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ABSTRACT
        In order to test the efficacy of having college
students read texts in which phrase boundaries are explicitly cued,
the phrased text treatments were administered to 42 college students
from 3 developmental reading courses in one southeastern university.
An experimental group was given the phrased texts, while a control
group was given the conventionally formatted texts. A brief
true-false quiz followed each reading of a text to insure that the
subjects were reading for meaning. Results indicated that the phrased
text treatment did not lead to any better (or worse) comprehension on
the conventional texts for the experimental group. Although both
groups increased their reading rate over the course of the treatment,
the increase in rate for the control group was significantly greater
than for the experimental group. (A table of data is included and 21
references are attached.) (JK)

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The Effects of Reading Phrased Texts on Readers'
Comprehension and Fluency:
An Exploratory Study

Running head: Phrased Texts

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The Effects of Reading Phrased Texts on Readers' Comprehension and
Fluency   An Exploratory Study

Sensitivity to phrase boundaries while reading appears to be an
important aspect of reading (Brown & Miron, 1971; Grosjean, Grosjean &
Lane 1979; Johnson, 1965; Kleiman, Winograd & Humphrey, 1979; Suci,
1967). Reading authorities have argued that the reader's ability to
read in chunked or phrase-like textual units is necessary for fluent,
proficient reading (Allington, 1983; Harris and Sipay, 1985; Kleiman,
Winograd, and Humphrey, 1979; O'Shea and Sindelar, 1983. Schreiber,
1980). Sensitivity to phrase boundaries in reading has been shown to
be developmental in nature (Aulls, 1977, Clay & Imlach, 1971; Kowal,
O'Connell, O'Brien & Bryant, 1975; Resnick, 1970; Rode, 1974-1975). As
readers mature they become more proficient at reading in larger
syntactic chunks. Phrase sensitivity has also been shown to be a
factor that distinguishes between good and poor readers (Aulls, 1977;
Clay & Imlach, 1971; Eagen, 1975; Kleiman, Winogr d & Humphrey, 1979;
Oakan, Weiner & Cramer, 1971; Rasinski, 1985). In the Kleiman,
Winograd, and Humphrey study. for example, good fourth grade readers
were more able to identify phrase boundaries in texts than poor
readers.

Because fluent readers read texts in phrase-like units, teaching
non-fluent readers to read in phrases has been advocated by reading
authorities for some time (e.g. Durrell, 1940). Prominent among the
suggestions for instruction has been practice in reading phrases in
isolation (Dolch, 1949). One line of research by Amble (Amble, 1966

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1967; Amble & Kelly, 1970; Amble & Muehl, 1966), for example, found improvements in reading comprehension for students exposed to an experimental treatment of viewing tachistoscopically presented phrases. More recently, approaches that are more contextual in nature have been advocated (Allington, 1983). One of these approaches involves the overt cueing of phrase boundaries in written texts for the reader. In this approach, phrase boundaries in the text are overtly marked i.. some way.

Recent investigations into the use of phrase-marked reading passages have been successful within the scope of the investigations (Frase & Schwartz, 1979; Gerrell and Mason, 1983; Gregory, 1986; Mason & Kendall, 1979; McBride, 1976; O'Shea & Sindelar, 1983; Stevens, 1981; Weiss, 1983). In these studies subjects read texts that had phrase boundaries marked by exaggerated spacing, slash marks embedded in the texts, or the ends of lines of texts. In general, when compared with their reading conventional tents, students reading the phrase marked texts demonstrated significant improvement in their performances on both comprehension and fluency measures. Such effects were particularly evident with less fluent leaders.

In order for the phrased text treatment to have any practical significance for reading instruction, however, the facilitation induced by the phrased text treatment needs to transfer to conventionally formatted texts. Unfortunately, in the above mentioned studies, transference was never tested.

The objective of the present exploratory study was to test the efficacy of having college students read texts in which phrase boundaries are explicitly cued. The main issue addressed was the transfer effect of the experimental treatment from phrased to conventional forms of texts.

