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Exercises in using the senses to improve the content of written composition

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Boston University
EXERCISES IN USING THE SENSES TO IMPROVE THE
CONTENT OF WRITTEN COMPOSITION

Submitted by

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CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND AND RESEARCH
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BACKGROUND AND RESEARCH

Purpose and justification of the workbook. It is the purpose of the writer to construct a series of exercises which will provide drill in using the senses as a means of getting ideas for and improving the content of composition. High school students in general express a dislike for, and even a fear of, an English assignment which demands an original written composition. There seem to be two reasons for this, both dating back to junior high school and in some cases grammar school days. First is the nature of previous assignments. An examination of the suggested topics for written compositions in several junior high school textbooks reveals titles such as the following: "My Hobby", "An Exciting Ride", "How I Spent My Vacation", or "What I Like Best about ______". It takes the highest form of teacher motivation to make these hackneyed topics exciting to a growing child bursting with curiosity about the world in which he lives. If these and similar topics are all that composition calls to mind, no wonder English is a bugaboo.
In the second place, too often it has been the correctness of the writing rather than the development of ideas and the expression of these ideas that has been the primary objective of the composition class. Bliss\textsuperscript{1} says, "Somehow our students have in the past been expected to acquire proficiency in composition from a very formalized study of the principles of grammar and rhetoric. Up to a very recent date, the chief emphasis in language instruction has been placed on form, not on content or attitude".

After reviewing the objectives as given in the courses of studies from 53 junior high school and 67 senior high schools, Smith\textsuperscript{2} states that there is a definite trend or preoccupation with the mechanics of expression characteristic of English teaching today. She says,

Ability to think clearly and to form independent judgment is fifteenth on the list of objectives and separated by a wide gap from the objectives above it. Only five courses refer in any way to the promoting of observation and interpretation of the life about one as related to the course in composition. . . . . The list of objectives suggests that builders of the course of study in English have need of returning with their pupils to the essential source of

\textsuperscript{1} Bliss, L.E. \textit{The Changing Attitude toward High School Composition}, unpublished Ed.M. Thesis, Boston University School of Education, Boston, 1931

expression--emotional and intellectual stimulation through experience-- to discover those normal activities of social and business life in which correctness and form of expression find their only reason for being. One would not be so bold as to make this assertion on the basis of analysis of courses alone. It is the result also of nine weeks of search throughout the country for classes in composition where ideas were actually being expressed. For days at a time one may accompany a principal from composition class to composition class in his building only to discover that each in its turn is "having grammar" or doing "punctuation exercises today".... Whatever the cause one is compelled to admit that the opportunity for expression of ideas in composition classes today is decidedly limited.

One can see no good reason why so much stress should be placed on form rather than matter. According to Lyman¹ very little research has been done to discover the relation between form and content. The outstanding study was made by Colvin² in 1902. He reported that there is a close relation between formal correctness and inventive power and that the two are dependent variables.

¹ Lyman, R.L. Summary of Investigations Relating to Grammar, Language, and Composition, University of Chicago, Chicago, 1929, pp.186-95

² Colvin, S.S. "Invention versus Form in English Composition-An Inductive Study", Pedagogical Summary, XX December 1902, p.393-421
The writer hopes that the general dislike for and fear of written composition assignments can be partly overcome by systematic drill beginning with simple exercises in using all the senses to help describe such ordinary objects as a stone or a piece of chalk. The development of a desire to write is as much the responsibility of the English teacher as is the development of the skill or knowledge of how to write. Rutan and Neumayer¹ assert, "If the pupil starts with a smaller context at first and achieves success in saying exactly what he means in a limited sphere, he will soon reach the point where he can write longer, meaningful compositions".

SUMMARY OF RESEARCH

Definition of composition. Cross and Carney² define composition as a "...skill in thinking through some problem and then writing out one's thoughts so well that a reader can understand what one has thought through".

Seely³ maintains that composition is "...the act and

¹Rutan, Edward J. and Neumayer, Engelbert J. "Composition with Meaning", English Journal, December 1944, p. 547
³Seely, Howard Francis On Teaching English, American Book Company, New York, 1933, p. 225
product of arranging, relating, organizing, rebuilding materials already possessed or purposefully sought and secured.

Relation between thinking and composition. Both of the preceding definitions of composition suggest the importance of critical thinking in the English class. There has been much written to maintain this relation between thinking and composition. Glaser lists "...to comprehend and use language with accuracy, clarity, and discrimination" as one of the abilities needed for critical thinking.

Cook says, "The teaching of composition is primarily the teaching of thinking..... To have something to say is the first prerequisite of expression".

La Brant emphasizes Dewey's theory that thinking is the behavior of the whole person in which emotional factors are freed. She says, "The purpose of the school is to develop active thinking citizens who are freed through lack of emotional blocking and

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1Glaser, Edward M. An Experiment in the Development of Critical Thinking, Teachers College, Columbia University Contributions to Education, No.843, Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, 1940, p.6


3LaBrant, Dr. Lou An Evaluation of Free Reading in Grades Seven to Twelve, Inclusive, Ohio State University Press, Columbus, Ohio, 1939, p.2
contradictory beliefs to use their intelligence creatively, and who are accustomed to using that creative intelligence in solving the problems they meet".

