911: For Secondary English Teachers

An Honors Thesis (HOMS 499)

by

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Muncie, Indiana

Thesis: 1996

Graduation: December 1996
Purpose of Thesis

The thirty innovative teaching activities compiled in this collection are a myriad of useful ideas for the secondary English teacher or by the teacher reading, writing, speaking, dictating, listening, and literature in the classroom. Any one of these innovative activities might be used as they appear, or altered to suit different students' purposes and programs. From this collection, teachers are choir to select, adapt, or integrate ideas while keeping in mind the students they work with and have.

911: For Secondary English Teachers is designed as a reference resource which contains creative activities that show students the expanded world of English.

Acknowledgements

First, I would like to thank Dr. Daryl B. Adrian who prepared the English Departmental Book a program, supervised our four departmental projects, and is a constant source of encouragement. Thanks to Dr. Shirley Booth for inspiring me to begin and continue to pursue my degree in education at the Barbour Park to making me love the MLA research methodology during my senior year at Marion High School, and to Mrs. Mildred Birkle for making me work so hard on my Teacher's Certificate during my junior year. These times were really an help. I would like to thank Dr. Robert E. Haddix, Dr. Y. M. Hata, and Dr. Andrew K. Borthwick for their extraordinary classroom instruction, constructive criticism, and support on my other three departmental projects. Also, thanks to Dr. Beverly R. Senger, who gave me my first glimpse into the Barbour State English program and who provided remarkable instructions for research and the incentives to achieve well. Much thanks also to Dr. Clinton A. Hanes, who emphasized the need of creative activities for the classroom to Dr. Wallace B. Guppy. He presents motivational techniques in his classroom and to Dr. F. R. Smith, who does a wonderful job guiding students through activities of the writing process at Marion by you through all the confusion. Thank you also to Dr. Frank O. Golding, Dr. Linda F. Hanes, Dr. Dennis B. Heims, Dr. C. Wade Johnson, Dr. G. Paul G. Kolzinski, Dr. William P. Minter, and Dr. Carolyn J. MacFarlane. Thanks to Dr. Anne F. Wittlin, whose advice led to this departmental project. Finally, I would like to express my extreme gratitude to Dr. Carol R. Barrett, who is kind enough to act as my chief departmental project advisor and first opened my eyes to the need of innovative activities for teaching the secondary English student. She provides guidance when there are doubts and helpful criticisms when needed. Moreover, thanks to the Marion College staff and those who prepare the helpful Marion Guide. Without these aforementioned people, this departmental project would have never been realized.
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Introduction

The thirty activities in this volume are arranged in six sections: Reading, Writing, Speaking, Listening, Language, and Literature. Each section begins with a brief explanation of the unit. Following the brief statement are five innovative activities related to the particular area. In the first section are activities related to reading. In the second section are activities aimed at encouraging writing. The third section deals with activities to stimulate speaking. Innovative listening activities are located following the speaking section. The fifth section of this volume focuses on exciting language activities. The last section contains activities related to literature. This method of organization naturally allows for overlapping. An example of such overlapping is found in the Listening section. Activity 4: "Selling Freezers to Eskimos." This activity employs both speaking and listening skills. Each of the six sections are self-contained, numbered separately, and labeled by subject headings. For example, Reading 2 identifies the second page of the Reading section, whereas Listening 3 identifies the third page of the Listening section. All of the activities are aimed at the secondary level student and intended to help make learning English enjoyable as well as educational.
According to Leonard H. Clark and Irving S. Starr, authors of *Secondary School Teaching Methods*, "[r]eading has two major functions in the school, as it has in life itself. It provides a source of information and ideas, and, equally important, it is a source of enjoyment" (264). The teacher must emphasize each of these aspects in order to truly teach the learning and pleasure gained through reading. Reading is a difficult skill to learn, takes years to master, and continues into our adult lives. Therefore, it stands to reason that a reading program that continues the development of reading skills in junior and senior high are necessary.

By the time students reach the junior high years, they have reached a time in their educational lives where they experience more and more reading and less time to read. In addition, the reading level becomes more difficult. Faced with the increased amount of reading and less time to read, the students often become frustrated and bored (Clark and Starr 265). I have selected the following five innovative reading activities in hopes of addressing the issue of the frustrated and bored secondary student.

Activity 1: "Celebrities Celebrating Reading" (Level 9-12)

1.) As a part of a special celebration of reading, I will ask students to brainstorm for the names of celebrities to whom they might want to write. On the chalkboard, I will list possible categories as:
   * Authors
   * Actors
   * Musicians
   * Comedians
   * Political Leaders
   * Religious Leaders
   * Businessmen
   * Sports Figures
   * Pro Wrestlers
   * Models
   * Royalty

2.) I will pass around twenty-six sheets of paper, each headed by a letter of the alphabet. Students will then add to the sheets as many names as they can think of, and, at the end of class, I will collect the sheets and prepare a "Celebrity Name List" handout.

3.) Students will be given the "Celebrity Name List" handout in order to select the name of the celebrity to whom they wish to write.

4.) Next, I will lead a class discussion emphasizing the purpose of the assignment. The main purpose of the assignment is to raise students' consciousness regarding the importance of reading.

5.) In addition to the emphasis on purpose, I will explain that the letters need to include a request for:
   * an 8" x 10" glossy photograph
   * a brief statement about the celebrity’s favorite book and the impact it made on them

6.) I will also explain that the students need to:
   * use the school address for the return address
   * include a self-addressed stamped envelope (8 1/2" x 11")

7.) Class time will be given in order for the students to write the first drafts of their letters.

8.) Then, the class will be divided into groups with approximately six students in each group.

9.) The peer groups will meet for a peer editing activity.

10.) The peer-edited letters will be returned to their authors, and the students will be given class time to prepare the final drafts of their letters. Completed letters will be collected and mailed.

11.) As the celebrity response letters arrive, I will deliver the letters to the student who wrote to that celebrity and allow class time for the student to share the response with the class.

12.) After five or six weeks, the students will be given class
time to arrange a display of the celebrity response letters and display copies of the books that were mentioned in the letters.

