

# Names, Addresses, and Positions of the Charter Members

## Reading the Past

The Golden Anniversary Convention Program held a wealth of information about the Council. Another section that was particularly interesting to read was the one describing the visions that people had for where the Council and the teaching of English in particular would be in 2010. We have reproduced that section for your reading pleasure.

Members at that time also addressed two statements: *What Worries Me Most about the Teaching of English* and *The Change I Most Would like to See in English Teaching during the Next 50 Years*. The sections are reproduced on the *Reading the Past* pages. The pages listed as *Writing the Future* have been written by current members of the Council and reflect their current thinking for the year 2011, and their hopes and expectations for the year 2061.

## Writing the Future

C. R. Rounde, Head of Dept. of English, West Virginia H. S.,  
Milwaukee, Wis.

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# Reading the Past

## What Worries Me about the Teaching of English

Albert H. Marckwardt:

English teachers have accepted the professional obligation of equipping every child with a mastery of the language adequate to the social and occupational demands of the station in life which he will eventually occupy. Never has any educational system committed itself to the teaching of a national standard language on so vast a scale. Yet in terms of tomorrow's social and technical demands, we cannot avoid the responsibility.

Unfortunately, many students come from homes where standard English is not habitually spoken or written. For such, this phase of the English program means that the individual student must be led to forego his habitual use of certain features characteristic of nonstandard regional, social, or immigrant dialects and to substitute for them, features of the prestige or standard dialect.

Will our control and application of the science of language, our ingenuity in devising drill and practice situations permit us to realize this ambitious aim? We cannot afford to fail, yet linguistic and educational history offer little justification for the hope that we may succeed to the degree that our situation calls for. To do so will require every scientific, pedagogic, and educational resource that we can possibly muster.

Stanley B. Kessler:

My main worry may seem to be a petty one—I worry about the public image of the English teacher. When I have asked people to describe this image, I get pictures of guardians of purity in grammar, dictators of what is “good” in literature, sharp-eyed detectives with red pencils poised to “correct.” Seldom is the picture of “person first,” “teacher” later. The general reaction is all too frequently typified by this kind of statement: “Oh, an English teacher! I’ll have to watch my grammar.”

The image may be misleading, but many of us must have done many of the things that go to make up such a stereotype. All of this bothers me because the English teacher makes the greatest impact when he first has established himself as a person; then he can help others to decide matters of language and literature on their own terms.

How do we change the image? By changing ourselves, I suppose.

Richard Braddock:

What worries me *most* about the teaching of English in the elementary and secondary schools is the number of “English teachers” who are unintelligent, parochial in outlook, inept in the communication skills, and basically disinterested in making a profession of English teaching. As long as many such people are employed as English teachers and paid according to longevity instead of accomplishment in the classroom, there is little point in focusing major effort on lesser needs. If we had more English teachers who were intelligent, well informed, and skilled in their specialty, they themselves would solve many of the other problems in due time.

Instead of giving the stamp of approval to any applicant for membership who has four dollars and knows the mailing address, the NCTE should admit as new members only those who give evidence of competence. Furthermore, the NCTE should press state officials to prosecute administrators who employ inadequately certified English teachers. Certainly the NCTE should exert its best efforts to jar administrators into hiring according to merit and to jar its members into refusing employment in situations antagonistic to effective teaching. Instead of merely distributing resolutions on such matters, the NCTE should inaugurate a program of direct action, led by its accomplished executive secretaries and assisted by an experienced public relations counsel with a budget permitting effective action, even though this necessitates a substantial raise in dues. Until the NCTE takes such steps, it is selling short the civilization it professes to school.

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# Writing the Future

## What Worries Me about the Teaching of English

By Kylene Beers  
NCTE President, 2008–2009

I watched the two women at the bookstore’s “summer hits” table. They were looking for a novel for their book club. When they had narrowed their choices to two, one woman flipped to the back of each book and said, “Let’s pick this one; it has questions to discuss.” The other nodded and responded, “Yes, the time we had that book without a guide, no one knew what to say.” Happy with their decision, they took their books and left.