Salisbury states,

Thinking in any language is a two-way process. It consists of incoming ideas, ideas derived from reading, from listening, from observing, from sense experience. It consists also of outgoing ideas, ideas organized for a purpose and expressed in either oral or written language. Improvement in this two-way traffic is the objective of every English teacher.

Judd points out that there is a definite development from first impressions to expression. He maintains,

There is an uninterrupted series of steps leading up from the experience which are externally conditioned; simple, and immature, to the experiences which are higher because they emphasize systematically relations, abstractions, and broad generalizations. It is to the advantage of society that all individuals be stimulated to climb these steps as rapidly as possible. The acceptance of this view means that the major task of the schools is to attempt to teach all individuals to make comparisons and draw contrasts, to look for explanations which will bring together ideas, to apply the systematic modes of thinking which the race has evolved, and to express clearly in language the relations between events and between facts.


Aims or objectives of teaching composition.

Hitchcock¹ says two essentials are necessary in order to write well. The first is that "one must have something to say before he can say it, that subject matter outranks expression, that cargo is more important than ship". The second is that "teachers of composition are concerned not alone with the mechanics and craftsmanship of winning full possession of subject matter for composition purposes. They are concerned with all the mental processes which come before expression. Failure to call attention to these processes and to provide exercise in this pre-expression field is to overlook what may be the teacher's greatest opportunity for service."

Smith² lists fifteen general aims of composition teaching compiled from 53 junior high school and 67 senior high school courses of study. These aims are presented in order of the times mentioned in the various courses of study. As previously stated Smith shows that there is a decided emphasis upon the mechanics of expression. The desirability of having

¹Hitchcock, Alfred M. Bread Loaf Talks on Teaching Composition, Henry Holt and Company, New York, 1927
ideas to express occurs seventh in the list. As stated, this aim is "To develop power in selection of subject matter from observation, experience, and reading". This is concerned with such abilities as "....the use of reference materials without plagiarism, the development of keenness of observation, the selecting of materials with reader and occasion in mind; in short, everything associated with the phrase 'winning possession of subject matter' ". 

Stuart\(^1\) asserts, "The business of a composition teacher is to lead them (the pupils) to be seers and interpreters of what they see". She maintains that the big thing in writing is "....to have thoughts worth dressing up".

Whittaker\(^2\) suggests,

Before a writer can write with any effectiveness, he must be helped in the process of creation. He must be shown, not told, how to describe what he sees, hears, and feels. Only the keenly perceptive person learns the trick from reading; the multitude must be taught how to use facts, specific details, illustrations, and colorful words to make the writing come alive.

\(^1\)Stuart, Mrs. Milo H. "Teaching Young Writers To Be Seers", \textit{English Journal}, May 1943, p. 253

\(^2\)Whittaker, Charlotte C. "The Shared, Contemporary Experience as a Basis for Freshman Composition", \textit{English Journal}, January 1946, pp.21-9
One writer expressed doubt that everyone can be taught to write well. This is Middlebrook who declares:

A student, or any other layman, can only be himself on paper: he cannot sound better than his intellectual background, his social interests, his moral tastes, or his very temperament. If he can not say anything, perhaps it is because he has nothing to say, or he does not feel urgent enough about his ideas to share them with others.

Meaning of the term "creative writing". There seems to be a difference in the use of the term "composition" and the use of the term "creative writing" in many English textbooks. Often the term composition is applied when the required writing of the classroom is meant, while creative writing is apt to refer to something written for the sheer love of writing. Smith found that the courses of study she examined differentiated between theme writing and creative writing. She reports,

Creative writing implies such aims as "to encourage creative writing in fields of individual talent"; "to utilize the play spirit in imaginative and creative work"; and "to give appreciation of and ability to write specific literary types, such as poetry, short stories, and plays based upon real or imagined situations".

1Middlebrook, L. Ruth "Teaching Young America to Write", American Mercury, May 1943, p.253

Smith\(^1\) also found that the "...ability to write a descriptive paragraph, unified and coherent, sparkling with appealing sense imagery, and creating a definite impression on the mind of the reader" was classed as creative writing rather than as the ability to produce a simple, well-constructed paragraph.

Mitchell\(^2\) says,

Creative writing by definition demands first subject matter. This subject matter is drawn from innate ideas or from the material world transmitted by imagination, emotional understanding, quickened perception, observation and experience. Most young writers are usually highly imaginative with keen perceptions and appreciations of the vividness and sensations of their world.

Hatfield\(^3\) lists the following as specific objectives in stimulating creative expression:

1. To help pupils recognize the value of their own experiences.

   Every student is a bundle of interests, and enthusiasms, moving daily through a world of infinitely varied stimuli to all his senses. These interests, enthusiasms, and sensory

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\(^2\)Mitchell, Mary Alice "Creative Writing in the Elementary School", Education, February 1945, p. 337

experiences are his materials, the things he should write and talk about—always different from those of everybody else. Under no circumstances should the excuse "there is nothing in my experience interesting enough to write about" be accepted as valid. And probably no one really lacks imagination. An "unimaginative" boy may be experiencing secretly the imaginative shock to knuckles and shoulder from the impact of a blow in a boxing ring, but fail to react poetically to clouds and trees and flowers.

2. To amplify the range of pupils' experience. The degree to which people react keenly and adequately to stimuli depends in part upon their inherent sensory equipment. But it depends, also, on their own reactions. Such an interest can be aroused by a variety of teaching devices.