Activity 2: "Scrambled Comics" (Level 9)

1.) I will mount comic strips from the Sunday newspaper on cardboard.
2.) Then, I will cut up the mounted strips. (To make the exercise self-correcting, I will write a word across the back of the cardboard before I cut up the comic.)
3.) Each cut comic strip will be stored in a separate envelope.
4.) Next, I will give each student an envelope containing the pieces of a comic strip.
5.) In order to provide the students with the opportunity to practice sequencing while reading, each student will then be asked to put the pieces in the correct order. The students will be given one minute to complete the exercise.
6.) At the end of the one minute time limit, I will circulate to check their squares for correctness.
7.) Following this, the students can exchange envelopes and repeat the activity with a new envelope of scrambled comic pieces.

Activity 3: "Reading Bingo" (Level 9-12)

1.) I will create blank bingo sheets (Five squares across, five squares down, center square "free") for all students.
2.) Then, I will create a list of thirty key words or phrases from material read (characters, cities, objects or events of note, authors, titles); the nature of this list will depend on the material I wish to review.
3.) I will write this list on the chalkboard.
4.) Next, I will provide each of my students with a blank bingo sheet.
5.) Students will then fill in the squares in whatever way they wish by writing in words and phrases from the list on the chalkboard. (They will not be able to use the complete list from the chalkboard and will not be allowed to confer with each other while filling in the squares.)
6.) I will call out a description of, or match for, one of the words or phrases on the list. For example:
   * "This character went to Europe with her rich aunt." If a student has a square containing the name of the character that matches that description and recognizes that match, he/she crosses out that square on the bingo sheet.
7.) The first student to cross out five squares in a row (horizontally, diagonally, or vertically) is the winner.
8.) If students use markers (paperclips make good markers) instead of crossing out words, they can exchange bingo sheets with a neighbor for second or third rounds of play.

Activity 4: "Reading Jeopardy" (Level 9-12)

1.) I will develop five categories appropriate to the material I wish to review:
   * titles
   * characters
   * settings
   * vocabulary words
   * quotations
   * events
   * authors

2.) Then, I will write each category on a separate file card and write down as many examples for each category as possible from assigned reading material.

3.) Then, I will ask for five volunteer contestants to sit in front of the room.

4.) I will write the five categories on the chalkboard.

5.) The contestants will pick the category of play.

6.) When the category has been decided, I will read one of the words from the appropriate category card.

7.) Each contestant must take turns devising a question to which that word would be the correct answer. (A time limit of fifteen seconds will be provided.)

8.) If a contestant cannot ask a question in response to a category word within the fifteen seconds, the turn will pass to the next contestant.

9.) One point will be awarded for each correct response.

10.) The contestant with the most points at the end of the game will be the winner of the game.

11.) To give all students a chance to participate, I will call students up in consecutive groups of five for three to four rounds of questions.

12.) Finalists from each group will then compete to determine the class winner.

13.) Another variation is to present the category words in order of increasing difficulty and to assign a higher point value to each round of play.

Activity 5: "Reading Baseball" (Level 9-12)

1.) Prior to the day of the game, I will ask each student to write four questions of increasing difficulty on the assigned reading material.

2.) The first question (the easiest) is a single base question, the second a double, the third a triple, and the fourth (the most difficult) a home-run.

3.) I will collect these questions, separating them by level of difficulty.

4.) Then, on the day of the game, I will draw two baseball diamonds on the chalkboard and divide the class into two teams.

5.) Alternating between teams, each student, in turn, decides which type of question he/she will attempt to answer: single, double, triple, or home-run.

6.) The student will then pick a question from the pile of questions.

7.) If the student answers correctly, I will write the student's name at the appropriate base in that team's diamond. Incorrect responses are strikes, and three strikes equal an out for the player.

8.) As runners are "batted in," points are scored.

9.) The team with the most points is the winning team at the end of the game.

According to Gabriele Lusser Rico, author of *Writing the Natural Way*, "many students [have] intense distaste, fear, even loathing for writing" (9). With this in mind, I have selected the following five innovative teaching activities in hopes of addressing these issues.

Activity 1: "Writing Down the Days" (Level 9-12)

1.) I will provide each student with a copy of Writing Down the Days by Lorraine M. Dahlstrom to use throughout the year. (See ILLUSTRATION A for annotation and example activity.)

2.) Students will need a notebook for writing activities.

3.) Students will write a minimum of one paragraph, consisting of no fewer than three sentences, for each assignment. (There will be no limit on how much the students write.)

4.) Students will leave room between each entry. (They might wish to return later to add information to specific entries.)

5.) Each entry will be dated.

6.) I will provide weekly time for students to look back over earlier entries in order to make corrections or expand entries.

7.) From time to time, I will discuss entry topics and share my answers to the questions asked.

8.) I will ask students to reproduce particular entries for more formal writing and grading.

9.) I will encourage students to write for more information where addresses are included. (A stamped, self-addressed, business-size envelope should accompany each request for information.)

10.) I will not grade the writing activities in the students' notebooks; however, I will comment and react on a separate sheet inside each student's notebook.
The Writing Down the Days reference provides 365 creative journal writing ideas, one for each day of the year. Each assignment is unique, and all are tied to the calendar year. Each activity is designed to help the teacher learn more about the students. For example:

January 1

Happy New Year! Today is New Year’s Day. It is a legal holiday in Canada and the United States. Approximately 123 other nations in the world also consider it a holiday.

Many people make New Year’s Resolutions. Resolutions are decisions to do or achieve certain things. They usually involve making personal changes. For example, you might decide to make your bed every morning, to help more around the house, or to get all your things ready the night before you need them (like your clothes, or the things you need for school).

Write at least three resolutions you will make for this year. If you can’t think of three things you need to work on, then make up three resolutions for someone else. Explain why you made these resolutions for yourself (or the other person).

Activity 2: "Half a Note" (Level 9-12)

1.) I will photocopy a "torn note."
2.) I will explain to my students that they are to assume that a note has been taped to their locker door, but before they find the note, it is ripped in half. They only have half of the note.
3.) Next, I will provide each student with a photocopy of the "ripped note."
4.) After the students have received the "torn note," I will ask the students the following question:
   * "What do you think the note originally said?"
5.) Next, I will ask the students to write out the complete note and then write a response to it.
6.) I will give my students time to write and then to read and compare the final versions as a class.