These women appeared to like books, certainly talked about a range of titles and authors as if they read often and read widely, and chose to spend their Saturday afternoon sipping coffee and searching for their next book. They are readers, perhaps even avid readers. But they didn’t want to read without those questions at the back of the book to hold their hand. When did that happen? When did we—as English teachers—so convince students that they couldn’t figure out what to say about a book that when they become adults (even adults who will join book clubs) they are still dependent on the teacher’s questions to have a discussion?

Did it happen when we confused a smart test-taking skill—read the questions before you read the passage—with a reading skill? I fear that’s part of the answer. I’ve watched Bob Probst do an activity with teachers in which he has them read an article before they look at the questions he wants them to consider. When he debriefs, there are always several who report that that being told not to preview the questions made them nervous. One veteran high school English teacher berated him, asking “How was I to know what to think about if you wouldn’t let me look at the questions before I read?” Most of the teachers nodded in agreement with her response, even those who were beginning to see the point of the activity, which was that out of the classroom, when students have become independent adults, raising those questions about texts will be one of their most important responsibilities. She concluded, “I would never expect my students to read this way.” And the nodding continued.

Once we’ve taught students (over the course of 12 years of schooling) that the way to enter a text is first to look at the questions so they’ll know what they should be looking for as they read, then we’ve told them, in essence, that they need to let someone else decide what’s worth considering. They become adults who seek out novels with discussion questions. Some grow up to become teachers who balk when given an article to read with no questions to guide their understanding. And some grow up to become a part of the increasing number of adults who tune in to watch what commentators say *after* an important political speech rather than actually watching—and questioning—the speech, themselves.

*The Atlantic*, the *New York Times*, and even *USA Today* don’t come with questions at the end (or beginning) articles. And not surprisingly, readership of those texts—both online and print versions—is down. What’s up? Talk news—news that is more editorial than fact, more interpretation than presentation—and most people don’t see the difference. As readers, we’re expected to decide when we stand in opposition to the text—any type of text—or when we stand alongside it. We are expected to interact with the text, to take those inkspots and turn them into the message that Louise Rosenblatt explained we could create by actively entering the text. Becoming a nation of readers means becoming a nation of thinkers, independent thinkers. That means helping students do far more than find the answers. They must discover their own questions. And so must we.

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# Reading the Past

## The Change I Would Most Like to See in English Teaching During the Next 50 Years

Robert Tuttle:

In 2010, all teachers were scholars who spent their time productively.

In composition, spelling, mechanics, grammar, sentence structure, and techniques of deduction were taught by automatic devices for learning. The machines also checked errors and gave further instruction when needed. Speaking was handled similarly. In reading and listening, skills, fact content, and literary facts were taught by machine.

What was left for teachers to do? Only the hardest and most rewarding things they have always done—to help the students toward new and meaningful insights and syntheses, brilliance of induction, and apt expression; to teach literature for its humane values.

Heaven was not yet. Teachers did have to help electronic technicians program the machine and to stand by to rescue the student who was too stupid or brilliant and so jammed the machine. Above all, they determined what could ethically be taught as fact and what as opinion—what as true and what as postulate, hypothesis, or best guess.

And what a mass of useless detail and false fact, they discovered, 1960 had wasted time teaching!

Arno Jewett:

During the next fifty years, I should like to see elementary, secondary, and college teachers of English strive to understand one another's aims, problems, and responsibilities so that they can work together much more closely and intelligently on local and state levels than they have worked during the past fifty years.

Experienced teachers know that there is much unnecessary duplication of content in the English curriculum, particularly in the area of grammar and mechanics. When, for example, a change is made in the teaching of language in elementary schools, of reading in the high school, or of freshman composition in colleges and universities, teachers of English at all levels are affected to some extent. Therefore, they need to *plan together* a curriculum which will accomplish the desired ends.

