invitations to the student to investigate for himself and to decide for himself. These are the open doors through which he may walk—and discover, perhaps, some lifelong interests.

To Professor Oscar Cargill, of Washington Square College, New York University, my most hearty thanks for his helpful criticism of the book in manuscript and in proof.

J. M. K.

CORVALLIS, ORE.
December, 1938

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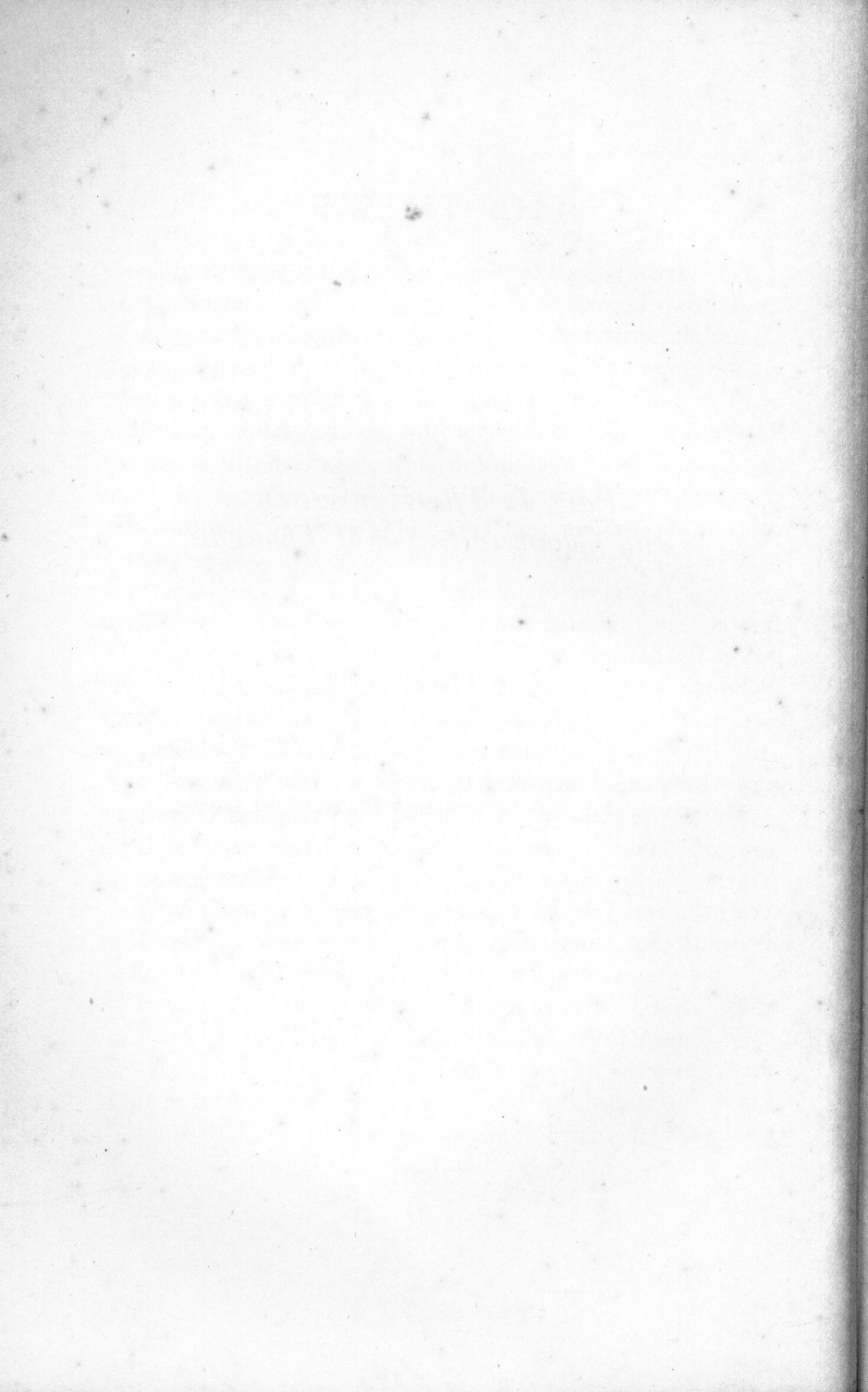
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*Part I: The Expression
and Communication of Thought*

Writing is like pulling the trigger of a gun: if you are not loaded, nothing happens.—Henry Seidel Canby.



THE THEME

You have attended the first meeting of the English composition class. Like most first meetings, it was a solemn affair, somewhat terrifying—to your instructor as well as to you. Sitting there, feeling curious and awed, depressed or amused, or even comfortably superior, you dutifully recorded in your notebook the instructor's name and his office hours, listened to his explanation of the nature of the course, heard a familiar phrase, "The object of all writing is the communication of ideas or impressions from one mind to another," and then—

"For our next meeting I shall ask each of you to write a theme—" ("How many words, please?" "Oh, something between five hundred and a thousand will do.") "—a theme out of the material of your own experience and observation."