3. To improve the quality of pupils' experience by encouraging more discriminating observation.

4. To aid pupils to fit words to the details of experience. The extension of observation and discrimination, and the improvement of vocabulary are reciprocal. The new sensory experience demands a new word; the search for new words makes possible new sensory experience.

5. To help pupils discover suitable forms for the transfer of experience to others.

Getting ideas for written composition. Writing is really nothing more than talking to an unseen audience. The young writer should learn that he should use his own experience and observations when asked to write just as he uses his experience and observations as the basis of his conversation. If he learns to see and feel and think, he will have plenty of material for writing. There will be no reason for setting up an
artificial listing of topics for conversation.

Robbins\(^1\) says that writing is a psychological enterprise. She believes,

The writer, like any workman who wants to turn out an accurate product, must possess a knowledge of materials and tools. For writing of any kind, pupils are equipped with one set of tools, the senses, which gather the material from the outside world of books and daily life and present these data to the other tool, the mind.

Jefferson and Peckham\(^2\) also believe that the material for writing can best be found when one has become aware of the world around oneself. They say,

There are two worlds from which the substance of literature is drawn. One is the external world, a knowledge of which is gained through the five senses. The other is the world of ideas, the world of the mind. The successful writer is necessarily one who has the power, either natural or acquired, to look upon life with open eyes. As one acquires the power to detect the significant details in the conglomerate sweep and rush of life, he is likely to be seized with the desire to give artistic expression to his discoveries.

Junior high grades are the best in which to work with these ideas to a large degree, according to Thistle\(^3\), because it is at this age that "... the

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\(^1\)Robbins, Phyllis An Approach to Composition through psychology, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1929, p.1


\(^3\)Thistle, James Selby "Creative English in the Junior High School", Education, February 1945, p.341
imaginative and appreciative instincts are at their peak. Self-consciousness has not yet appeared to any considerable degree. Self-expression is the dominant trait."

Hitchcock\(^1\) has enumerated the following as suggestions as to what a teacher can do to "...accent the substance rather than the form".

1. Let the "winning possession" idea control, in general, the sequence of the course in composition.
2. Accustom pupils, from the beginning to regard compositions as, first of all, adventures in winning possession of subject matter.
3. Keep the winning possession of ideas in mind when reading compositions and criticizing them.
4. Increase the amount of time allotted, in classroom and out, to preparation for writing.
5. Experiment with simple exercises bringing into play the mental activities which should precede expression.
   a. Discovering through the senses alone all that is discoverable about an object.
   b. Competitive exercise in which the senses are employed singly.
   c. Competitive exercises in assembling facts, as preparation for writing a news story.
   d. Competitive exercises in accurate recollection.
   e. Competitive drill in discovering patterns, plans, systems of organization, structure.

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\(^1\)Hitchcock, Alfred M. *Bread Loaf Talks on Teaching Composition*, Henry Holt and Company, New York, 1927 pp. 3-21
Conclusion. A review of the preceding research reveals the following:

1. The amount of time spent in the English classroom on correct usage, punctuation, and capitalization as a means of communication greatly exceeds the amount of time spent in developing ideas for and improving the content of composition.

2. It should be a fundamental aim of every teacher of English composition, and especially of junior high school teachers of composition, to show the pupils that the material for communication should come from the pupils' own background of experiences.

3. The development of sense impressions is important in discovering these experiences.

4. Once discriminating observation is recognized as the basis for the details of experiences, the pupils need aid in improving their vocabulary so that these ideas may be accurately expressed.
CHAPTER II

DEVELOPMENT OF THE EXERCISES
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DEVELOPMENT OF THE EXERCISES

The following workbook is an attempt to provide exercises for junior high school students in getting ideas for composition and enriching their expression of those ideas through more careful observation of the immediate world around them.

Rounds\(^1\) points out that teachers have long recognized that when any class is offered an opportunity to write the members fall roughly into these three groups: (1) the few who have been waiting for just such an opportunity and need no further stimulus; (2) those who have ideas but are not sure about how to proceed; (3) those, frequently the majority, who seem to be entirely devoid of ideas. The exercises in the following workbook were designed especially for the pupils who fall in the last category although they may be used to advantage by all three groups.

The workbook is divided into three parts. Part one is a series of exercises designed to make the

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\(^1\)Rounds, Robert W. Teaching Creative Writing in the Junior High School, Published Doctor of Ed. Thesis, School of Education, New York University, 1942, p. 46
pupils aware, one at a time, of each of the five senses, sight, hearing, taste, touch, and smell. Part two is a series of exercises in which the pupil is asked to observe as much as possible about suggested subjects using all his senses. Part three contains exercises which build discrimination by helping the pupils select from all the details gathered those which best portray the mood. At intervals throughout the workbook are exercises designed to emphasize the importance of sense-arousing vocabulary.

In compiling the exercises in the workbook the writer drew from those she has found most helpful during two years of teaching English to seventh grade classes.

The material for communication, oral or written, is life. If the pupil can be helped to observe in detail and to think in terms of the world around him, it follows that he will grow in number and quality of ideas and material for communication.
CHAPTER III

EXERCISES IN USING THE SENSES TO IMPROVE THE CONTENT OF WRITTEN COMPOSITION
THE WORLD IS SO FULL OF A NUMBER OF THINGS

"What shall I write about?" How many times have you been guilty of this thought when you were asked to write an English assignment? If you have never had to wonder about what to write, it is probably because you have discovered by yourself that the material for oral or written communication comes from your own observation and experience. One of the first requisites of writing well, or speaking well, in fact we might even say of growing up is that you train yourself to notice the world around you. Yes, all of you have had fascinating experiences, but one trouble is that some of you didn't realize that they were fascinating and would interest your friends.