Activity 3: "Storybook for Elementary Students" (Level 9-12)

1.) Prior to the start of this activity, I will prepare a list of names of elementary grade students from a nearby elementary school.
2.) Then, I will ask each of my students to select the name of one elementary student and to prepare at least twenty interview questions that will spark ideas for them to create a story.
3.) I will hold a class discussion of possible types of questions to ask the elementary students, such as:
   * what hobbies they have
   * a list of favorite activities
   * names of pets and friends
4.) I will then help students warm up to interview questions by helping them remember their own elementary interests, hobbies, and pets.
5.) We will take a field trip to the nearby elementary school.
6.) I will introduce my students to the elementary students.
7.) My secondary students will then interview their elementary interviewees.
8.) A picture of each interviewer and interviewee will be taken.
9.) My students, using their notes from interviews, will write creative stories that they believe the elementary students will find interesting.
10.) After the stories have been written, the writer will meet with a peer for feedback.
11.) Students will make revisions on the stories, create a cover, title page, and author’s page which should include a brief biographical sketch and the photo taken at the elementary school.
12.) The final drafts of the storybooks will be delivered personally to the elementary students.
13.) One group picture will be taken including my students, the elementary students, and the storybooks.

Activity 4: "Tell Lies" (Level 9-12)

1.) I will read aloud several short tall tales to my students.
2.) Then, I will divide the class into teams with two students on each team.
3.) Next, I will ask the students to think of something that has happened to them and then have the students tell their experience to their partner.
4.) Next, I will have the students stretch the truth and tell the same experience to their partner.
5.) Now, I will have the partners change roles.
6.) I will explain that the students are to write a paper. It can be a poem, a letter, a story, a newspaper article - whatever form they want, but, everything they write must be a lie.
7.) After the first draft is completed, the students will share, with the class, what they have written.
8.) After hearing the "lies" from their classmates, the students will be given time to write a second draft.

Activity 5: "Memories and Mementos" (Level 9-12)

1.) To begin this activity, I will request that students look through items that they have saved as mementos and find one in particular that recalls a vivid memory. (This item should be anything that can be transported to school.)

2.) I will explain that the writing assignment will be for them to project themselves into the future and give themselves celebrity status. They will be asked to imagine that a weekly news magazine supplement has asked them to write a short one to two page memoir in which they recreate a certain moment in their life. In the memoir, they are to describe the moment they came to understand the real meaning of joy, misery, disappointment, or whatever feeling their memento symbolizes for them.

3.) Before the students begin writing, I will read aloud excerpts from autobiographical memoirs - Mark Twain’s and Gordon Liddy’s.

4.) Poetry that draws from real life - Anne Sexton’s "Pain for a Daughter" or Phillip Lopate’s "Once a Long Time Ago" - will also be read aloud.

5.) The students will discuss the emotions conveyed through these writings and suggest concrete items that might have triggered these memories.

6.) Students will form pairs and exchange mementos.

7.) The students will then consider what emotions these mementos might recall for their owners, such as:
   * pleasant
   * wistful
   * nostalgic

8.) Then, the students will ask one another questions, explain their reactions, and return the objects.

9.) At this point, students will also close their eyes and recall all the sense impressions they associated with the object.

10.) In each pair, the listening student will record the impressions in list form, and then, the students will switch roles.

11.) Students will then be asked to go over the list of sensory details and to choose those that most closely and accurately recreate the memory for them.

12.) The students will be asked to work these details into natural images.

13.) After writing, the students will trade their papers with their partners.

14.) Each student will write detailed responses to these questions for his/her partner:
   * Does the written draft illustrate the same feelings conveyed by the oral version?
   * Does the introduction indicate the direction of the paper?
Has the writer used details that stir all the senses?
Does the memoir have a strong and appropriate conclusion?

15.) Students will then read their final drafts to groups of six peers.

We normally see the written language as a sequence of letters, separated by small segments of space. This is how we are taught to write. Everyone born with the normal capacity to learn acquires the ability to listen and speak before the ability to read and write. The origins of the written language, however, lie in the spoken language, not the other way around. Verbal communication is an important language skill. Moreover, students develop a good attitude about school when they feel that what is happening in the classroom has a valid purpose and makes sense (Schaff iii.-v.). The development of verbal communication is worthwhile. The following five innovative activities encourage secondary students to develop their speaking skills.

Activity 1: "Daily Discussion" (Level 9-12)

1.) In order to develop an ability to select topics to talk about on their own, I will ask my students to select a topic from school community, national, or world happenings and come to class prepared to discuss background information on the topic.

2.) I will provide sample topics such as the following:
   * the controversy over where to put the new landfill for the city’s garbage
   * computer "hackers" who break into private or corporate computer systems
   * drugs in professional sports

3.) I will explain that the responsibility for the daily, ten-minute discussion will rotate around the class, with a different student leading the discussion each day and that the presentation will last no more than two to three minutes of the ten-minute discussion.

4.) In addition, I will explain that after the speaker has provided the background information, the speaker will be expected to ask his/her peers three thought-provoking questions related to the topic. For example, they might ask:
   * "How would you react if you learned that the city was proposing to open a new landfill near your home?"
   * "Should computer hackers who break into private or corporate computer systems be regarded as criminals?"
   * "What effect, if any, does it have on young people to learn that one of their sports heroes has been disciplined or suspended for drug use?"

5.) The class will then discuss the questions for the remaining seven or eight minutes.

Activity 2: "The Lost Art of Storytelling" (Level 9-12)

1.) The face of Indiana Jones or some similar expression-filled face will stare at the class from an 8" x 10" photograph.

2.) I will explain that adventure lurks behind the eyes; narrow escapes permeate every fiber of his sweat-stained fedora, and that Indiana's picture tells stories. (Or, I will find details in another photograph that hint at the story behind the photograph.) I will illustrate that the students also share fantastic on-the-spot tales while explaining their loss of homework, lateness, or an unexcused absence.