However, in some cities and states an entirely different approach is being used. College professors and deans who have not been in high school since their own or their children's graduation day are criticizing high school English teachers for teaching pupils to read, write, and spell. Curriculum committees representing only one group are telling teachers of pupils at lower levels what to teach. In some districts, high school and elementary teachers are working on their own separate courses of study without knowing what is being done at other levels. Criticism based on incomplete knowledge and misunderstanding may breed academic confusion and professional chaos.

Therefore, the change that I hope for during the next fifty years is to have teachers of English representing all levels visit one another's classes, discuss professional problems, plan sequential programs, and develop mutual respect.

Paul Diedrich:

I hope to see teaching organized so that:

—no high school English teacher need ever meet more than 24 students at a time except by his own choice;

—every high school English teacher may have one day a week completely free of class duties to see students who are either so far ahead or so far behind that they require individual attention;

—English classes will ordinarily meet two days a week; one for class discussion of books that have been read in common, the other for class discussion of student papers;

—two days a week will be devoted to “free reading,” probably in groups of about 200 students, directed by teams of specially qualified college-educated housewives (“free reading aides”) who will be on duty not more than three hours a day;

—one day a week will be devoted to a test and follow-up of “self-correcting homework” (exercises that tell the student after each response whether he was right or wrong).

—a paper will ordinarily be assigned every two weeks, but three out of every four assignments will be graded and corrected by a reader (a specifically qualified college-educated housewife). The reader will read about twelve papers a year from each student while the teacher will read four and check enough of the others to keep in touch with the program of the class.

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# Writing the Future

## The Change I Would Most Like to See in English Teaching During the Next 50 Years

By Leila Christenbury  
Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond  
Council Historian, NCTE

On the occasion of this NCTE centennial celebration, in the next fifty years I hope to see less high-stakes testing of students, more funding for school districts, and more attention paid to classroom teachers by policy-makers who wield great power but have concomitantly less than great understanding of the fundamentals of education. From my perspective, these three changes could absolutely transform education, especially at the K–12 level.

On the other hand, there is a change I hope I never see.

Twice a year in my department we interview the students who have been accepted into our graduate teaching program and, in the course of the meeting we ask, in different guises, why they are entering education. Over two decades of interviews, despite recessions, budget cuts, school shootings, testing scandals, and even a dearth of teaching jobs, the students I interview never fail to inspire. Year after year a new group attests they want to be teachers because they want to change students' lives, create lifelong readers, foster writers, be as good or be better than their own teachers, mold the future, and give back to the community. The sheer force of their positivity is consistently remarkable and uplifting, and after dozens of semesters interviewing these prospective teachers, I hope their optimism and idealism is a fountain that will never run dry.

Yetta Goodman  
NCTE Past President

When language is turned into abstract objects and single correct forms, students often conclude they are not capable of language learning. I look forward to a time when "language study" is the focus for students as well as teachers as they inquire into how and why humans need and learn language. They discover that all humans learn oral language and when written language is needed by a society or by individuals, they learn to read and write. They find out that in multilingual countries people easily learn two or more languages and often invent new orthographies for new languages. They observe how language is used by different people at different ages and shift to different forms in diverse contexts.

They document how language is used for thinking as well as for social communication.

Children and adolescents actively learn language easily in authentic and relevant contexts and teachers' most important role is to understand how to organize such contexts to support humans' marvelous language abilities. When students' language use is responded to positively by teachers and other important members of the community, language use is expanded and students become confident and competent language users.

George Hillocks, Jr.

The spring of 1956, I did my student teaching in a small town high school in Ohio. I learned how to take attendance and control classes as a group, to ask questions and listen to answers in recitation fashion, make assignments, grade papers, and plan lessons in advance to "cover" the required material. My classes and I worked on several minor works of American literature and *Our Town* diligently for the semester, focusing on the content and interpretation of the works which I elucidated for the students. The tests I learned to make were about what the class had covered, what my students remembered, not about what they had learned to do.

