

Tests Punctuate Paragraphs of Academic Progress

Variety Is Liberal Arts Grammarian

Tests are like punctuation marks in the paragraph of an academic year.

They can be strong and emphatic, like a period. Some are commas and colons, pauses before another clause related to the first. Some tests are exclamation points, indicating with gusto that the course has been exciting and absorbing.

Others are question marks, hinting that the essence of the course is still vague.

Many things affect the make-up of a test. The amount of material covered is, of course, important. But even more obvious to someone comparing tests is the difference in the material itself and the treatment it demands.

We have compiled some sample questions which point up the relation of the test to the subject or material.

As much a part of the freshman year as orientation are the required science courses. They emphasize memory of factual data.

Mr. Campbell directs: **Diagram and label the vascular bundle of a corn stem.**

Mr. French: **In preparing hydrogen by the reaction of a metal with a suitable acid, the source of hydrogen is 1) acid 2) metal 3) water 4) metal and water 5) air in the bottle.**

Later on, aspiring medical technologists, straight science majors, and home economics girls are faced with the same type of question on another level. A chemistry 209 final reads thus: **Illustrate the tautomerism of acetoacetic ester.**

The student is asked to prepare: **2, 5-dimethylbenzoic acid from p-xylene.**

These questions have objective answers. The education department effects a good compromise between factual material and student interpretation. For instance, an open book examination in Education 220 includes: **After studying the N. E. A. Code of Ethics, list those types of behavior which you consider to be professionally and personally essential.**

Psychology students are asked to apply principles to actual situations.

Here is a sample: **Analyze the following brief case study, suggesting the probable cause of the personality difficulty and one remedial technique you might use in helping the individual to solve the problem for himself. Jimmy, aged 6, has, in the past month, become antagonistic toward his parents. He is hostile in speech and manner and, three weeks ago, sneaked downstairs during the early morning hours and cut to pieces the upholstery of the divan and chairs in the living room. He is stubborn, sullen, negativistic, and does not hear when spoken to. He has just struck the boy next door with a stick and has hurt him rather seriously. We will leave Jimmy with psychology.**

English courses deal with literature and literature is meant to be

interpreted. But the facts must be mastered first.

In Introduction to Theatre, Miss Riegner asks: **Define and illustrate irony, suspense, dilemma, pathetic motivation, generalized character, complex plot.**

Then she puts this one out: **An inexperienced director has asked you to attend one of her early rehearsals. Although the cast has spontaneity and talent, the play has obviously not been blocked: the movements are meaningless and the actors are bumping into each other. Assuming that the director is open to suggestions, write a full paragraph on stage movement that would be helpful to the director. Be practical and specific.**

And we move away from the courses which demand even a slight practical approach.

Miss Byrd says on a Restoration

The Tested Ones Have Their Trials

There is an alibi for almost every bad grade. The following were found by writers in the **New York Times Magazine** a few weeks back to be the most often offered as excuses.

There must be a mistake somewhere.

At no time before the exam did I receive an official warning, therefore, relying upon the college, I merely maintained my grade. Surely, this should have been a satisfactory grade.

I know many members of the class who do not work as hard as I do and who got a better grade. I am recognized among my classmates as a good student—you just ask any one of them.

I was not well at the time of the examination.

This mark ruined my prospect of getting a scholarship.

This mark grieved my mother (or

father) whose pride I am.

This is the only course in which I received a poor grade.

It is not a higher mark I seek;

I care nothing for marks, I think marks are wicked and I disapprove of them. However, this pernicious system of which I am the victim requires marks for achieving success and, therefore, I seek a higher grade.

Several people around me copied from my paper during the examination, yet they received higher marks than I did. Surely, this is not fair.

I live far away from the college and I feel this extra-travel should have been considered when you gave me my grade.