3.) Next, I will ask students to select, from pictures on the table in my room, one face that "speaks" to them.

4.) Looking at the chosen pictures, students will be asked to do a pre-telling webbing activity. They will have two minutes to draw five circles on their papers and write information inside each circle. For example:

5.) After completing the webbing activity, students will be given partners and will take turns telling one another the tales suggested by their webs.

6.) Each student will have three minutes to tell the story.

7.) The listening student will provide feedback, suggesting what he/she likes best and what parts are difficult to understand.

8.) Since stories often change and develop through retelling, students will change partners after one telling and tell their stories again, making any changes they think are necessary.

9.) Again, students will have a three-minute time limit, and listeners will tell the storytellers what they like and what they find difficult to understand.

Activity 3: "Verbal Tennis - Wimbledon" (Level 9-12)

1.) In order for the students to develop feelings of value for speaking, they will select a subject area such as:
   * countries
   * cities
   * boys' names
   * girls' names
   * animals
   * birds

   (Subjects will be chosen by the class.)

2.) After the subject area is selected, the first player will begin by naming any relevant word within that category.

3.) The second player will then reply, within an agreed amount of time, with an equally valid word - but one which begins with the last letter of the one just given.

4.) A verbal tennis match will ensue until a player is unable to respond, makes an error, or repeats a word already used.

5.) With "animals" as the subject, a typical exchange could go as follows:

   Player 1: DOG
   Player 2: GIRAFFE
   Player 1: ELEPHANT
   Player 2: TITMOUSE
   Player 1: EARTHWORM
   Player 2: MOOSE
   Player 1: EYRA
   Player 2: ADDAX

   (Player 2 is the winner of this particular rally, as Player 1 is unable to think of an animal that begins with the letter "X").

6.) The game should be played over a number of rallies with the server nominating a different subject each time and players taking turns to serve.

7.) Using four players, the game can be a match of verbal tennis doubles, and, with three people, it can be played on a round-robin basis, eliminating one person each time.

Activity 4: "Selling Freezers to Eskimos" (Level 9-12)

1.) I will bring several pictures of objects to class.
2.) I will then place the pictures on a table in the room and divide the class into two groups. Each member from the speaking group will select a picture of an object.
3.) The speakers will be given two minutes to think of a one minute argument to "sell" the object to the class by arguing why the class members really need the object. I will explain that the activity can be done seriously or humorously. For example:
   * Holding up a picture of a home knitting machine, the student might explain that we are all tired at the end of the day. They might explain that we can watch television or we can go to a local fast food drive-in with our friends. But, if we go to the drive-in every night, it costs lots of money. They could continue their argument by saying that the real answer is knitting. Knitting is relaxing! They could explain that we can use the knitting machine to relax and also to make gifts for our friends, or we can sell the knitted items. The student might summarize by saying that the knitting machine is relaxing, is an expression of one’s self, and is a way to make money. Then, they might ask if anyone wants one.
4.) After the two minute planning time, the "sales talks" will begin. The talks will be recorded.
5.) Following all of the "sales talks," the class will switch roles, and the activity will be repeated.
6.) Following the last "sales talk," the students will individually listen to their recorded talk and analyze the persuasiveness of their own presentation.
7.) To conclude the activity, the students will discuss what they found most persuasive while listening to all of the "sales talks."

Activity 5: "Idiot Board" (Level 9-12)

1.) Each student will be given three stiff cards and a broad-tipped marker.
2.) Then, they will be asked to write one witty example of:
   * a person's name
   * a place
   * an animal
   on each of the three cards.
3.) I will collect the completed cards.
4.) I will shuffle and then hand the shuffled cards to a student who will act as a prompter.
5.) Next, I will invite a student to describe any news-type event, explaining that they must "dry up" at any point where he/she intends to name a person, place, or animal.
6.) As soon as they have "dried up," the prompter will hold up a random idiot board and the speaker will use the given word rather than the one they intended.
7.) If the student collapses with laughter, he/she is eliminated and another student takes his/her place.

When speaking activities are introduced into the secondary classroom, the teacher introduces an equally important communication skill - listening. We listen more than we talk and more than we read or write. Yet, our listening skills do not necessarily improve with time. Therefore, listening skills are an important part of many activities in the classroom. For example, papers based on interviews require careful and critical listening. But, how can a secondary English teacher excite his/her students about developing their listening skills? The following five innovative listening activities are aimed at developing secondary students' listening skills.

Activity 1: "Jabberjabberjabber" (Level 9-12)

1.) First, I will hold up an object and provide the following instructions:
   * Everyone must talk about the object nonstop and simultaneously for fifteen seconds.
2.) At the end of the fifteen seconds, I will replace the first object with a second object and explain to the students that their talk must continue for another fifteen seconds about the second object.
3.) Next, I will divide the class into groups of four to six students and ask them to sit in a small circle.
4.) After the students have gotten into their circles, I will assign a topic to each group. Suggested topics are:
   * corners
   * little things
   * big things
   * buildings
   * butterflies
   * dirty socks
   * Grandma’s house
   * jello
5.) Person A in each circle will begin to talk to the others nonstop on the assigned topic.
6.) When I give a signal, person B will immediately begin to talk.
7.) When each member of the circle has had a turn, I will announce a new topic and repeat the activity. Again, only one rule: The students may not stop talking.
8.) To conclude this activity, I will call the class together and discuss the difficulties of listening when everyone talks at one time.
9.) I will also point out the uselessness of everyone talking at once.

Activity 2: "Hearing Mistakes" (Level 9-12)

1.) I will explain to my students that I will be reading them a short story that we recently worked on in class and that they are to listen carefully as I read.
2.) I will explain that they must call out the correction when they hear a mistake.
3.) Then, I will deliberately make mistakes while I read to the class.

Activity 3: "Seeing Pictures in Your Mind" (Level 9-12)

1.) I will explain to my students that individuals hear differently when listening and that what they hear is influenced by their individual life experiences. I will ask my students to close their eyes and to sit in as relaxed a position as possible.