In 1961, I attended my first NCTE annual convention in Chicago, the fiftieth anniversary of our organization. By that time, primarily because of Bernard J. McCabe, a man who had become my mentor, I had learned considerably more about teaching: how to set up and operate activities that resulted in actual discussion among students with a good deal of interchange rather than simply recitation; how to construct units of instruction that focused on learning how to **do** things such as interpret satire rather than simply recall information; and how to develop what are now called "authentic assessments" that allowed me to assess what my students had actually learned to do. I had also learned to use, although a bit tentatively at first, small group work, which in the years since then, has become a mainstay of my teaching. In the process, I happily witnessed a dramatic change in the level of engagement of my students with the ideas, materials, and processes they studied.

Since moving to a university in 1965, I have taught, written about, and researched these ways of teaching extensively. Indeed, I am still working on that. Sadly, when I visit classes or interview teachers, I witness or hear about the kind of teaching I learned to do in my student teaching: covering material, recalling content, reciting known answers rather than discussing, and assessing recall. In one set of interviews of over three hundred teachers in five states for a book called *The Testing Trap*, less than one percent of the interviewed teachers indicated that they had gone much

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# Writing the Future<sub>continued</sub>

beyond what I had learned in my student teaching. Martin Nystrand found very similar patterns in his work for the book *Opening Dialogue*. Research indicates strongly that these patterns are ineffective. It seems clear that when teachers talk extensively about content, student learning halts.

I have one wish for the teaching of English. It is that teachers learn more and more about engaging their students in the processes of learning how to do things (procedural knowledge) through units that help students learn the processes of interpreting literature and dealing with complex problems in writing and that they do so by instigating real discussion in whole class or small groups, develop units that enable students to learn how to deal with more and more complex problems, and assess student learning of how to actually do things rather than of simply recalling what the text or teacher said.

Ernest Morrell  
2012 NCTE Vice President

I imagine that in 50 years it will still be important for our students to read well, to write well, and to understand the world and their place in it. Because of the tireless work of the members of NCTE we will be beyond our testing craze and back to the business of teaching our youth the things that matter. During our second golden era, I would like to see that our discipline has embraced the dynamic literacies that come with the advent of new media while still holding true to our love of literature and our belief in the power of cultivating the literary imagination. English classes will also be spaces where students continue to learn to write powerfully across numerous genres including the essay, the blog, the poem, the play, the short story, and the novel. Additionally students will learn the ancient art of rhetoric that they will apply variously to oral debate, to persuasive writing, and to the analysis of visual images found in films, advertisements, websites, and whatever new communications technologies that have emerged between now and then. Our discipline will remain flexible in responding to advances in media, but we will also remain steadfast in our commitment to the exploration of ideas, the construction of beautiful language, and to our fostering in successive generations of self-actualized readers of the word and of the world.

Victor Villanueva

Twenty-seven states have current Official English or English-Only language legislation. With all those Spanish speakers coming into the country, the fear of losing the de facto language of the land is apparently great, though if I remember right, folks of German ancestry remain the largest ethnic group of the nation. But English is resilient. Though parents now seem more and more to want their children to maintain an ancestral language, the children still acquire English as the primary tongue, with many second generation children still, despite parents' efforts, losing the ancestral tongue.

In fifty years English will contain many more words derived from Spanish. And maybe we'll be better informed of all those words that have roots in the indigenous languages that continue to survive (and given my own background, I think of words like potato, tobacco, hammock, hurricane, words whose roots reach deep into history, to the languages spoken by the indigenous of my ancestral land, Puerto Rico). But the English language will remain primary, no less than France still speaks French or Greece speaks Greek. And no one will know what a split infinitive is (most of my graduate students don't know now), as the need to imitate Latin fades further into obscurity, and the ways we speak our English will continue to relax, so that "mirror" will be universally pronounced as "meer" (as it already is on the West Coast), for example. But my hope is that fifty years from now Americans will have come to believe in the resilience of English, that we'll take pride in knowing that Americans speak in many tongues but recognize English as the primary tongue, that there is no need to pass laws that oppress while people learn the language that they will be compelled to learn to carry on the business of everyday life in an English-speaking country.