I have studied this subject from the broad philosophical viewpoint and, therefore, I was unable to answer your technical catch-questions.

test: **Identify Edith Sitwell, Titus Oates, Dr. Arbuthnot, Mrs. Williams, Bowzybeus, 1631-1700.**

Then: Discuss the works of Swift and Johnson as illustrative of neoclassic principles about man, society, etc. and artistic principles. What difference do you find in the thinking and artistic methods of Addison and Steele and of Pope?

A typical Shakespeare question: Discuss the character of either Leontes or Hermione. Do you consider this character probable. What tone does the character give to the play?

Comparative religion reaches the heights of comprehensiveness. Dr. Sawyer queries: Hinduism as a religion is like a great, sprawling, multi-membered giant. Yet its views on Karma, Maya, Nirvana, etc., are remarkably consistent. Discuss these, as time permits, telling what hope there is in escaping the effects of Karma and caste. What role does the Supreme Being

play in all this? What is the after-life like, and what place does prayer have?

Dr. Lewis, in Philosophy 201, is a little more abrupt: **The Greeks defined "philosophy" as the "love of wisdom." Explicate this definition.**

In art, Mr. Shewmake wants to know: **On what grounds would Wilenski criticize the recent purchase of a new "Venus" by the Metropolitan Museum in New York? Or: What basic characteristics of modern architecture do you think would or would not make it a suitable style for building churches today?**

History is perhaps the most flexible material for testing purposes. Questions range from this type: **(A. Chaucer B. Erasmus C. Dante) wrote "The Divine Comedy. To this: Discuss this quotation from the standpoint of substantiation. "Frederick Jackson Turner has stated an undeniable fact that an organic connection exists between American democracy and the American frontier."**

The limited samples listed here imply the broad scope of liberal education. There is variety in kinds of minds, kinds of subjects, kinds of questions.

An attempt to understand a test in terms of what the course allows it to be might lessen the shock in the variety of grades available.

—Jo Smitherman

Beyond . . .

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ner in "The King and I," **Best Supporting Actress**—Dorothy Malone in "Written On the Wind," **Best Supporting Actor** — Antony Quinn in "Lust for Life," **Best Director** — George Stevens for "Giant," **Best Foreign Film**—"La Strada," and **Best Song**—"Whatever Will Be, Will Be."

Thought Jerry Louis was wonderful and Elizabeth Taylor and Eva Marie Saint the best dressed. And oh, that Yul Brynner!

"It's getting so that pretty soon there will be an award for every picture and, presumably, the ultimate will be achieved with an award for the picture that gets the most awards," says the **New York Times**.

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This 'natural superiority' idea of the Ivy League colleges is getting rather boring. Harvard grads Alan Jay (My Fair Lady) Lerner and Musician Leonard Bernstein have just completed a song for the old alma mater called "The Lonely Men of Harvard". Quote:

"We're the lonely men of Harvard,

Alone, alas, alone, alack, are we,
And that's the curse we've got to bear,

For our irrefutable superiority."