Method

Subjects

Forty-two college students from three developmental reading courses in a university in the Southeastern United States participated in the study. Students in these classes were identified as having reading/study problems based upon their SATV scores and high school grade point averages, and upon their performance on a university constructed reading proficiency examination prior to entrance into the university. Each class was randomly divided into experimental and control groups. Twenty-one students were assigned to the experimental phrased text treatment and 21 were assigned to the control non-phrased treatment.

Materials

Eight experimental texts were developed for the study. The texts were selected from contemporary literature for young adults and ranged in readability from 7th to 12th grades. For each text phrase boundaries were identified using a consensus technique similar to the one described by Weiss (1982). In this technique a panel of judges read and identified intrasentential pause boundaries within the texts. Pause boundaries identified by over two-thirds of the judges were selected as required phrase boundaries. In the experimental texts the

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required phrase boundaries were graphically highlighted in the texts by placing slash marks at the appropriate places. Slash marks were used to cue phrase boundaries. This was based upon an earlier instructional recommendation by Allington (1983).

The same texts were also used with the subjects in the control group. This group, however, was presented with texts in a conventional format.

Procedures

Prior to the actual treatment all subjects were pretested on reading rate and comprehension using the The Nelson Denny Reading Test, Form E.

All treatments were administered during the normal reading class periods for the subjects. All treatments were administered by the regular instructor. Prior to the treatment it was explained to the subjects that proper phrasing during reading was important for successful reading comprehension and fluency. Subjects were told that in some texts phrase boundaries were marked. Subjects with those texts were instructed to use those cues to guide their phrased reading. On Monday through Thursday for two consecutive weeks subjects were given one of the treatment texts to read. The texts were administered in order from easiest to most difficult in terms or readability. Subjects in the experimental treatment were given the phrased texts while subjects in the control group were given the conventionally formatted texts. In order to insure that the subjects would be reading for meaning, a brief true-false quiz was administered after each reading of a text. All students were timed during their readings. Students

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recorded their times at the top of their comprehension check answer sheets and were advised to try to decrease their time from session to session while maintaining adequate comprehension. Otherwise, no instruction in improving reading rate was given.

On the Monday following the the final treatment students were administered a posttest. Subjects were administered the Nelson Denny Reading Test, Form F. Measures of reading comprehension and rate were taken. Subjects in the experimental reading group were also administered a questionnaire that attempted to determine their affective response to reading the phrased text.

Results and Discussion

Means and standard deviations for all measures were calculated and are displayed in Table 1. In order to determine if significant differences between groups existed in comprehension and reading rate due to treatments, analyses of covariance was conducted for both variables. Pretests for comprehension and reading rate were used as covariates.

Insert Table 1 About Here

The analysis of covariance for comprehension indicated that no significant differences were detected $F(1,39) = .05$, $p > .05$. For reading rate, however, the analysis of covariance indicated that significant differences were apparent between treatment groups $F(1, 37) = 4.77$, $p < .05$.

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The results indicate that the phrased text treatment did not lead
to any better (or worse) comprehension on the conventional texts for
the experimental group. For both groups reading rate improved over the
course of the treatment. The increase in rate for the control group,
however, was significantly greater than for the experimental group.
Although both groups increased their rate of reading the experimental
group increased at a slower rate.

The lack of significant effects for comprehension suggest two
possibilities. First, the phrased text treatment does not lead to
improvements in comprehension. Although reading texts that are phrased
may improve comprehension on those texts, such reading does not
transfer to conventional texts. An alternative and more plausible
explanation is that the treatment involved in this study was not
sufficient in terms of intensity or duration to lead readers to process
or comprehend texts any differently than they had in the past. The
experimental treatment consisted f reading eight phrased passages over
the course of two weeks. During this period the students in both
treatment groups were also reading many selections written in a
conventional format. It seems quite likely that any gains in
comprehension due to a treatment consisting of reading phrased texts
cannot be made over brief periods with low intensity treatments.