Helen Keller¹ who has been both deaf and blind since childhood wrote the following about using your senses:

I who am blind can give hint to those who see—one admonition to those who would make full use of the gift of sight: Use your eyes as if tomorrow you would be stricken blind. And the same method can be applied to the other senses. Hear the music of voices, the song of a bird, the mighty strains of an orchestra, as if you would be stricken deaf tomorrow. Touch each object you want to touch as if tomorrow your tactile sense would fail. Smell

¹Keller, Helen "Three Days to See", Atlantic Monthly, January, 1933
the perfume of flowers, taste with relish each morsel, as if tomorrow you could never smell and taste again. Make the most of every sense; glory in all the facets of pleasure and beauty which the world reveals to you through the several means of contact which nature provides. But of all the senses, I am sure that sight must be the most delightful.

Although this selection was written before some of you were born, it is still very good advice.

In the first series of exercises in this workbook you will be asked to use each of your five senses in turn--sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste. Next you will see how much you can experience in common situations when all your senses are alert. Then you will be shown that in order to have others share your experience vividly, you will want to select from all the details only those which will best portray your point of view or mood. All through the exercises you will search for words to improve your vocabulary so that you will be better able to express yourself exactly.

When you have finished the exercises we hope that you will at least begin to agree with Robert Louis Stevenson who told us "The world is so full of a number of things--".
PART I

SHARPENING YOUR SENSES

In this first part of your workbook you will do some exercises that will make you aware of each of your five senses. These senses are, of course, sight, hearing, taste, touch, and smell. Although you have had these senses since birth, most of you have never trained yourself to "make the most of every sense".

First you will do a series of eye-opening exercises. Then you will do some exercises which should help to sharpen your other senses. You will be amazed to find how much of the world around you that you have missed because all of your senses have not been on the alert. Train yourself to observe details carefully.
WHAT DO YOU SEE WHEN YOU LOOK?

One reason many people find it hard to write or speak interestingly is that they don't observe closely enough in life. Let's prove this with a simple test. All of you have seen the front of this building. Can you answer these simple questions about it?

1. Of what material is the building made? __________
2. What color is it? ____________________________
3. What color are the window frames? _____________
4. How many windows are there on the front of the building? _________________________________
5. How many floors has the building? ____________
6. Is the front door a single door or a double one? __________________________
7. Is there a window in the door or above it? ______
8. How many steps lead up to the door? ____________
9. Is there any inscription (such as the name of the building, or dates) anywhere on the front of the building? _______ What does it say? ________________
10. How many trees are in front of the building? ____

Multiply the number right ___ times 2 to get your score ____. Record this score on the graph on page 32.
WHAT DO YOU SEE WHEN YOU LOOK AT A PERSON?

Choose any person you have seen today. It may be a member of your family, or a person in some other class, or the teacher of your last class. Don't choose anyone you can now see. How many of the following questions can you answer about him (or her)?

1. What color is his hair? ______________________
2. What color are his eyes? ______________________
3. Is he nearer four, five, or six feet tall? _____
4. Is he heavy, light, or medium in weight? _____
5. What mood was he in (happy, sad, animated, puzzled, worried, etc.)? _________________

If a man or boy, answer these questions:
6. What color suit was he wearing? _________________
7. What color was his shirt? ______________________
8. What color was his tie? _________________________
9. What color were his shoes? _____________________
10. Was he wearing a hat or anything on his head? ______

What? _________________________

If a girl or a woman, answer these questions:
6. Was she wearing a dress or a suit? Or was she wearing a sweater and skirt, or a blouse and skirt? _________________________
7. What color (or colors) was it (were they)? ______
8. What kind and color of shoes did she have on? _________________________
9. Did she have on stockings or socks or was she barelegged? _________________________
10. Did she wear jewelry? ______ What? _________________________
Check with the person you are describing to see how many answers you had right on the preceding questionnaire. Your score is the number right times 2. Record this score on the graph on page 32.

MORE EXERCISES IN OBSERVING PEOPLE

I. Choose someone you can look at directly. Answer the preceding questions about this person. Write your answers below.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.
II. Find a colored picture of a person in a magazine. Study the picture carefully, then close the magazine and see if you can answer all of these questions about the person in the picture. When you have finished, check with the magazine to see how many of your answers are right.

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.
10.

Did you have more right on this page than on page 26? Again your score equals the number right ___ times 2. Record this score on page 32.
HOW MUCH CAN YOU REMEMBER OF WHAT YOU SEE?

Below are twenty drawings. Study this page. At the end of one minute, turn the page. On the next page see if you can list all twenty items. No peeking!
List as many as you can of the twenty articles pictured on the preceding page.

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Draw a line under the last article you listed.

Now look back and see which ones you forgot. Add them to your list.

This time your score is the number of items you recalled without looking back. Record your score on page 32.
ANOTHER CHANCE TO TEST YOUR OBSERVATION

Walk slowly by a crowded store window and observe its contents. Without looking directly into the window, list as many of its contents as you can remember.

1.  
2.  
3.  
4.  
5.  
6.  
7.  
8.  
9.  
10.  

