

No Time For Grading

Farewell To The Good Old Days

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The extent to which panic can generate shock and terror can most vividly be exemplified in recalling Orson Welles' realistic radio broadcast of Oct. 30, 1938, during a series of pseudo news bulletins describing an invasion from Mrs. and the emergence of the dreaded Martian monsters armed with death rays.

They landed in New Jersey first and spread to New York. Then came frequent periodic reports from various laboratories and research centers and government agencies, as well as personal appeals from public officials. They left havoc and destruction of all living substance and equipment. Neither the Army or the Navy was a match against them.

Thus a group of talented actors broadcasting "The War of the Worlds" unwittingly created chaos, by being excessively zealous and overdoing a vivid dramatization. Subsequently the Federal Communications Commission had something to say about their excessive realism. Subsequently many studies were made of the psychology of fear.

Of parallel significance is a new system of grading which makes guinea pigs of students. Last semester there was an announcement to a class of 200 students at the beginning of a course that there would be four objective tests of 25 questions each covering the text, and the reading of nine plays, all masterpieces, including a Shakespearean tragedy.

The text covered 3,000 years of theatrical history. And if the students applied themselves, this study would turn them into reasonably educated theater-goers, the instructor promised, who know what they seek when attending the theater. The students were cautioned, however, that there "was only one answer" to the true or false questions. So they set about compressing 3,000 years of history and nine masterpieces into the proper pinpoint answers.

Too late many confused students lamented about the good old days when an instructor gave an essay test for comprehension of ideas, rather than multiple choice quizzes for recall of fact. There were trick questions and the final had one "free question" as to the identity of a major athletic figure during a certain

period of time.

How can you have "one answer" for each play, Shakespearean, for instance? Is there nothing else to say? Then why have scholars throughout these three centuries debated and interpreted each phrase and word created by the Bard. Why the need, for instance, of the Folger Shakespearean Library in Washington, devoted solely to

the study of Shakespeare?

Comfort yourselves, students, that college henceforth will be a guessing game, and if you cannot get "that one correct answer," your fraternity brother probably will find it for you among records of quizzes the fraternities are supposed to have on file.

No more old-fashioned term papers for which neither the professor nor his grader

have time. "Let 'em guess the answer, and if they're wrong, we'll fail them."

Do they give these guessing games in medical and law schools? Will the "objective tests" teach the doctor to treat his patients "objectively?"

And why didn't the grader have time to grade subjective tests? That individual was busy with her duties as assistant, and teaching other classes,

as well as acting in a campus play. In other words, because she worked on three jobs.

Don't worry, parents and students. Things right themselves as a rule.

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