At first glance the treatment effects on reading rate may seem
baffling. Both groups increased their reading rates, with the control
group increasing its rate to a greater degree than the experimental
group. The generalized improvement in reading rate may be due to a
practice effect. Students were aware that they were being timed during
the treatments and this concern may have transferred to increased rates

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on the posttest. Additionally, it may be that the phrased text
treatment acted to retard the rate gains made by the experimental
group. This hypothesis is supported by post treatment surveys of
students in the experimental treatment. Several students mentioned in
the surveys that the phrased text forced them to slow down in their
reading and to think more about the meaning of the text. This slowing
of reading rate may have transferred to reading conventional texts.
But slowing down and paying attention did not lead to improvements in
comprehension.

The results of this study are somewhat ambivalent. The brevity
of the treatments tend to obscure the findings. At best, it can be
suggested that a transfer was observed in the form of a relative
slowing of the subjects' reading rate. Because of the lack of main
effects for comprehension, no instructional suggestions can be made
from these results. The call for further research, however is
indicated. Some tentative suggestions and hypotheses for further
research may be worth considering. First, any phrased text treatment
that attempts to demonstrate a transfer effect needs to be of
considerable intensity and duration. Subjects need to read many
phrased text selections over a long period of time. A minimum
treatment period of six weeks should be considered. Second, although
not clearly demonstrated in the present study, the phrased text
treatment may act to slow reading rate on texts that are conventionally
formatted. This hypothesis should be investigated further. Moreover,
the significance of such an effect must be considered. Does the
slowing of reading rate act to facilitate or inhibit overall reading
performance? It may be that for many poorer readers the slowing of

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reading rate allows the reader to process the meaning of the text more fully than was previously possible.

Despite the lack of significant main effects for comprehension in this exploratory study, the study does help point the way for future work. Investigations into the use of phrased texts over longer training periods should continue. Moreover, future studies may wish to employ phrase cues that are potentially less distracting than slash marks. Nevertheless past research has indicated promising results for the use of phrased texts in improving reading performance. The present study does suggest that some sort of transference occurs after a brief series of treatments. Future research should help specify the applicability of the use of phrased texts in conventional instructional settings.

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TABLE 1

Means and Standard Deviations for Comprehension and Rate Measures

Measure	Mean	Standard Deviation
Experimental		
Comprehension Pre	37 71	10.40
Comprehension Post	43.81	10.00
Rate Pre	210.35	44.37
Rate Post	220.80	62.52
Control		
Comprehension Pre	36.48	9.76
Comprehension Post	42.76	8.54
Rate Pre	224.45	56.85
Rate Post	266.30	57.35

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DOCUMENT RESUME

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AUTHOR   Dixon, John; Stratta, Leslie
TITLE   Reading and Responding with Understanding, Part I: An
              Analysis of GCSE Exemplar Materials (1986-1987) for
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INSTITUTION   Cxford Univ., Eastleigh (England). Delegacy of Local
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              Comprehension; Reading Materials; *Reading Processes;
              *Reading Tests; *Test Construction; Test Validity
IDENTIFIERS   *Great Britain

ABSTRACT
        As a response to the artificiality of the traditional
reading comprehension test, this booklet provides alternative means
of testing that are within the guidelines of the British National
Criteria. Ideas for testing informative, persuasive,
autobiographical, and literary materials are presented in the
booklet--carefully chosen to provide material in a meaningful
context, to consider reading processes, and to offer students an
important role and purpose. For example, the booklet contains some
tests that require students to read and write responses to
advertisements and editorials that are of particular interest to
teenagers, and thus calls into question the value of timed
examinations as measures of reading with understanding. Recommended
for the future is a coursework folder that will provide a more valid
representation of students' achievements as readers--assuming
teachers do not model themselves on nation-wide exams. (ARH)

READING WITH UNDERSTANDING

Booklet 1.

READING AND RESPONDING WITH UNDERSTANDING :

PART I

an analysis of GCSE Exemplar Materials (1986-7)

for Understanding & Response.

by

John Dixon
Leslie Stratta

1987

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Introduction

The Delegacy's Writing Development Group combines a range of
interests.