November, 2011

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# What to Expect in the Year 2010: As Envisioned in the Year 1960

## *In Elementary Language Arts*

Muriel Crosby:

November 26, 2010—and a new school year was well launched. Miss Dell, teacher of sixes, thought of yesterday's Thanksgiving dinner and the delicious one-pound turkettes each member of her family had enjoyed. "Big birds have certainly gone out of style" thought Miss Dell, "just like the horrid pre-primers my grandmother used to teach *her* sixes to read back in 1960."

As Miss Dell planned for her post-Thanksgiving language arts program, she based her vocabulary study on the children's associative experiences which would bring beauty and power to the words. The significance of experience or association in developing language power had become firmly noted.

The reading program in 2010 offered the sharpest contrast to grandmother's back in 1960. But the roots of it could be traced to those pioneer authors of the mid-twentieth century who had discovered that stories for young readers which exemplified fine literary style, interesting plot, and delightful illustrations gave greater incentive to learning than did exaggerated vocabulary control. Miss Dell thoughtfully examined her old and yellowed copy of a first edition of Dr. Seuss' *The Cat in the Hat*, that prime example of an exciting story, full of humor and rhythm, which had revolutionized the approach to the beginners' reading program so long ago. Miss Dell knew that many authors had followed Dr. Seuss in the production of quality reading materials, but *The Cat in the Hat* had become a classic, and Miss Dell cherished her first edition as a collector's item.

One of the most remarkable developments in reading during the last fifty years, recalled Miss Dell, was the spread and establishment of fine children's libraries in each elementary school. Miss Dell could remember her grandmother's account of the battle carried on by teachers of her generation to secure libraries for their children. "In my day," Grandmother had exclaimed, "school libraries were few and far between. When I started teaching, only three per cent of all elementary schools in the nation had professional libraries. And when I retired, only thirteen per cent had achieved this goal." Miss Dell found it difficult to imagine successful teaching without the library in her school and its wealth of resources.

As Miss Dell completed her planning for the following week, she smiled in satisfaction. Her youngsters not only *could* read; they *did* read—with pleasure, satisfaction, and competence. They not only listened and spoke with ease and satisfaction, but they also enjoyed it and were competent. Writing remained a skill to be learned. But the growing awareness of the beauty and power of words which her children evidenced continuously gave hope of eventual skill in writing.

Alvina T. Burrows:

The next half century will almost surely extend the importance of the spoken word in the affairs of men and nations and hence in elementary education. Language arts teachers will have many aids now too expensive for common use. Tape recorders will be as common as chalk is today. A great deal of composition will be dictated and preliminary editing done as children write their first drafts. Each class will have its own voice-printer that will turn dictated words into print. New composing and correcting procedures will be taught both for immediate and for delayed editing. Teachers and children will write many books. Children will have silent typewriters at their desks or cubicles and will type quite fast by sixth grade. One style of handwriting will suffice rather than the two now competing for time and energy.

Dramatics will reclaim its important role as one of the strongest of all teaching media. Children will express themselves abundantly in story and verse and will experiment in new forms that relate the graphic arts and music to language.

Books will abound. A library will be the hub of the school with classrooms radiating from it. In an age of electronic gadgets, literature will assume its greatest role as a preserver of the human spirit.

The biggest change, however, will be in the elementary teacher himself. Four years of training will not suffice. Perhaps seven will be an average. Liberal arts and professional preparation will have found a wise balance. Teachers will often deal with classes that cross age-grade lines, thus assuring continuity of language teaching and learning. The elementary school will reflect society's re-discovery that except for the integrity of language and the never-ceasing outreach of thought man cannot break the shackles of slavery.

## *In High School English*

Elizabeth Almén:

During the next half century the role of the secondary English teacher will change drastically. Teachers will be aided in a number of ways in their struggle to teach the communication skills to greater numbers of students.