11.  
12.  
13.  
14.  
15.  
16.  
17.  
18.  
19.  
20.  

Go back and check your list with the items on display. What did you forget? Write these things below.

Your score for this exercise is the number of items you recalled. Write this score on page 32.
CHECKING YOUR PROGRESS

Chart your scores from the preceding exercises on the following graph.

Number right or score

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 20|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 19|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 18|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 17|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 16|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 15|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 14|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 13|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 12|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 11|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 10|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|  9|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|  8|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|  7|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|  6|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|  5|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|  4|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|  3|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|  2|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|  1|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|  0|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

Does the graph show improvement?

If it doesn't, you need to do more exercises like those you have just done.

Learn to see as much as you can.
WORDS TO DESCRIBE WHAT YOU SEE

In order to express exactly what you see, it is necessary to have an adequate and reliable vocabulary. In the next few exercises you will be asked to list descriptive words that you could use when you talk or write about what you see. Don't try to complete these lists all at once. Add words as you hear them, read them, or think of them. Date your first entry and draw a line under your last word. Then as you make new entries, add the dates. As you "come alive" to more and more experiences, you will be adding more and more descriptive words to your vocabulary.

I. List all the words you can think of to describe

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Color</th>
<th>Shape</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
II. List all the words you can think of to describe
Expressions on Faces

The Way People Walk
III. List all the words you can to express the way the following may appear:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trees</th>
<th>Houses</th>
<th>The Sky</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clothes</th>
<th>Animals</th>
<th>Rivers or Lakes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TRAINING YOUR HEARING

Do this exercise anywhere. Shut your eyes and listen for a full minute. What can you hear? List the sounds. If you didn't hear at least five different sounds, you must have been in a soundproof room.

The Place ____________________________________________

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.
10.
11.
12.
13.
14.
15.
ANOTHER EXERCISE IN LISTENING

On your way home from school this afternoon stand on the busiest street corner you cross. Listen sharply for a full minute. List all the different noises you can hear.

Now choose a street corner where and a time when you know there will be little traffic. Again listen for a full minute. List the noises you can hear.

Compare your two lists. You may find your list of sounds is just as long for the quiet corner as for the noisy one. Why?
MORE LISTENING

Go to the quietest place you know. It may be your own room, the woods, or the attic. Listen carefully and list all the sounds you hear within a period of five minutes. Oh, yes, there'll be some; you'll be surprised how many.

Which of the words in your list seems the most accurate to you?

Underscore the two you consider your best choices.
FINDING WORDS TO DESCRIBE SOUNDS

What is the best word or words you can think of to describe the sound made by each of the following? Take plenty of time to do this exercise. Change it and add to it as new words occur to you.

1. Thunder
2. a vacuum cleaner
3. bacon frying
4. boiling water
5. horses running
6. surf breaking on a rock
7. a lawnmower
8. mosquitoes
9. tearing a piece of paper
10. a typewriter
11. wind in the trees
12. a hungry baby
13. fire in an incinerator
14. a locomotive starting
15. a locomotive stopping
16. the crowd at a ballgame
17. a coffee percolator
18. crows
19. very small kittens
20. at least four puppies

Don't forget to keep adding words to your lists on pages 33, 34, and 35.
USING YOUR SENSE OF TOUCH

You'll need a helper for this exercise. Have your friend blindfold you and then pass to you one at a time ten common objects which he has selected. (Suggested items are a pair of scissors, an eraser, a comb, a nail file, a knitting needle, an orange, a postage stamp, etc.) See how many of them you can identify merely by handling them. Have your friend keep score for you on the following list.

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.
10.

Do this exercise again and again with a different and more difficult set of objects. Keep a record of your scores on a graph like the one on page 32.
DESCRIBING THE WAY THINGS FEEL

What is the best word (or words) you can think of to describe the way the following feel as you touch or handle them?

1. sandpaper
2. the bark of a pine tree
3. the bark of a birch tree
4. an orange
5. satin
6. waxed paper
7. feathers
8. a baby's hands
9. a man's hands
10. cement or concrete
11. a kitten's fur
12. grass
13. rope
14. ice
15. a dog's nose
16. piano keys
17. clean sheets
18. soap
19. leather
20. wet paint
HOW'S YOUR SENSE OF SMELL?

You'll need help for this exercise too, and again you'll need to be blindfolded. Have your friend place a number of familiar objects or liquids with distinctive odors on small saucers. (Suggested items are a slice of banana, a slice of lemon, soap, any antiseptic, tobacco, any flower, turpentine, a mothball, vinegar, dry grass, pine needles, etc.) See how many of them you can identify merely by smelling of them. It's not fair to peek or touch! Again have your friend write down your answers.

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.
10.

Do this exercise several times with different items each time.
FINDING THE BEST WORD TO DESCRIBE DIFFERENT ODORS

What is the most descriptive word you can think of to describe the odor of each of the following? Try not to use the same word twice.

1. roses
2. pine needles
3. frying bacon
4. fresh paint
5. burning leaves
6. clean, starched clothes
7. an attic
8. wool
9. sardines
10. coffee
11. grape juice
12. mint
13. tobacco
14. a mothball
15. gasoline
16. antiseptic
17. onions
18. cinnamon
19. pop corn
20. sour milk
YOUR SENSE OF TASTE

You have now done exercises which required you to use your senses of sight, hearing, touch, and smell. Your sense of taste is greatly influenced by your sense of smell. However, there are a few definite "tastes" which you should recognize. These qualities may be described as salty, sweet, sour, bitter, and stinging. Think of foods that have these taste qualities and test your sense of taste in the same way you did the senses of taste and touch.