"What kind of theme? . . . What shall we write about? . . . Does it have to be true? . . . May we write a story? . . . I haven't anything to write about! . . . Won't you please assign us a subject?"

"Just write about yourself," continued the unruffled voice of your instructor. "Tell me where you have lived, what work you have done, what hobbies you have been interested in. Tell me about your education, your friends, your sports, your ambitions, your disappointments. If you wish, tell me what brought you to college, what your religion is, what your philosophy of life is. Write about something that means much to you. I want to get acquainted with you as quickly as I can. I want to know you as individuals, as persons, not as a class in English composition. The better I know you, the more I can help you with your problems in writing."

THE THEME

"Just write about yourself—" Troubled and vaguely disturbed, you left the classroom, confronted at the start with all the fundamental problems of writing. You knew you had something to say, for you had lived, you had gone to school, you had thought about your friends, about your education, your hobbies, your sports. You had read books and magazines. You had ideas about politics, marriage, dictators, unemployment, dancing, baseball, motion pictures. You actually had too much to write about. Your real problem was how to select one out of the thousand interesting subjects you could write about, how to organize your material, how to present it to your reader so that it would mean to him what it meant to you. You had to catch your reader's attention and hold his interest until he had finished reading what you had written.

You had expected to be taught how to write—if you are an exceptional student, you may even have thought of education as the process of learning instead of being taught—but you did not expect to produce a theme day after day, or three times a week, or once a week, before you had made your own the magic power of laying words end to end in such a way that they would come alive before the eyes of your instructor. You are told to learn to write by writing. And your common sense tells you that this is a reasonable method. In fact, there is no other way. We must all learn to write by writing.

The first few pages of this little book have been written to help you with your problems at the beginning of the course in English composition.

WHAT TO WRITE ABOUT

If you honestly feel that you have nothing to write about, the best thing for you to do is to write a theme explaining to your

WHAT TO WRITE ABOUT

instructor just why you have nothing to write about. You have never been outside of your own dull, prosaic, conventional town, where nothing ever happens. You have never read anything. You do not dislike hobbies; you are just not interested in them. Sports are a dreadful bore. You have no friends. Your parents just happened to you. You did not come to college; you were sent here. You have often wondered why you are so different from other persons of your age. In short, you are a monstrosity, incredible, an amazing *lusus naturae*—but, of course, that is all utter nonsense.

Actually you are a normal young person of college age, and your native good sense tells you that you can save yourself much fretful wasting of time by immediately taking stock of your resources. You can begin to organize and classify your experiences. Let us start this process of taking stock with a list of general subjects about which every college student has something to say:

- | | | |
|----------------|------------|-------------------|
| 1. Occupations | 6. Sports | 11. Friends |
| 2. Hobbies | 7. Morals | 12. Nature |
| 3. Reading | 8. Manners | 13. Pets |
| 4. Travel | 9. Customs | 14. Organizations |
| 5. Education | 10. Home | 15. Amusements |

Now let us take each of these large divisions and draw up a list of possible theme subjects. And, by the way, let us not confuse subjects and titles. These are *not* titles.

Occupations

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. Applying for a job | 5. The work of a life guard |
| 2. The lure of aviation | 6. How hops are picked |
| 3. Why I want to teach | 7. Running a paper route |
| 4. Washing dishes in a sorority house | 8. The waitress at a summer resort |

THE THEME

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 9. Growing prize-winning roses | 15. I know a plant hybridizer |
| 10. Why I want to be an engineer | 16. A clerk in a department store |
| 11. With the night crew | 17. Marriage as a career |
| 12. Delivering groceries | 18. I caddie at the country club |
| 13. I want to be a country doctor | 19. The work of a football coach |
| 14. My job is keeping house | 20. Does society owe me a job? |

Some of these subjects you know nothing about. Others you could discuss intelligently. Check these for future use. Now think about the work that you have done and the work that you plan to do after you leave college. Consider the various aspects of your job, occupation, profession, or career—whichever it is to you—analyze it in terms of your qualifications, the opportunities it offers, the spiritual and material returns you expect from it. Then proceed to add twenty more theme topics to this list. Record these in your notebook.

If you question the value of a theme of this sort, glance through some of the popular magazines, like *Harper's Magazine*, *Scribner's Magazine*, or *The Saturday Evening Post*, and notice how frequent are the essays or articles discussing either an occupation or the relations of men and women to the work they do.

Hobbies

- | | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. What is a hobby? | 11. Hunting with a camera |
| 2. What is philately? | 12. Making enlargements |
| 3. Indian relics | 13. Building birdhouses |
| 4. Collecting first editions | 14. Hobbies for profit |
| 5. Strange hobbies I have observed | 15. Grooming a prize-winning calf |
| 6. Hunting with bow and arrow | 16. What I know about guns |
| 7. Semiprecious stones | 17. Tying trout flies |
| 8. Building model airships | 18. Collecting sunrises |
| 9. Wood carving | 19. My short-wave set |
| 10. Mother collects antiques | 20. What my hobby has done for me |