2.) Then, I will describe a picture for them to see in their minds.

3.) I will describe the picture slowly, as follows:
   * "There are broad fields, and, in the distance, there is a low hill. There are trees on the hill. Above is a great sky filled with clouds."

4.) I will tell students to concentrate on the picture for a few seconds.

5.) After thirty seconds, I will ask the students to open their eyes and to describe the landscape to their neighbor. (Almost certainly they will discover that each saw the landscape differently.)

6.) I will prompt a discussion by asking such questions as:
   * "What could you see in the fields?"
   * "Was it grass?"
   * "Was it corn?"
   * "Were there any animals?"
   * "How did you feel about the picture?"

Activity 4: "Doodles and Directions" (Level 9-12)

1.) First, I will pair students and ask them to find seats next to their partners.
2.) I will then explain that one student out of each pair is to face the board and that the other is to turn his/her chair to face the opposite direction.
3.) I will then explain that the students facing the board are to be the speakers.
4.) At this point, I will project, on the overhead projector, a drawing of ILLUSTRATION A.
5.) The speaker will then be asked to describe the figure in such a way that the listener can, without looking at it, accurately reproduce it with a pencil on a sheet of 8 1/2" x 11" paper.
6.) I will explain that at no time will the speaker be allowed to look at his/her partner’s paper, point at the board or at the drawing in progress, or use any means besides verbal communication to describe the figure.
7.) The listener will not be allowed to talk or ask questions, but will concentrate on listening and interpreting as carefully as possible the speaker’s instructions.
8.) When the speaker has described the entire figure, the listener will write both partner’s names on the drawing and will raise his/her hand to indicate that the pair is finished.
9.) Until all students are finished, listeners will remain with their backs to the board and will remain quiet.
10.) I will collect the drawings as they are completed.
11.) When all of the pairs are finished with the drawings, I will post all of the drawings on the board for examination and discussion of what went right and what went wrong with the speakers’ descriptions and the listeners’ responses.
12.) The discussion will no doubt lead the listeners to feel that they can be better speakers than their partners and vice versa. In order to resolve this argument, I will allow the students to switch roles with their partners and try the exercise again with ILLUSTRATION B.
13.) The activity described above may be used as a springboard for a number of activities requiring close attention to language. It involves everyone in the class in speaking, listening, and interpreting verbal instructions.

Activity 5: "Oral Composition" (Level 9-12)

1.) After reading a story with conflict, I will ask students to consider alternative resolutions not given in the story. There is one wrinkle in the speculation – solutions cannot detract from the meaning or mystery of the story. I will explain that their possible resolution must be one that the author has introduced or suggested. I will provide a general way of solving a dilemma present in the story. For example:
   * Students might create a new character.
   * Students might change an action of one or more characters.
   * Students might change a reaction of one or more characters.

2.) Next, I will divide the students into groups of three. I will explain that for the next three days, the three are to work together and to compose out loud. One member of the group is to serve as the "eavesdropper" and writer, while the other two members of the group discuss possible resolutions for the story.

3.) At the start of the second class period, the roles will be rotated and the "eavesdropper" will become a solution-seeker, and one of the solution-seekers will become the "eavesdropper."

4.) The process will be repeated on the third day with the last "eavesdropper" becoming the writer while the other two discuss the possible resolution for the story.

5.) On the fourth day, I will remind the students how much time they have spent mentally editing and critiquing the story.

6.) Then, I will ask the groups to present a three to five minute presentation explaining the group’s possible resolution to the story.

7.) After the groups present their oral compositions to the class, I will explain to the students that this activity should have magnified the working of the creative minds, developed their sensitivity to the thinking process of composing, and developed their listening skills.

What is the most complex, most useful, most important, most entertaining invention in the history of the human race? The space shuttle? The wheel? The television? The printing press? The microchip? No. None of these could have come about if people had not first invented language. I find it strange that we go to great lengths to teach history, yet we fail to teach the story of the most important ingredients of that past - language. Learning about language is an important and interesting study. Thus, I have selected the following five innovative language activities in hopes of addressing these issues related to the English language.

Activity 1: "Language Deals With . . ." (Level 9-12)

1.) I will have students get into small groups of four people each.
2.) Then, I will give to each person a large sheet of construction paper and a felt pen.
3.) I will instruct each student to draw a picture that shows, or represents, what, in his/her opinion, language encompasses.
4.) After students have drawn their pictures, they will share the pictures with the other members of their group by following this procedure:
   * Each student, in turn, will hold up his/her picture for the others to see.
   * The other members will first make statements about what the artist was trying to show/communicate.
   * Then, the picture's owner will respond to their "guesses" by commenting on the accuracy of their remarks and by providing further explanation of the points he/she was trying to make in the drawing.
   * After all members of the group have shared the drawings in this way, the pictures will be mounted on the class walls.
5.) I will give small index cards (3" x 5") to each student and direct the class to write a short statement about what language encompasses. (The statement may consist of more than one sentence, but it must all fit on the front side of the card.) Students must work individually in completing their statements.
6.) I will collect the cards and read some of the statements aloud (without mentioning the author's name). I will also post some of the cards on the walls of the classroom.
7.) There are a couple of possibilities for procedures here:
   * One way is to share with students my perception of what language encompasses and compare my perspective with theirs.
   * Another procedure is not to share with students my perspective of what language encompasses. Instead, I will ask students, periodically throughout the semester and immediately after they have completed certain exercises, what these activities have to do with "language."

**Activity 2: "What Does English Encompass" (Level 9-12)**

1.) I will announce to my students that they are going to be given an assignment that requires them to consider exactly what it is that English encompasses.

2.) Then, I will explain that they have been "doing English" for several years and that we are going to look closely at what they have been studying and learning.

3.) Next, I will explain that we need to construct a statement that answers the question, "What does English encompass?" This statement may be one, two, three, or even more sentences long, but it must be a statement that the whole class has helped to create.

4.) Once we have created the statement, I will use it as a reference for the final writing assignment.

5.) I will explain to the class that in order to create this statement about what English encompasses, we will need plenty of words that are:
   * descriptive
   * accurate
   * meaningful

6.) Then, I will explain that we need to create a word bank that we can use to draw upon for the words that we think we might need.