What word (or words) best describe the way the following taste?

1. Vinegar
2. oil
3. chocolate
4. bananas
5. radishes
6. ice cream
7. milk
8. pepper
9. postage stamps
10. burnt toast

Are you remembering to add descriptive words to your lists on pages 33, 34, 35, 39, 41, and 43?
A PAGE OF SENSE-ROUSING WORDS

Date your list and begin today to keep a list of words that will describe sense reactions. Don't try to complete your list at one time, but add a word or two each day as you think of them or hear them or come across them in your reading. Date each new entry.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SIGHT</th>
<th>SOUND</th>
<th>SMELL</th>
<th>TASTE</th>
<th>TOUCH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>gaudy</td>
<td>melodious</td>
<td>fragrant</td>
<td>spicy</td>
<td>blunt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gilded</td>
<td>swishing</td>
<td>rancid</td>
<td>savory</td>
<td>prickly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dingy</td>
<td>haunting</td>
<td>musty</td>
<td>peppery</td>
<td>spongy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PART II

USING ALL OF YOUR SENSES

Now that you are aware of each of your five senses, let's see how each of them plays a part in building your reaction to any experience you may have. First you will take some situations with which you are familiar. List all the details that impress you either through seeing, hearing, smelling, touching, or tasting. Don't try to limit yourself to any particular mood or point of view about the experience. List all the details that have anything to do with the subject in their proper columns.
A FIRE

A fire is a dramatic, awe-inspiring spectacle whether it is kept within bounds in an incinerator or a fireplace or whether it roars unchecked through a building or a forest. Recall some fire you have seen. Complete the following chart with details you remember.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT I SAW</th>
<th>WHAT I HEARD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT I COULD SMELL</th>
<th>WHAT I FELT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(To the teacher: The writer has found that after the preliminary drill of Part I has been completed, the pupils need to be given very little help in building their lists of details for the exercises in Part II. However, in a very slow group it might prove helpful to work out the details for one of the situations as a group exercise. Suggested details for the exercise, "A Fire", are given in the appendix. It is to be understood, of course, that these are merely suggested items. The lists are not complete now are they the only ones that pertain to the subject.)
**A CAFETERIA**

Complete the following chart with details showing how each of the five senses is aroused in a cafeteria.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT I SAW</th>
<th>WHAT I HEARD</th>
<th>WHAT I SMELLED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT I TASTED</th>
<th>WHAT I TOUCHED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A FAMILIAR PLACE

Go to some place that is familiar to you. It may be the attic or the cellar, the railroad station or a quiet place in the woods. Spend five or ten minutes exploring the place with all your senses alert. Then fill in the following chart to show how well you used all your senses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Time of Day</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT I SAW</th>
<th>WHAT I HEARD</th>
<th>WHAT I SMELLED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT I TASTED</th>
<th>WHAT I FELT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Almost everyone enjoys going to the circus, or a carnival, or an amusement park. Certainly there are many sights, sounds, and smells there. Yes, you taste and touch things, too. This is an excellent chance to show how almost every experience you have is made up of sense reactions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT I SAW</th>
<th>WHAT I HEARD</th>
<th>WHAT I SMELLED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT I TASTED</th>
<th>WHAT I FELT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
MORE DRILL IF YOU NEED IT

If you think you need more drill in listing details, analyze your sense reactions to the following experiences. List your details in chart form as you have been doing.

1. The Kitchen on Thanksgiving Morning
2. A City Street in the Rain
3. On the Farm
4. A Crowd Watching a Parade
5. Sunday Morning in Church
6. The School Corridor Just After the Dismissal Bell Rings
7. A Ride on the Bus
8. Shopping in the Five-and-Ten
9. A Walk on a Windy Day
10. Skating with the Gang
11. Wandering in the Dark
12. A Picnic
13. At the Dentist's
14. The Library
15. A ___ball Game

These are just a few suggestions. You can probably think of many more. Remember--"The world is so full of a number of things--".
PART III

USING THE DETAILS OF SIGHT, HEARING, TOUCH, TASTE, AND SMELL IN YOUR COMMUNICATION

Until now you have just been limbering up. Now you will do some actual writing. Keep making those lists of sense details until you feel you can make them mentally. However merely listing all these details in sentence form will not make interesting paragraphs. Now comes the task of selecting the details that will portray exactly what you want your readers to experience. For example, you and your mother may be writing to your aunt about your new collie puppy. You may mention how pretty your pet looks as the wind ruffles his long, shaggy fur. Your mother, no doubt, mentions how the loose hair on the rug makes her housework more difficult. You and your mother will be describing the same animal but you will be doing it with different points of view.

In Part III of your workbook you will be asked to write many paragraphs. In each you will use the details you have discovered by using your senses critically, but you will use only the details that will portray the mood or point of view you wish to portray.
A BALL GAME

Recall a ball game you have seen or taken part in recently. Better still if you know there is going to be a game you could watch this afternoon, wait and do this exercise after you have seen the game. Make a chart as we have been doing showing how all the senses are at work building up the complete experience in our mind. List as many details as you can. Later we'll pick out the ones we need for a composition.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT I SAW</th>
<th>WHAT I HEARD</th>
<th>WHAT I COULD TOUCH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT I TASTED</th>
<th>WHAT I SMELLED</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Place a figure 1 beside the items you would experience if you were playing and a figure 2 beside those which you would have if you were just watching the game. You'll have both figures beside some of the details.
A BALL GAME (continued)

Using the details you listed on the preceding page, write about the game from the player's point of view.

