



Wesleyan's Freshmen English Student Might Benefit From A Program Such As This

Collegians at three Midwestern universities have apparently proved that they can learn to write simply by sitting down and reading a book.

Not just any book, but one a college professor has just published that may revolutionize freshman English at the collegiate level.

Its author, Dr. Fred L. Bergmann, head of DePauw University's English department, believes that "Freshman composition, which most of us see in college, is fuzzy, helter, skelter writing." With a grant from the U. S. Office of Education, he tried a quasi-scientific approach. Bergmann calls it programmed paragraph rhetoric. Sounds stuffy and technical, but freshmen at DePauw, Kalamazoo College and Ohio Wesleyan University proved it's not.

"No piece of writing will be any better than the paragraphs that go into it," Bergmann reasoned. So in his program he set out to teach students how to write good super paragraphs -- generally no longer than a page. Since Bergmann's premise was to teach his composition by self-instruction, he knitted together 124 pages of exercises dealing with the "hows" of writing.

He started with the simplest elements of writing and proceeded to the more difficult. For an opener he asks his young students to write a paragraph about their careers. When it's finished they go back and pick out the topic sentence, indicate spots where they meandered in their thoughts, and finally show examples of how they hung their story together. This self-evaluation, Bergman believes, starts the students on their way. Shortly they start evaluating paragraphs from the Yale Review, the Scientific American, Atlantic Monthly and other sources. They register their responses in multiple choice questions and then turn the page to learn whether they were right. The process depends on the learner pyramiding his knowledge as he goes, testing himself on the alternatives offered in the book.

In all three schools the book was used in lieu of conventional lectures on composition. A program pre-test and post-test

educated these results: At Ohio Wesleyan, where a 9-point grading scale was used, pre-test scores averaged 4.3 for 20 students. The post-test result was 6.65. Thirteen students showed 2.0 points or better

improvement; none declined. In fact, Professor Dorothy Whitted said she had the best set of final essays she had ever had from a freshman section.

At DePauw, where two classes used the book, "Paragraph Rhetoric," the average gain on a 100-point scale was 15 points (from 74-89) in one class, and a full grade point in the other. Results were less decisive at Kalamazoo. Eleven of 19 students showed improvement, five remained the same and three showed negative improvement.

Main objection to the program was what one professor called students' objectives about the impersonal and mechanical nature of the work."

Air Force Pilots Prove "Age of Adventure" NOT Yet Passed

In today's computerized world of mass-produced, labor-saving devices, it often seems that the individual has been lost in the shuffle. Many believe the age of adventure passed with no new worlds left to conquer.

Local Air Force Recruiting Sergeant J. D. Wright disagrees. According to him, challenge and adventure are still available to the Air Force pilot.

Today's modern airplanes are, of course, a far cry from those of yesteryear. They are bigger, faster, and demand much more from their pilots. Yet, the horizon still beckons the bold and the unique thrill that comes when man and machine are aloft above the clouds is unchanged.

"Pilots are a breed of man apart from the crowd," Sgt. Wright stated. "They're the pioneers of our time, direct descendants of the explorers and adventurers of years gone by."

Qualifications for Air Force pilot training remain high. Those who would qualify must be four year college graduates, under 26 1/2 years old, and in excellent health. The essential ingredient for would-be pilots, however, remains the age old desire of man to be master of his element.

Applications are now being accepted by Sgt. Wright at the Air Force Recruiting Office, 138 Western Ave., Telephone 442-2718.

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