* * *

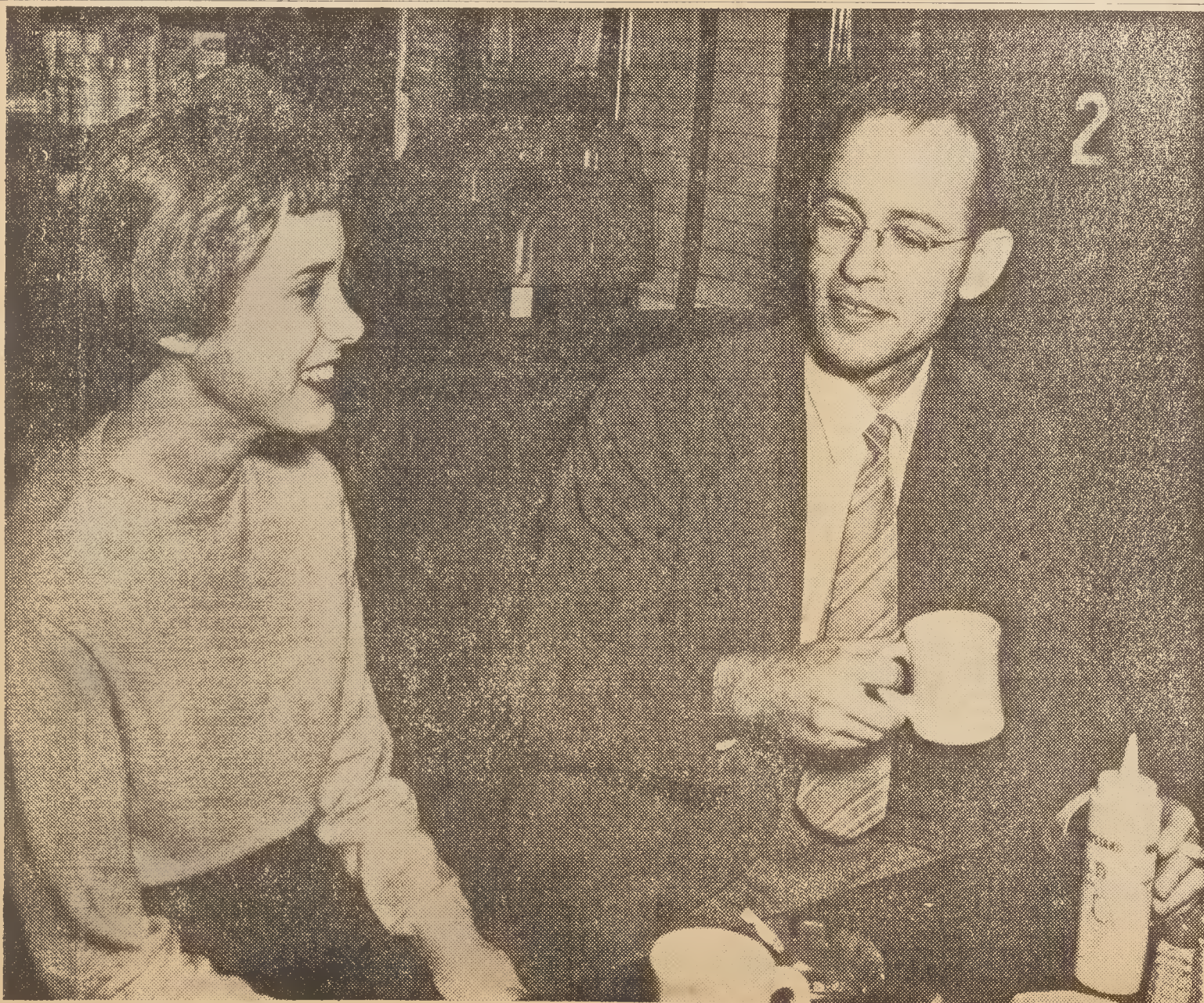
For those who go up to New York this summer, a plan to present Broadway musicals under the stars in Central Park has finally been approved by Robert Moses, City Parks Commissioner. This idea has been suggested many times in the past, but it has always been turned down. There will be a minimum of three shows presented and a maximum of seven. The program will consist of revivals slightly modernized and shows never before produced.

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One of the biggest playboys in America is **Lance Reventlow**, the son of Five-and-Dime heiress Barbara Hutton. Mr. Reventlow shows he is at least doing some self-analysis when he explained to reporters, "I guess you might say I'm a playboy. But I like what I'm doing and I'm never bored like so many people are who work all the time."

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If you frighten easily, stay away from San Francisco. Last Friday they suffered an earthquake that shook buildings, wobbled the Golden Gate Bridge and scared the inhabitants out of their wits.



Student-faculty relationships are sometimes cemented back into shape outside the classroom. Marcia Stanley and Mr. Shewmake, actor and art instructor, illustrate the process.