7.) I will divide the class into six groups of approximately four to five students in each group.

8.) I will then supply each group with sheets of construction paper and felt pens.

9.) I will provide the following instructions to Groups 1 and 2:
   * They will have fifteen minutes to brainstorm NOUNS that, in their opinion, have something to do with what English encompasses.
   * Then, they are to put down everything they think of; they will be given time to eliminate and revise later.
   * The two groups work independently of each other at this stage.

10.) I will provide the following instructions to Groups 3 and 4:
   * They will have fifteen minutes to brainstorm VERBS that, in their opinion, have something to do with what English encompasses.
   * They will continue with the same instructions provided for Groups 1 and 2 above.

11.) I will provide the following instructions to Groups 5 and 6:
   * They will have fifteen minutes to brainstorm WORDS THAT END IN "-ING" that have something to do with what English encompasses.
   * They will continue with the same instructions provided for the other groups.
12.) I will direct Groups 1 and 2 to:
   * combine their lists of NOUNS, eliminating duplications, and create a combined list of the ten to fifteen words that they believe are most descriptive or indicative of what English encompasses.
   * write only five final words on each sheet of construction paper, allowing plenty of blank space between each word.

13.) I will give the same directions to Groups 3 and 4 for them to do with their VERBS.

14.) I will give the same directions to Groups 5 and 6 for them to do with their WORDS ENDING IN "-ING."

15.) To prepare for the next stage of this activity, I will tape the final lists from each combined group to the walls of the classroom. I will spread them around the entire room.

16.) Then, I will explain to my students that they have identified some of the words that they feel are important in describing what English encompasses.

17.) I will encourage them not to stop here by telling them that they might feel that some of the words are more important than others. This next activity will help them to identify those words.

18.) I will then give each student nine sticky stars.

19.) The students will then be asked to vote, using these stars, for those words that they feel are the most important words in describing what English encompasses.

20.) They may place all nine stars beside one single word; or they may vote for a total of nine different words.

21.) I will allow fifteen minutes for the students to circulate around the room, casting their votes.

22.) The students will be told to take their seats once they have completed their voting.

23.) Once all students have taken their seats, I will reassemble the students into their original six groups.

24.) I will point out to the class that we now have some words that we can use to construct our class statement on what English encompasses.

25.) Now, each group should create a statement.

26.) I will explain that they should feel free to draw from the word bank the class has created. (This step may take as long as two hours to complete.)

27.) Once each group has drafted a statement, I will direct the groups to select a representative from each group to show that statement to another group. (The representative from Group 1 consults Group 2; the representative from Group 2 consults with Group 3; etc.) During this activity, the consultants should provide feedback to the representative.

28.) Then the representatives will go back to their groups and make any necessary changes they want to make.
29.) Once again, I will combine Groups 1 and 2; 3 and 4; and 5 and 6.

30.) I will direct the students that they are to create a single statement.

31.) The three groups will then turn in their statements.

32.) To prepare for the final activity, I will type all three statements and give copies of the three statements to the entire class.

33.) I will explain to the class that this is what they have so far and that now, they are ready to create a final statement about what English encompasses.

34.) The constructing of the final statement will be a class activity and could last for two hours.

35.) Finally, the class will create one statement about what they feel English encompasses.

36.) Following the above activity, I will immediately ask the students to write on one of the following questions:

* Question 1: Why is the exercise that you have just completed an appropriate and worthwhile activity for an English class? Use the statement that the class composed to support your ideas and explanation.

* Question 2: Perhaps you don't like the single statement that the class created about what English encompasses. In that case, do the following:
  a. Identify the problems or weaknesses of the statement. What's wrong with it?
  b. Create your own statement about what English encompasses.
  c. Explain how your statement is better than the other one.

Activity 3: "Weird and Wonderful English" (Level 9-12)

1.) To prepare for this activity, I will bring one dictionary for each student to my classroom. (The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language would be an outstanding dictionary for this activity.)

2.) I will begin by reviewing the three major divisions in the development of English: Old English (Anglo-Saxon), Middle English (a blend of French and Anglo-Saxon, as seen in Chaucer's writing), and Modern English (as seen in Renaissance writers such as Shakespeare).

3.) Then, I will write Old English words that are similar to the modern words that developed from them. Words like:

- dæppel
- sceapord
- wif
- neocu
- hors
- fisc
- hring
- brecon
- sunne
- sunnandæg

4.) After writing these ten words on the chalkboard, I will ask the students to guess the modern equivalents, checking their dictionaries.

5.) I will continue to explain that the Normans invaded England in 1066, French became the language of the aristocrats, and Old English (Anglo-Saxon) was spoken mainly by peasants. Gradually, the two languages merged to form a new language - Middle English. As a result, many of the words associated with luxury and power, with the military and with religion, came from the French because they were in control. I will explain that those words used by simple people, and associated with day-to-day living, remained in Old English (Anglo-Saxon).

6.) Next, I will write words like the following on the chalkboard:

- swine
- meal
- dinner
- table
- cow
- roast
- salad
- father
- fire
- water
- saint
- court
- day
- star
7.) I will ask students to decide which of the words listed on the chalkboard came to us from the French and which came to us from the simple people who worked in the fields.

8.) Students will put an "A" in front of the words they decide are Anglo-Saxon words and an "F" in front of those they think came from the French.

9.) A "dictionary referee" will be appointed to settle disputes.

**Activity 4: "Word Party" (Level 9-12)**

1.) Several weeks prior to the date I have chosen for the "Word Party," I will introduce the idea of the party to the class.

2.) I will ask each student to choose one of the following party options:
   * A. Dress as a person who contributed a word (eponym) to the English language. For example, Joseph Guillotine might carry a head under his arm, and the Earl of Sandwich might come dressed as a sandwich.
   * B. Dress as any word of your choice that has an interesting derivation. Hypochondriac might wear band-aids and carry candy pills, a thermometer, and a hot water bottle; Generosity could come dressed as a dollar bill with an ample supply of play money to distribute.
   * C. Bring to class a food (kuchen, salami, potato), the name of which has an interesting derivation.
   * Each student should also prepare an oral presentation to accompany the costume or food, including the derivation of the word and other interesting information.