Sandra Boreham's experience is in FE & Communication;

Lorraine Foreman-Peck researches into Response to
Literature;

Liz Johnson's experience is in Tertiary College & Drama;

Dave Kessel, a senior moderator with the SEG, is especially
interested in cross-curricular work;

Eric King has been a moderator for SREB;

Norman Munnery is especially interested in media;

Mike Preece is a chief moderator with the SEG;

John Dixon and Leslie Stratta do research into writing and
reading.

This booklet is the outcome of this group's seminars throughout
the year 1986-87 and has been written up on their behalf by
John Dixon and Leslie Stratta.

* * * * *

SECTION A.

Everyday Purposes for Reading with Care

Let us imagine a small town and a day in its life: what
kinds of occasions for reading (with care) might one
expect to find?   We'll start with what regularly comes
through some of the letter-boxes first thing in the
morning : letters from friends sharing experiences;
letters from charities giving information and requesting
help;   persuasive letters offering a "service" you may
want;   agendas, fixture lists and other circulars from
clubs, voluntary associations, or unions ....   Moving
on into the day, at the bus or railway station there may
be timetables to consult or travel brochures and
circulars to pick up, with advice about cheap fares,
week-end holiday opportunities, excursions abroad ...
At the newsagent's we'd expect to see people buying not
only newspapers but specialist weeklies and magazines -
some of them offering information, advice or encourage-
ment, and appealing to a range of diverse interests
(computers, do-it-yourself, cars, cooking, gardening ...
The Economist, New Society, Radio Times, Spare Rib ...
Women's Own).   During the working day, many of the
townspeople will have to read memos, specifications,
reports, incoming orders, and a variety of other
documents.   Some will have to draw on advisory leaflets
and booklets, produced by government (national or local)
and many other agencies or trades.   Throughout the day,
in breaks and the lunch hour, people will be reading
specific news items, some reporting events, thus
interpreting them, offering opinions and moulding
attitudes.   Some items will involve genuine human
dramas, others sensationalised gossip, no doubt.

In the evening there may be time to read longer feature
articles on topics of the day - AIDS, child abuse,
radioactive pollution, firearms, the latest political
crisis, among many others.

So far much of this reading informs, advises, persuades or argues with the reader about people and things in the world. Thus, in turn, the reader may have to take note of what has been read and act upon it - including, perhaps, producing further written material for others to read with care. That is one dimension. But life isn't just getting things done. There should be room for the world of the imagination - for the mind at play. And this is why we'd expect to find some people reading novels and shorter stories, simply "for enjoyment"; imaginatively exploring new experiences, empathising with different characters, living for a time in a fictional world ... This is a second dimension, and equally important. (And we may act upon it, though in a different way, in our day-to-day understanding of our own life and that of others).

Alongside this daily range of reading, of course, we will observe most - perhaps all - of the people of our town drawing on the media, both television and radio, for many of the same purposes. For some people there is complex interweaving between print and the audio (visual); for many, television and radio are much more central, even omnipresent, outside working hours.

Whether voluntary or obligatory, all these different acts of attentive reading (with viewing and listening) arise in the course of everyday living. But there is another area of life to recall, where reading with care is central, and that is education. However practical the subject, it's likely that at some point books and print material will be referred to; equally, some subjects are unthinkable without a textual basis.

English is one of those subjects. But how well have traditional English Language "exercises" in "compre-hension" related to reading with care in everyday life? In 1981 Barnes and Seed found, after detailed analysis of GCE/CSE Exam papers, that "the artificiality of the typical comprehension test is most striking" (1).

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To summarise how artificial the traditional exercise had become, we would point to the following characteristics:

1. A passage is typically offered <u>without context</u>, and <u>without any purpose for reading</u> other than satisfying an examiner.

2. The formulaic questions focus attention on <u>words and phrases</u> selected by the examiner, not on the overall <u>meaning of the passage</u> and its <u>potential significance</u> for the reader.

