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BOSTON

179019

RANDALL E. DECKER

PATTERNS
OF
EXPOSITION
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LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOG CARD NUMBER: 75-21262

SECOND PRINTING

*Published simultaneously in Canada
by Little, Brown & Company (Canada) Limited*

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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To the Instructor

Patterns of Exposition 5 retains the same principles and format as the four former editions. With the still rapidly expanding usage of the books throughout the country, we continue to question instructors who are using one of the earlier editions about their preferences in essay materials and their needs for any basic changes in the book. This time, in addition to a continuing dialogue between Little, Brown representatives and college English teachers, the publisher mailed extensive survey questionnaires and received more than eighty in reply. Although we have been unable to comply with all requests, most of them have been incorporated into this new edition and all have been seriously considered and fully appreciated. Few basic changes were requested. This fifth version was frequently suggested, primarily for a continuing change of illustrative selections to keep pace, to some extent, with the changing interests of youth. It is important, we believe, through fresh materials to maintain the same kind of teaching enthusiasm with which the earlier editions have been used.

Twenty-three of the most highly regarded selections from the previous edition have been retained, and many new selections are here anthologized for the first time. Three classical essays, each using one or more of the patterns of exposition, are grouped in a separate section at the end.

In this edition, as in the others, we have attempted to bring together the best readings to demonstrate expository techniques. We have also tried to make possible their convenient use in whatever ways instructors think best for their own classes. Versatility

was one of the many standards used in choosing materials; therefore only complete essays or free-standing units of larger works have been included. If these, with some inevitable overlap of patterns, are more complicated than excerpts illustrating single principles, they are also more realistic and certainly more useful for other classroom purposes.

Their arrangement here is but one of the many workable orders; the instructor can easily develop another if he so desires. To make such variations convenient, we have nearly always placed interessay questions at the ends of sequences, where they can be quickly detected and, if not suitable, easily eliminated or modified.

We have tried to vary the study questions — and undoubtedly have included far more than any one teacher will want — from the purely objective to those calling for some serious self-examination by the students. (A booklet, *A Manual to Accompany Patterns of Exposition 5*, is available, placing further materials under the instructor's complete control.)

Suggestions for writing assignments to be developed from ideas in the essays are located immediately after each selection. But for classes in which the instructor prefers writing to be done according to the expository pattern under study at the time, regardless of subject matter, topic suggestions are located at the end of each section.

"A Guide to Terms," where matters from *Abstract to Unity* are briefly discussed, refers whenever possible to the essays themselves for illustrations. To permit unity and easy access, it is located at the back of the book, but there are continuing cross-references to it in the study questions.

In all respects — in size, content, arrangement, format — we have tried to keep *Patterns of Exposition 5* uncluttered and easy to use.

The editor wants to express appreciation for the helpful criticism and suggestions provided by his friends and colleagues, especially Marvin H. Garfinkel, Margaret Hall, Hubert H. McAlexander, Margaret E. Svec, and Jack C. Wills. He would also like to thank Douglas Cope and certainly the many cooperative members of the Little, Brown staff, especially Charles Christensen, Margaret Zusky, and Lynn Lloyd.

Introduction

Exposition is one of the four basic forms of communication, more important to most people than any of the others — narration, description, or argumentation (including persuasion). The novelist and to some extent the sports reporter use narration and description; the lawyer, the salesman, the preacher become skilled in logical argument and persuasion. But these persons are in specialized fields, prepared by specialized training. People in such professions, like the rest of us, are also frequent users of exposition in one way or another.

Exposition means explanation, simply an *exposing* of information or ideas. Its primary function is not to tell a story or relate a happening, although exposition often *uses* narration as one of many techniques. Its primary function is not to create vivid pictures for the reader, although description, too, may at times be a valuable technique of exposition. The primary function of exposition is not to convince or persuade, although, conversely, logical argument and persuasion frequently use exposition as one of their techniques. But the primary function of exposition itself is merely to *explain*.

Even beyond our increasing need for informally written and spoken explanations, we use the processes of written exposition throughout college — in reports, term papers, essay examinations. Most of us use exposition throughout our working lives — in letters, in memoranda, in business and professional reports. Hence there are practical reasons why most college composition courses are devoted primarily to study and practice in exposition. And these, of course, are the reasons this book is devoted to the basic

patterns of and other techniques commonly used in expository writing.

There is nothing new about these patterns of exposition; we have been using most of them since we first tried to explain why some types of birds fly south in the winter. But mature writing depends partly on the author's being able to use *deliberately* whichever techniques will do the job best, with the least chance of misunderstanding. We study them to get a clearer view of their functions and possibilities, with the aim of being able to use them more effectively in our own writing.

We examine and practice these techniques separately, realizing they are seldom used separately in practical writing. After all, when we observe and practice for hours a skill involved in tennis or golf, we are not assuming that an entire game will be made up of serving or putting. In writing, we know there is no reason why a process analysis should not be used to assist comparison in some explanations, why illustration might not be valuably aided in certain developments by narration. In good writing, if the patterns do not overlap, it is simply because one alone is sufficient for the purpose.

But besides the study of writing techniques in a college anthology, we have a right to expect real benefit from the reading itself. Reading and thinking about new ideas or experiences is an excellent way to widen horizons, to broaden our interests — and that is an important phase of becoming educated. In general, each set of four essays in this book progresses in complexity and depth. Challenges help our understanding to reach an ever higher level.

The manner of approaching each reading, or the study of it, may be suggested by the instructor. If not, a worthwhile system for the student to give at least a fair trial is this:

1. For the first reading relax. Read the selection casually, as you would some magazine article, for whatever enjoyment or new ideas you can get without straining. Do not stop to look up new words unless the sentences in which they are used are meaningless until you do. But have a pencil in hand and mark all words you are doubtful about, then go on.

2. When finished with the first reading, put the book down; for a few minutes think over what you have read.

3. Then use the dictionary to help you understand the words you have marked. Do not make the mistake of finding the first or

the shortest definition and trying to memorize it. Instead, look at the various meanings, and for the word's uses as noun, verb, and modifier. *Think* about them. Pronounce the word. Use it in a few sentences. Identify it with similar words you already know. Then see how the author has used it.

4. After you understand all the words, read and think briefly about the assigned questions and remarks following the selection. (The paragraphs in each selection are numbered for easy reference.)

5. Then reread the essay, pausing sometimes to think and to *question*, underlining important ideas, marking sentences or phrases that seem to you especially interesting, misleading, amusing, or well expressed.

6. Then return to the questions at the end. You will probably find that you have already provided most of the answers. If not, give them further thought, referring again to the essay and to "A Guide to Terms" or earlier explanations wherever necessary for thorough understanding.

7. Next, try to *evaluate* the selection. What was the author trying to explain? Did he succeed in explaining? Was his endeavor worthwhile?

Useful as these selections can be, however, they are not intended as models for imitation by students. Each was written, as all expository projects should be, to give a particular audience a particular explanation. The style of some is much too informal for most college writing. Other styles, perhaps from a slower and more sedate age than ours, would be too stately for today. Pure imitation is not the purpose of our study.

But each of the selections does demonstrate one or more of the *patterns* of exposition, which are as useful now as ever. Each can provide, too, some profitable study of other sound principles of writing — principles of effective sentences and paragraphs, mature diction, forceful introductions and closings. The consideration of all these principles, instead of being handled in separate sections, is a continuing study within the basic framework of the expository patterns. The book is designed so that instructors and students can use it in several ways.

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