3.) Judges will be selected by the class to award prizes in categories defined by the students. Suggested categories might include:
   * Funniest Costume
   * Most Carefully Executed Costume
   * Most Complete Oral Presentation
   * Most Original Idea

Activity 5: "Dialect Survey" (Level 9-12)

1.) First, I will prepare copies of ILLUSTRATION A or similar questions.
2.) I will then explain to the class that they might enjoy reading Discovering American Dialects by Roger W. Shuy (Urbana: National Council of Teachers of English, 1967).
3.) Then, I will explain to students that they will conduct a survey to determine the different words people use for the same object.
4.) I will point out, for example, that a westerner probably says "faucet," but a southerner may say "spigot," and an easterner probably says "tap."
5.) Continuing, I will explain that a teenager is likely to say "pantyhose," but an older person is more likely to say "nylons," and a much older person may say "silk stockings."
6.) I will encourage students to survey as many different people as possible - people from different areas, different occupations, and different age groups.
7.) I will then distribute the activity sheets and go over the dialect survey with the class.
8.) After students have completed their surveys, they will share the information with the class.
9.) Students will then tally responses and summarize the results in a bar graph. The bar graph will be posted on the display board in the classroom.

DIALECT SURVEY: DATA SHEET

name ____________________________

Person interviewed ____________________________

Occupation ____________________________ Sex ________ Age ________

Highest grade in school ____________________________

Places where you have lived ____________________________

Father grew up in ____________________________

Mother grew up in ____________________________

What do you call each of these items? Please give the first answer that comes to mind.

1. a carbonated drink
2. a device on the outside of the house used to turn water on and off
3. fabric on rollers hung over a window
4. a large piece of furniture usually found in a living room on which at least three people can sit
5. long sheer legcoverings worn by women
6. an electrical appliance used for mixing ingredients in cooking
7. the object on which records are played
8. a piece of cloth used to wash dishes
9. the room in the house in which the tub, sink, and toilet are located
10. the utensil in which food is fried
Secondary level students are often the most social of the school population, and literature study is often a solitary activity. Therefore, American secondary students are reported by the National Opinion Research Center to read fewer books than citizens of any other country. For many secondary level students, being alone and quiet is punishment rather than pleasure. With this in mind, English teachers must learn to approach literature outside the realm of the silent environment. The five innovative activities that follow are designed to create an active, social approach to literature in the classroom.

Activity 1: "Poetry Trading Post" (Level 9-12)

1.) I will divide the class into no more than ten teams and give each team an envelope with a completed poem on the outside and ten fragment cards inside.

2.) I will also provide each team with an envelope containing $2,000 of "funny money."

3.) Then, I will explain to the students that each team is responsible for collecting the ten cards that complete the poem and putting them in order.

4.) In addition, I will explain that each team must explain the general meaning of the poem to me.

5.) I will explain that the students may trade, buy, or sell fragments in order to obtain the fragments they need to complete the team's poem.

6.) I will continue to explain that the object of this activity is to make as much money as possible by selling useless lines of poetry and bargaining for those that are needed.

7.) Then, I will provide a five to ten minute planning period for teams to organize themselves. During this planning period, the teams will assign responsibilities (buyers, sellers, bankers) or organize themselves in other ways.

8.) After the teams are organized, I will start the trading period. Students will circulate to buy, sell, and trade fragments to complete their poems. A time limit of thirty minutes will be set for the trading period.

9.) Some teams may finish before other teams. I will announce that when a team has correctly assembled the lines of the poem, the team is to sell the poem to me as follows:
   * A fifty-dollar bonus to the team that assembles its poem first
   * One hundred dollars to a team that successfully assembles its poem
   * One hundred dollars (prorated according to the quality of the interpretation) to a team that explains the meaning of its poem to my satisfaction
   * The team with the most money at the end of the game is the winning team

Activity 2: "Short Story: Poe, "The Tell-Tale Heart" (Level 9-12)

1.) Before the reading of "The Tell-Tale Heart," I will ask my students to create and write down:
   * A name for a fictional person
   * An action known by that person to be wrong
   * An emotion strongly felt by that person
   * A description of the feeling
   * A description of an action that shows the feeling

2.) Then, I will ask each student to write a first draft of a story using the ingredients above while:
   * Showing the emotion sustained throughout the story
   * Having the main character (above) tell of his/her actions
   * Creating suspense

3.) After the first draft has been written, we will discuss the difficulties the students had writing the stories.

4.) At this time, the students' stories will be put aside.

5.) I will explain that the writer of the short story that they are about to read may have had the same difficulties.

6.) We will spend the next few days reading aloud and discussing the short story.

7.) After we have read the short story, I will divide the class into small groups and ask the groups to answer the following questions in order to develop their understanding of the plot development of "The Tell-Tale Heart":
   * Why does Poe apparently lead the reader to think the speaker is insane?
   * Does the speaker's insanity have any bearing on the story?

8.) Then, I will encourage my students to make as many comments and observations as they can about Poe's use of "heart" and "eye" and ask them how the references to the "heart" and "eye" influence the plot of the story.

9.) I will then provide enough background information for the class to understand the situation leading up to Julius Caesar, Act II, Scene ii.

10.) Then, in order to continue my students' understanding of plot, I will ask them to work in their groups and prepare a dramatic reading based on that scene from Julius Caesar. (I will circulate around the classroom to answer questions the students might have concerning the text.)

11.) When the groups have prepared their dramatic readings, I will tape each group's dramatic reading.

12.) Once all of the groups have taped their dramatic readings, the class will listen to each of the taped presentations.

13.) I will instruct the class that while they are listening to each of the dramatic readings, they are to write down
the emotional impact each of the group’s scenes have upon them.

14.) After my students have discussed the emotional impact of the various group dramatic readings, I will conduct a whole-class discussion, focusing on the plot development as witnessed in that particular scene from *Julius Caesar*.