3. Candidates are required to <u>provide written answers</u> to a set of such questions, <u>not to use the ideas or message</u> for any relevant purpose; <u>their role</u> is simply that of an <u>examinee</u> and <u>totally alien</u> to any of the <u>everyday roles</u> in which they will produce written responses to printed material. (It doesn't even relate to reading in other school subjects).

The widespread criticism of this tradition. and the recognition of everyday purposes for reading with understanding, offers a new challenge to GCSE examiners, as a close reading of the National Criteria demonstrates.

The National Criteria : assessment objectives

These criteria set out for teachers and examiners eight "inter-related and inter-dependent" objectives. All syllabuses "must provide opportunities for candidates to demonstrate their ability" to fulfil these eight. Let us focus attentively (!) on those that may affect reading and responding with understanding. What new goals do they set us?

In the broadest terms, students are expected not simply "to understand" material but to "convey" and "present" it to others. In other words, they have to use what they have read as a basis, to "communicate effectively and appropriately" to an "audience" or readership.

The criteria state explicitly that <u>understanding</u> will be concerned not only with "facts", but also with "ideas and opinions", "implicit meanings and attitudes". These will be studied "in reading material and in other media". Acting on that understanding will call for the ability to "evaluate" what has been read and viewed, to "select what is relevant to specific purposes", and to devise a suitable "order" in <u>presenting</u> it to others. <u>Conveying</u> what they have understood will require students to "show a sense of audience and an awareness of style", both "formal and informal".

So far we have been relating the objectives to what the criteria call "non-literary material". Clearly this includes a very broad range of possibilities : narrative reports, general information, persuasive documents, argument and discussion, to go no further. To deal adequately with such a range - as the criteria make explicit - students will need to "respond in a variety of ways to what is read". (And without recourse to course work folders, we doubt if this range and these complex objectives can actually be covered in assessment).

In addition, within the English syllabuses there is a second dimension to be considered : the ability of students to "enjoy and appreciate the reading of literature" and to "respond imaginatively to what they hear, read and experience in a variety of media". Although these Aims do relate directly to one objective 2.1.4. (that students "articulate experience and express what is felt and what is imagined"), it seems to us that they could benefit from some filling out by reference to the English Literature objectives, especially the students' ability to "communicate a sensitive and informed personal response to what is read".

So much for the criteria laid down. They may not be perfect in their present form, but in our view the model of the uses of language which informs them represents a major step forward. How far, we must ask, have the Boards been able to meet this challenge in

their initial exemplar materials?   Before we answer that
question, however, we must first consider how best to
"order" and "present" the material for our readers!

Mapping the Field

When we confronted the exemplars from all six boards,
our first problem was its range and variety.   Some
boards included visual material - images, diagrams,
tabulations - others confined themselves to text.   One
board even included an audio-tape.   So the mode of
communication was one variable we had to bear in mind.

When we focussed on the printed material, there were
further obvious differences to consider.   Almost all
boards had included a narrative passage, though in some
this was a piece of imaginative literature, in others a
documentary report.   A few boards used a passage of
generalised prose, a factually-based piece of informative
writing, for example.   Thus a second variable to
consider was the contrast between narrative and general-
isation (or the "level of abstraction" as it has been
called).

A third variable has already been hinted at.   An
imaginary story was going to call for different kinds of
understandings from a factual (eye-witness) report.   The
one might be called "imaginative" or "poetic", the other
"informative".   (And to make matters more complex,
there may be passages where the two functions of
language overlap).   Similarly, in one piece of general-
ised prose we noted that the major function was
"persuasive" rather than "informative".   Again a
different process of understanding was required.

There were equally complex differences when we came to
analyse the demands of the visual material.   One
offered a simplified but still concrete image; a second
a rather schemetized map;   a third a linear route map;
and a fourth a tabulation of hotels, prices and travel
times.   Manifestly, different kinds of "reading" and

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interpretation were called for.

