

ADVANCED COMPOSITION: A BOOK OF MODELS FOR WRITING

John E. Warriner
Richard M. Ludwig

COMPLETE COURSE

FRANKLIN EDITION

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THE AUTHORS

John E. Warriner has taught English for 32 years in junior and senior high schools and in college. He is chief author of the *English Grammar and Composition* series, coauthor of the *English Workshop* series, general editor of the *Composition: Models and Exercises* series, and editor of *Short Stories: Characters in Conflict* (1981).

Richard M. Ludwig, who received his Ph.D. from Harvard University, is Professor of English and Assistant University Librarian for Rare Books and Special Collections at Princeton University. His publications include *Aspects of American Poetry*, *Letters of Ford Madox Ford*, *Dr. Panofsky and Mr. Tarkington*, and *Literary History of the United States* (with Robert E. Spiller and others).

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INTRODUCTION

How this book will help you to write better

The purpose of this book is to improve writing. We learn to write better in three ways: (1) by studying sentence structure, mechanics, and organization; (2) by reading widely; and (3) by writing and rewriting. This book provides you with many different types of good prose to examine and to use as models and suggests many techniques for you to imitate and topics for you to write about.

The essays and stories that follow are divided for your convenience into four parts: Description, Exposition, Argument and Persuasion, and Narration. As you come to each of the four parts, you will find first a general discussion of what is meant by "description" or "exposition" or "narration," and then, in the chapters that follow, a variety of models to illustrate the characteristics of the type of writing. As you read each model, examine it to see what the writer's purpose is, how the writer has handled the material, how the writer commands the reader's attention. The critical "Analysis," the "Questions on Technique," and the suggested "Techniques to Imitate" which follow most selections will guide you in your study.

You will find that most of the rhetorical terms used in the analyses are defined in context where they first occur. When a rhetorical term recurs, it is marked with a circle, thus: °, which directs you to the Glossary on page 601 for explanation. Here all rhetorical terms used in the text are listed in alphabetical order. They are defined in more detail than in the text itself and illustrated with additional examples. Difficult words, proper names, and allusions occurring in the models are also marked with a circle, refer-

ring you to a footnote which explains how the author is using the term or what the reference means. Words marked with an asterisk, thus: *, are suggested additions to your vocabulary. Look these words up in a dictionary and memorize their meanings. They, together with frequently used words marked with °, are repeated in a brief section called "Add to Your Vocabulary" after the model.

After you have carefully studied a model, you are ready to write. Suggestions for writing follow the questions on content and technique. Many of the models deal with topics about which you yourself have ideas, or they may remind you of experiences of your own. As you try your hand at an expository or a descriptive or a narrative or an argumentative piece, apply the technique you observed in the model. This does not mean that you should imitate slavishly the author whose piece you have studied. But every good writer, regardless of style, employs certain techniques which the models in this book exemplify, and which you too must master if you would learn to write well. These techniques are highlighted by the "Questions on Technique" and the "Techniques to Imitate."

Writing means planning

In undertaking any writing assignment, you will want to progress by several stages. You will not want to plunge into your subject at once, uncertain of where you are going. If you do this, your essay will be built on shifting ground, a house of words with a weak foundation. Suppose, for example, that your assignment is to describe a memorable personal experience. As a subject you have chosen your first journey alone away from home. As a working title you have chosen "Stranger on a Train." How shall you begin?

First, you will want to recall and make notes on *specific* details: how old were you, where were you going, why, how long was the journey, what happened? How did things in the train look, feel, smell, sound? Your title at first glance suggests *you* were the stranger, since it was your first journey by yourself; but you have, perhaps,

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someone else in mind: the man in the derby who asked to share your seat on the train. You will need to recall *more* specific details: who was he, what did he look like, what was he carrying, why were you suspicious of his behavior? Stage one, then, is the assembling of your material: who, when, what, where. These rough notes are a beginning.

Second, you will want to decide in what order you will use this material. You may organize it chronologically, progressing from your leaving home to your arrival at your destination. Or you may begin in the middle of the incident with the stranger walking toward you down the aisle. Or you may organize the composition not as a story, but as an essay, beginning with why this event was memorable and going on to describe the event and its effect on you. No matter which approach, which ordering of events you choose, a complete outline or plan is of great importance. You must have your conclusion clearly in mind before you begin writing.

Third, you need to decide where your main emphasis will lie. Although you are writing in the first person, is this a story about you, about the stranger, or about a journey? Let us suppose the man in the derby is the center of interest. You will want, therefore, to focus attention on him fairly soon. You cannot afford to waste words on unimportant details if your reader is to *see* this stranger, to *feel* your reaction to what happens after he sits down beside you and begins to talk. Following your outline will keep all details in the right order. You must also decide in advance which detail is to be the center of the composition.

Writing means thinking

All these steps involve clear thinking. In fact, good writing begins with clear thinking. It is impossible to separate the two processes. That is not to say that all writers elaborately outline their work before they put words on paper. Professional writers are able to organize their source material rapidly and concisely, sometimes out of sheer

force of habit. But these professionals have had practice in establishing the primary ideas in their writing, in arranging their sentences for strongest emphasis, in cutting away all unnecessary words and phrases. Much of their outlining is done mentally. Clear thinking and deep concentration are habitual with them.