The high school English teacher will no longer have a single classroom as his domain. The English department will occupy a suite of rooms. There will be a room designed for large group viewing of telecasts. Each teacher will have a private office where he will have on file a complete test record, a personality evalua-

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tion, and a sampling of the written work of each of his students. Also there will be conference rooms where groups of students will meet with a teacher to discuss the ideas presented on a telecast or the literature they have read. There will be language laboratories where students who make errors in usage or grammar can press a button and an electronically controlled device will select the proper tape which will drill them in their particular difficulty. Those students who are not proficient in reading skills will spend part of each school day in a laboratory with electronically controlled machines. Small listening and viewing rooms will be equipped with tapes and films of well-known works of literature. A piece of standard equipment found in each department in a high school will be an electronic device for machine scoring all objective tests.

Nontechnological aids to the English teachers will include clerical help in record keeping and test duplication and lay readers who will aid in theme checking.

The widespread use of television, tapes, and films will result in a more standardized English curriculum throughout the United States. To counteract this trend, local curriculum committees will give more emphasis than they presently do to the folklore and lesser known writers of their own region.

There will be greater specialization in the training for teaching secondary English. In 2010 when delegates assemble for the NCTE convention, teachers will register with such titles as Language Laboratory Director, American Literature Studio Teacher, or Reading Skills Specialist.

We shall certainly see a widespread use of the new communication tools which are now being used in a few communities on an experimental basis.

G. R. Carlsen:

Boys and girls will not really change. They will be troubled by the same problems of family relationships, of group status, and of conflicting values, but through the work of the elementary schools, they will read better and write and speak with greater surety. Teachers will also be much the same as they are today, coming from the same backgrounds, subject to the same fears, and pleased by the same rewards, but through application of knowledge of human development to teacher education programs, they will be more aware of themselves as human beings and more proficient in the social processes of setting goals and accomplishing objectives within groups.

Junior high schools will almost universally teach the language arts in a two- or three-hour block of "common learnings." They will structure work around a carefully selected series of topics, some centered in historical, geographic, or social understandings and some centered in deeply personal reactions to living.

The senior high school program will consist of extensive of-

ferings of one semester courses, most of which will be open to tenth, eleventh, or twelfth grade students indiscriminately. Such semester courses will develop from present "idea centered" units and from newer concepts of the communication process.

The very structure of the program will exert pressures that will make repetitions of content from semester to semester difficult, that will prevent profitless activity, and that will give both students and teachers a sense of purposeful direction.

Richard Corbin:

The year 2010 is a millennium away, not in time, but in change. As our conquest of nature moves onward at an accelerating pace, our English language—all languages—*must* grow. The world's vocabularies will expand to provide us with symbols for now undreamed-of understandings and events. The purification of grammar will go on. People in an increasingly populous, therefore shrinking, world will face ever more intense demands upon their communicative powers. They will, as they must, find new and more effective ways to teach themselves the useful forms and structure of language. By 2010 the human race may well thaw and resolve itself into an atomic dew if men have not learned to understand infinitely better the operation of language and to use it far more humanely than we now do.

### ***In College English***

William S. Ward:

A few prophets among us see in our newest technological developments and classroom gadgetry the beginning of the end of the professor in the classroom and the gradual decline of the typographical culture which has developed since the invention of printing. And no doubt it is true that complex changes are taking place in our concept of what communication is, but for the foreseeable future it seems unlikely that the importance of the professor will diminish greatly or that the printed page will become outmoded.

It does seem likely, however, that our technology will produce greatly improved teaching aids and will perfect the ease with which they can be used. The principal development, perhaps, will be in the use of sound film, which though expensive of production today, will probably soon be mass-produced by textfilm companies just as textbooks are produced today: films of every sort and for every purpose and in such variety that an English department will have its own film library and the technical equipment to make every item in it available in any classroom instantaneously.

All that the professor will have to do will be to notify his departmental film librarian of his needs and then turn the appropriate dials as a film is needed. There will be no cumbersome equipment to be carried, no screens, and no armful of illustrative

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materials to be provided by himself or his assistant. No matter whether he is dispelling the mysteries of the sentence outline, revealing the beauties of Wordsworth's Lake Country, illustrating styles of acting through the centuries, or showing the inside of an Elizabethan playhouse, he will have no production problem beyond that of a pushbutton sort.