This was the beginning of our map, then - but only the beginning.   There were still two major elements to consider : the reading processes that were called for and the role and purposes offered the student in producing a written "response" for a particular reader-ship.   Rather than treat these elements in abstraction from the material, we shall discuss and analyse these as we look at each exemplar.

* * * *

SECTION B.

The Exemplar Materials

Our group is grateful to all six Boards for sending
their exemplar materials for us to study.   We are well
aware, from our SEA representatives alone, of the
pressures that the Boards were under to produce this
material on time.   What's more, our own group's recent
experiences in re-designing "questions" on poetry has
left us in no doubt as to the importance of detailed and
lengthy discussion, whenever radical changes are being
attempted.   If there are flaws in the exemplars, then
this should not be surprising - given the schedule
demanded and the complexity of the task.   The aims we
set ourselves, therefore, in scrutinizing the material
were threefold:

> (a) to recognise positive achievements in meeting
>   the National Criteria;
>
> (b) to suggest, where we could, extensions and
>   developments of these achievements;
>
> (c) where necessary to point to places where, in
>   our view, the criteria were not met and
>   "artificiality" still predominated.

In this booklet we have decided to group the material
according to the main purpose or function of the lang-
uage/visuals : in broad terms, we shall start with
informative accounts and material, move on to exemplars
with a persuasive or argumentative purpose, and
conclude with autobiographical and literary passages.

Of course, in selecting materials for a booklet we
ourselves have had to face constraints of space.
Within these we have tried to give a flavour of the
material itself, but necessarily we have been restricted
to extracts : readers who want to follow up further
details will no doubt apply to the Boards direct.

Understanding and Response to Informative Material

Language with an informative purpose surrounds us in our
everyday lives. We have only to open a newspaper -
well, some newspapers! - or to listen to/watch a news
broadcast and we are told what is happening, or has just
happened, in the world. Of course, what we hear isn't
simple "information" : every report will be shot through
with social attitudes and ideological assumptions. This
is something teachers and examiners need to take into
account when studying reports, documentary features, eye
witness statements, testimony in court, and the like.

Of course there are other kinds of topic : informative
booklets or articles on mechanical equipment, on how to
make or mend things, on how to use your word-processor,
on what to look for or where to find products you need -
language about such things stands a chance of being more
"factual" or "objective". Even then, as soon as we get
into guidance or advice, there will be room for different
opinions : which word-processor to buy, which plants are
best for indoors, how best to make or do something, and
so on, all will involve personal choices and judgements -
even in something as factual as a "Which?" magazine.

So this is a very rich field for teachers and examiners
to draw on, with the possibility of quite a sophisticated
range of different kinds of "understanding" to develop.

* * * * *

Six exemplars fell into this category:

a) two used multiple reports (on a ship running
   aground; a road accident);

b) two used maps with associated text (about a
   marathon run; a railway outing);

9   12

c) one used a set of schematized visual images (on designs for the Channel tunnel);

d) one used a tabulation (of flights and hotel prices).

The range of different forms (or modes of communication) is encouraging and appropriate).

a) Multiple Reports

The Welsh board chose a dramatic news item, where the "Prince Ivanhoe", a pleasure steamer, came to grief off the Welsh coast.   It is an excellent example of the kind of local event that most of us would switch on to as it came up on the news.   The students are given two reports : a word-for-word account from a television news programme, only two hours after the incident, and a front-page item in the following day's newspaper. Each is roughly 500 words, but it seems worth giving a longish extract from both.