Write about the same game from the spectator's point of view.
A FIRE

Using the details you listed in Part II on page 47, write a description of a fire. Use some of the sense-rousing words you have listed on page 45. (Are you adding to this list regularly?) Make us see, hear, smell, and feel what you did about this fire.

(To the teacher: Many paragraphs about various subjects written by seventh grade pupils who had received drill in using the senses are included in the appendix. These paragraphs are not included as examples of excellent writing but as examples of satisfactory work.)
DESCRIBING A CAFETERIA

Look back over the details you listed about the cafeteria. Write a paragraph description of the cafeteria as it would appear to

(1) a clerk from a nearby office who only wants a sandwich and coffee before going shopping.

(2) a refugee from some war-ravaged country.
MORE EXERCISES IN FINDING DETAILS AND THEN SELECTING THE ONES THAT WILL EXPRESS A CERTAIN POINT OF VIEW

All of the following topics are familiar ones. First, make a chart of details to show how each of the five senses plays a part in forming the over-all picture. Then write a paragraph using only the details that will portray the point of view or mood suggested by one of the sub-headings.

I. Building a Shack
   a. As the boys building it see it.
   b. As the neighbors see it.

II. A Railroad Station
    a. Before the train comes in.
    b. After the train has left.

III. A Department Store before Christmas
    a. As experienced by a small child.
    b. As experienced by a clerk.
    c. As experienced by a last-minute shopper.

IV. Thanksgiving Dinner (or any large, family dinner)
    a. From the viewpoint of a hungry youngster.
    b. From the viewpoint of the person who prepared the meal.

V. A Deserted House
   a. In the daytime.
   b. At night.

VI. Any Person's Appearance
    a. As described by a friend.
    b. As described by someone who dislikes the person.

VII. A Lady's Hat
    a. As she thinks about it.
    b. As her husband thinks about it.
IN CONCLUSION

By now you should be ready to agree with what we said on the first page. There is plenty to write or talk about in the world around us if we only take the time to see it and think about it.

Once we realize the abundance of material and learn to "sense" this material, the battle is partly won. As in every kind of work, the only way to improve is to keep at it. We hope you continue to observe and to get new ideas.

Make it a point to write a paragraph a day about anything that appeals to you whether it is a pebble, an elm tree, a deserted house, or a lady's hat. An excellent idea is to keep a diary-- not the ordinary kind, but one in which you write a short paragraph each day about something in particular that you have noticed. Tell which senses were aroused and how they were roused. You'll find it will not only help to improve your writing, but you'll also become more observant and have many interesting things to talk and write about.

"The world is so full of a number of things--"
CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS
CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to provide a workbook containing exercises which would be helpful to junior high school students who are at a decided loss because they feel they have no ideas about which they can express themselves. The workbook contains exercises in using the senses as a means of getting ideas for and improving the content of composition. There are three parts to the workbook. Part I is a series of exercises designed to make the pupil aware, one at a time, of each of his five senses, sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell. Part II contains exercises in which the pupil is asked to observe as much as possible about suggested subjects by using all of his senses. Part III provides opportunity to use the details of sense awareness as the material for communication.

The writer does not presume that these are the only exercises that could be developed in this area of thinking. The exercises included are those which the writer found very helpful in teaching her seventh grade English classes.

In the appendix the writer has included a sampling of paragraphs written by the pupils that shows the kind
of results that can be obtained after the pupils have become aware that their five senses can provide material for communication. None of the paragraphs is presented as a sample of excellent writing. Each shows an attempt by the pupils to present their own observations of the world around them. Each shows a desire on the pupils' part to present these observations with vivid sense arousing sentences.

By becoming aware of how very much each of the pupils can experience in ordinary situations through the use of all of his senses and then by using these observations as the material for expression, pupils will lose their dread for assignments in composition and will show noticeable improvement in their choice of material and in the content of their communication, both oral and written.
CHAPTER V

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY
CHAPTER V

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

1. Since these exercises were developed and used with only two classes and those two being in a small rural community, it is suggested that the same exercises be used with many more classes in order to prove their merit.

2. Other exercises in using the senses need to be developed.

3. Other ways of improving composition need to be developed and tested. There is a great need for studies of ways to improve the content of all kinds of communication.
APPENDIX

The following is a list of details that might be included in the exercise on page 47. The subject is a forest fire. This is not a complete list of details for this subject. It is included here for suggestive purposes only.

A Forest Fire

What I saw

variety of colors in the flames
different shades of smoke
fire engines
fire fighters
tall trees charred by the flames
bushes and shrubs completely burned over
black ground left after the fire
streams of water played on the flames
frightened animals

What I heard

crash of falling trees
hiss of water
shouts of firemen
cries of animals
roar and crackle of the flames
people coughing
sirens
sound of water pumps

What I could smell

smoke
perspiration
hot engines on the fire engines
chemicals
pine needles

What I felt

intense heat
dismay about the needless waste
perspiration trickling down face and neck
spray from water hoses
slight burns on hands or face
fatigue
thirst
branches brushing against you
The examples of pupils' work that follow were written after exercises similar to those in the preceding workbook had been done by the pupils.