15.) Finally, each student will be given time (this might take as many as two or three class periods) to prepare a final draft of the story written at the beginning of this activity.

16.) I will explain that this final draft is to sustain and develop the emotional impact the scene had upon them and point out that they are to pay special attention to the plot development of their story.

17.) After the final drafts have been written, I will collect the stories.

18.) I will then share some of the stories with the class by reading them aloud. (I will not read the name of the authors.)

Activity 3: "Group Poetry" (Level 9-12)

1.) I will divide the class into groups of three to five students.
2.) Next, I will ask the students to read a particular poem to themselves. Possible poems might be:
   * Ferlenghetti’s "Constantly Risking Absurdity"
   * Dickinson’s "Because I Could Not Stop for Death"
3.) Then, I will ask for one volunteer from each group to read the poem aloud as the other members of the group listen to the reading of the poem.
4.) While the students are listening to the poem being read, I will ask them to do the following:
   * Make whatever comments and responses they wish.
5.) Then, I will tell the groups that at the end of their discussion, they will share with the rest of the class three comments which they consider either:
   * thought-provoking
   * funny
   * interesting
   * helpful
6.) Following a twenty minute discussion period, each group will select one representative from their group to share their three comments with the class.
7.) When all of the groups have shared their comments with the class, one person (chosen at random) will sum up what has been said.
8.) I will then ask the students to write about one personal observation that the groups did not share during the reporting session.
9.) Next, I will ask students to draw a picture of the whole poem.
10.) Following the drawing activity, I will ask each student to write either:
    * A response to the poem
    or
    * Answer the following question, "What do you think of the way this poem is written?"

Activity 4: "Poem vs. Short Story" (Level 9 - 12)

1.) To introduce Ray Bradbury’s short story "There Will Come Soft Rains" (1965 [1950]) to the class, I will describe a few of the author’s other works of science fiction.

2.) Then, I will read the story aloud to the class.

3.) Following the oral reading, I will lead a whole-class discussion.

4.) After the class discussion, I will encourage the students to ask questions and instruct other students to respond to the student questions and interpretations.

5.) Then, I will ask the students to look closer at the part of the story where the poem is read to Mrs. McClellan in the library.

6.) At this point, I will hand out copies of the poem, "There Will Come Soft Rains" by Sara Teasdale, and read it aloud to the class.

7.) Following the oral reading of the poem, I will lead a whole-class discussion about the poem.

8.) Next, I will divide the class into pairs and ask them to focus on Teasdale’s point-of-view and intent in writing the poem.

9.) I will tell the pairs to draw a giant "T" on a piece of paper, dividing the paper into two columns:

   What is the poem about? What is the author saying about it?

10.) I will continue to tell the pairs that the left-hand should be headed: "What Is the Poem About?" and the students will be instructed to list as many topics as they can think of that are appropriate.

11.) Then, I will instruct the pairs to label the right-hand column, "What Is the Author Saying About It?" and, for each of the items listed on the left side, they are to fill in the right-hand side with whatever insights they generate with their partner.

12.) The pairs will be given fifteen minutes to complete this activity.

13.) Following the paired activity, the pairs will share their written responses with the whole class.

14.) The final assignment for this activity will be for the students to answer the final question, "Why did Bradbury
borrow the title of Sara Teasdale’s poem for his story?" (This is the same question as "How are the story and poem alike?")

15.) To complete this activity, I will hand out index cards (3" x 5") to each pair of students and instruct them to write their response on the card.

16.) After the pairs have completed their cards, I will collect their cards and read them aloud to the class.

17.) A follow-up activity that might be worthwhile would be to introduce Carl Sandburg’s poem "Grass" and ask the students to compare it to Teasdale’s poem.

Activity 5: "Mythology Projects" (Level 9-12)

1.) I will distribute copies of ILLUSTRATION A.
2.) Then, I will ask the students to keep the list of mythology projects in their notebooks.
3.) I will explain to my students that they may select a project from this list to complete alone or in small groups.

MYTHOLOGY PROJECTS

1. Write an advertisement for a new product based on a Greek myth. Your ad should include a slogan or be accompanied by a testimonial from one of the residents of Mount Olympus.

2. Interview a person or god or goddess from a myth you read. Record the answers carefully, revealing the personality and experience of the interviewee as she or he responds to specific questions.

3. Write and assemble a child’s A-B-C book based on Greek mythology. Each entry should contain a word, the pronunciation of that word, and a sentence using that word. Since this is a book for children, you might like to provide illustrations.

4. In the year 3000 we see a subspecies of human, Homo sapiens pollutus, that is biologically adapted to living in a smog-filled atmosphere. Homo sapiens as we know them have disappeared (due to natural selection) and along with them have gone their religions, technical knowledge, and cultural traditions. Invent a mythological system that Homo sapiens pollutus might accept. Include in your description a paragraph or more on each of the following: (a) a creation myth for this new mythology, (b) gods and goddesses in the new mythological system, and (c) the morals put forth by the new gods and goddesses and/or the beliefs of Homo sapiens pollutus.

5. Write a myth (unrelated to historical fact) that describes the evolution of the Volkswagen. You may include gods and goddesses as well as Greeks or other mortals.

6. Develop a myth or legend that might be heard in 400 years about a national hero (Reggie Jackson, Martin Luther King, Jr., John F. Kennedy, Elvis Presley).

7. Many of the Greek gods or goddesses committed immoral or illegal acts. Put one of them on trial. To do this, you may choose one or a combination of the following ideas: (a) a newspaper account of the trial, (b) the defense attorney’s closing statement, (c) the prosecuting attorney’s closing statement, (d) a juror’s diary kept during the trial.

8. Select a Greek myth and rewrite it in a version that can be read and enjoyed by second-graders. With prior arrangement by your teacher, go to a nearby elementary school and read your new version of the myth to a second-grader.

9. Write a version of a myth for Rolling Stone, Mad, or another popular magazine. Use humor, slang, inflated language, satire, or other devices to make your story interesting for readers of the publication you chose.

10. Write a television or radio show for a major mythological figure. Examples: a travel show for Ulysses, a soap opera for Penelope, a war story for Ares.
Works Cited