Nor need the use of film teaching aids be limited to the professor in the classroom. There is no reason why the department's film library should not have ample laboratory rooms where a student can either receive remedial help on a matter that is troubling him or view a production that brings a classic to life before his eyes.

Glenn Leggett:

*Time:* Early fall, 2010. *Place:* Faculty Conference Room, Verbal Building, Northern Branch A, Great Western Universities. *Persons:* Supervisor, Elementary Writing Courses; four staff members serving on "course content" committee—Miss Pickle, Mr. Strank, Dr. Jones, Dr. Sledperson.

*Supervisor:* Each year, as you know, before we begin preparing a new syllabus, we ask ourselves if our basic assumptions in the last one were correct. I should like now . . .

*Miss Pickle:* Of course they are. I thought that last year we agreed to stop these pointless debates about aims and purposes. I now spend all my time, every day, making up new lesson plans and learning new texts.

*Supervisor:* I don't think it's that bad, Miss Pickle. It's healthy to rethink our approaches now and then.

*Dr. Jones:* Let's face it. What we really need is to re-examine our basic assumptions about the process of learning itself. Until a book like Smitzinski's *VERBALIZATION IMPACTS ON SYNTACTICAL UNITS IN THE LEARNING EPISTEMOLOGY* becomes the center of our approach in this course, we're not getting at the roots of the problem.

*Mr. Strank:* Oh, for Pete's sake, Jones, I'm an English teacher, not a psychosyntactical synthesizer. What these kids need is a book on "do's and don't's," some theme paper and access to a good magazine or two.

*Jones:* That's an anti-intellectual argument, if I ever heard one, Strank. These "kids" you speak of are complicated mechanisms whose gears haven't been able to mesh yet. They're not Pavlov's dogs, to be drilled in pointless precision.

*Strank:* Precision is never pointless, damn it, and I wish you'd stop talking about human beings as some sort of superior machines. These kids are human, but they're lazy and undisciplined. They need the security of firm handling and stiff practice.

*Dr. Sledperson:* All of you are right and wrong at the same time. Jones is right because he thinks we need a subject matter, but wrong because his subject matter is too far away from our proper concern. Strank and Miss Pickle are right in their focus, but wrong in their refusal to see that students have to write about something. That "something" must be the central subject matter of the course.

*Strank:* O.K. Sledperson, let's make literature the subject matter.

*Sledperson:* I mean language itself. If it is possible to study our history, our economy, our geography, why can't we study our language with the same honest objectivity and the same warm concern? English is a language you know. Why can't we teach it as such in the English departments?

*Miss Pickle:* Because your students always end up saying that if William Faulkner can write dangling participles, so can they.

*Sledperson:* Oh, for Pete's sakes!

*Jones:* Faulkner's old hat, anyway. Smitzinski pointed out the psychoneurotic syntactical confusions in him a decade ago.

*Strank:* Oh, for Pete's sake!

*Supervisor:* Gentlemen, please. We need now to have someone prepare a draft of the new syllabus, a point of departure for the rest of us. I'll do a first draft trying to incorporate the sense of this conference and then ask for your individual comments. I needn't remind you of the importance of our work. Ten per cent of the students entering the university must still take our course for they can't pass the proficiency writing examination. Incidentally, I understand, there's a move afoot to cut the requirement from 2000 to 1500 words and to give students 40 instead of 30 minutes to complete it.

*Miss Pickle:* Utterly ridiculous, if it's true. I had a real case in the office yesterday. She had a 750-word paper that had taken her 30 minutes to write. It had three misspellings, two very badly confused paragraphs, and believe-it-or-not, a fragmentary sentence. I'm glad that my own high school teachers aren't alive to see it. They'd be scandalized.

*Supervisor:* I wonder. They might rest a little easier in their graves.

*Miss Pickle:* "A little more easily," please.

*Supervisor:* Oh, for Pete's sake.