The first few paragraphs were written one morning when the teacher learned that nearly every member of the class had witnessed, on the preceding afternoon, a forest fire on the outskirts of the town. After about ten minutes of very spontaneous oral communication about the fire, each pupil was given paper on which to record his own impressions. These proved to be so much better than anything the pupils had written before that they were corrected, recopied, and placed on the bulletin board for the other classes to read.

Following the paragraphs about the fire are four written by members of another group. The pupils in this class were asked to watch, on their way home from school, the way people acted in the wind and to notice any signs of the wind's strength. It was a particularly windy March day. The next day in class a few minutes were spent orally giving details that members of the class had noticed. Then each pupil was asked to write, using not more than five sentences, what he had observed.

The other paragraphs of pupils' work that are included in this summary are more samplings of the written work done after sense-arousing exercises had been completed. None of
the paragraphs is presented as a sample of excellent writing. Each shows an attempt by the pupils to present their own observations of the world around them. Each shows a desire on the pupil's part to present these observations with vivid sense-arousing sentences.

THE FIRE

Flames were all around. You could hear the fire engines and the yells of the fire fighters. Once in a while you could glimpse a blazing tree falling through the thick smoke. You could almost taste the smoke it was so thick. Little animals were fleeing to safety. The smoke made your eyes smart. More engines from neighboring towns came to help. The fire was spreading. The heat was getting worse. Soon there was nothing left of the fire but a smoldering mass of blackened trees.

Jean C.

The yellowish red flames with the black smoke ranging in the sky were taking a heavy toll of the trees in their path of destruction. The falling trees crackled and crashed. The water sizzled as it hit the hot wood. The whole forest, once a peaceful pine grove, soon was a blazing inferno. You could smell the chemicals that the firemen were using. The smoke made you cough and sputter.

Patrick

The hungry flames leaped high around the trees. The smoke was so thick the firemen could hardly see. Water spurted from the hose and pounced on some little flame and killed it. Trees were falling. The intense heat drove the firefighters back. Many people were coughing and choking. At last they put the fire out. It was hard to believe that once this place had been a beautiful green forest. Nothing remained now but a mass of black, burnt trees.

Barbara F.

A huge fire blazed and crackled. People were yelling orders. The fire engines raced to get to the fire. Soon you could hear the pumps working and the hiss as the water hit the flames. The smoke whirléd into the air. People choked and coughed. There was the smell of smoke and perspiration and chemicals in the air. The flames that had been ranging high into the sky a short time ago were gradually controlled. Soon the fire was out.

Lois H.
A WINDY DAY

The little boy coming down the road looked as though he were trying to push a five-ton truck. The trees were bent over like old men and their finger-like branches seemed to dart out and grab at the air around them. The wind shrieked and whistled. The smoke from the chimney didn't even get started before the wind had taken it and blown it away. Donald M.

Many women, one hand holding their coats, the other on their heads, were moving at a cautious rate. Old men with red noses, big safety pins at the collars of their overcoats, and shuffling feet blew their warm breath into the cold air. Little children in carriages bawled without hesitation and poor "mama" had to tuck them in every few minutes. Jane C.

Everybody acted as if he were afraid of the wind. It was making them go where he wished. It was so strong I could feel it through my heavy coat. It slapped me on the back and pushed me. The wind was the boss of everything including me. Nancy H.

Doors were slamming and the wind was howling for joy. The branches and the trees were doing their bending exercises. The wind played tag with me. The pond must have liked the wind because it was leaping and rolling with joy. But the smoke from the chimney must have been tired because it couldn't get past the chimney top. David G.

MISCELLANEOUS TOPICS

I always enjoy a walk in the woods. There is a welcome mat of moss and pine needles at my feet. There is a special kind of piney perfume in the air. The green and brown draperies are always fresh. The music supplied by the birds is both mellow and smooth. Everything is calm and peaceful. Priscilla L.

While I was walking through the woods, I heard the chatter of some squirrels. I watched as they raced from limb to limb like acrobats at the circus. The wind made the pine trees bow as if they wanted to ask for the next dance. I heard the low gurgle of the brook hurrying on to the big pond. A rabbit lifted up his big ears, but bounded away on velvet feet when it saw me. Corinne N.
I arose early. The air was brisk and snappy. I got into my kayak and slid through the water as quietly as a water snake. The quietness engulfed me like a fog. When I landed, I started toward Hell Rock. As I rounded a curve in the path, I saw a magnificent buck deer. His muscles rippled each time he moved. He kept sniffing the air. Quickly and quietly I raised my gun, but I must have been deer-struck. I couldn't shoot. I lowered the gun and watched.

Robert B.

It suddenly became quite dark. Lightning flashed. You could hear the thunder rumbling not too far away. Then the rain came pouring down. Everything looked dark and dreary. Our chickens were falling over themselves trying to get to their house. The attendant at the gas station next door ran out to answer the impatient tooting of a car that needed gas. He had no raincoat and ran about with his shoulders hunched. The bus stopped and people ran toward their homes.

As suddenly as it started, the rain stopped. The sun shone. There was a rainbow in the sky. The wet grass sparkled. The birds in a nearby tree started to sing again. Betty G.
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