BBC Wales Today 5.5ᵗpm Monday

.... *Well, the 'Prince Ivanhoe' had set out on a holiday cruise along the Mumbles and the Gower coast. The weather was fin..   The ship is thirty years old. The voyage was a routine trip that she had made before.   She's solidly built with a double-skinned bottom for extra safety.   Two months ago she went aground in the Avon Gorge and she stayed marooned for three days before she could be refloated.   Well, this time it seems that she struck an underwater obstruction which holed her hull.   Water rushed in. At one time the captain lost the use of the ship's twin diesel engines, but power came back in time to beach the vessel one hundred yards off shore.*

Mrs. Anne Gill, a passenger, was asked if there had been panic on board.   "Well, there seemed to be

quite a number of panics, but not too much. There
were quite a number of babies crying but ... you
know ... people weren't rushing, but they seemed
to be moving pretty fast. I got a bit scared
downstairs so I said, 'Let's go upstairs'. So
we went upstairs. By then - oh, we started
moving, that's right - he managed to get us off
the reef and went, you know, towards Port Eynon
beach, where he beached the boat we were on ... or
the ship ... he actually drove into the beach
where it wasn't ... you know, so steep. The
bottom deck was, well, the engine room was
completely flooded". One of the passengers,
Mr. Jack Stubbs, described what happened.

"Well, we heard the bump and we felt it, but we
thought the engine just sort of ... just sort of
missed a beat or something, but in fact it had hit
the bottom, and holed the ship and the captain
stopped the ship, and then told us that there was
no need to panic or anything, that he was going to
turn around but in fact it started making water
quite fast and I went down below to have a look
and one of the engineers was covered in oil almost
up to his waist, and we realized then it was quite
serious and the ship was going down quite fast".

Newspaper Report Tuesday

A mini-Armada of small boats ferried 452 day-
trippers to safety yesterday after their pleasure
steamer was holed and beached off Gower during a
Bristol Channel cruise. Local fishing and
pleasure boats rushed to help the 1000 tons diesel
vessel 'Prince Ivanhoe' which was packed th
families from South Wales, the West country and
the Midlands.

The 'Ivanhoe' had been beached 400 yards off-
shore after striking a "submerged object" off

Port Eynon point.

Terrified passengers, many wearing life-jackets,
scrambled down gangplanks and were lowered to
rescue craft as water swept through the 'Prince
Ivanhoe's' below-decks lounge. Three helicopters
hovered above, supervising the rescue, and the
Mumbles and Tenby lifeboats towed some of the
smaller rescue boats to shore.

The 'Ivanhoe's' own lifeboats were also used during
the operation. All the passengers were landed
safely within an hour of the vessel being beached.

The passengers, many of them children, were taken
soaking wet from the beach to recover at nearby
hotels.

The 30-year old former Sea-Link ferry, 'Prince
Ivanhoe' started the cruise at Penarth yesterday
morning and the ship went to Barry, Minehead and
Mumbles and was making a tour of the Gower coast.

It sailed into Port Eynon and was making its way
out past the point at 3.45 p.m. when passengers
heard a rending sound and the ship shuddered twice.
It is believed that a local pilot was on board and
the tide was near its lowest ebb. The ship came
to an abrupt halt and the engines stopped. It was
20 minutes before they restarted and pulled her
clear. The captain then sailed his ship into
the centre of the bay and ran it on to the beach
because it was taking in water.

Let us start from the reading processes called for here.
It seems to us there is a rich variety, even in what may
seem at first sight fairly straightforward passages. As
a start, which elements do the examiners help candidates
to focus on?

Part of the interest lies in what happens to the people:-
What kind of experience did they go through? - How did
they behave? Here the examiners are very helpful:

- "to what extent do you think that the evidence points to panic ... after the "Prince Ivanhoe" was holed?"

- "Mrs. Anne Gill was interviewed ... Read carefully what she said and the way she spoke. How does she show what the state of her mind was?"

Another part lies in how near we are getting to the truth of what happened, when we compare the various informants. Here again the examiners prompt the student to consider many useful points:

- the accuracy of the numbers on board

- the clarity of our impression of what holed the ship

- the details of the rescue operations.

It's appropriate that only after raising such questions do they ask another, more evaluative question:

- "What is your judgement of the Captain?"

Equally there is the possibility now of reaching an overall judgement on the reporting itself, given some understanding of the constraints on the reporters and production teams. Although they do help the candidate to consider the effects of time constraints ("What evidence is there ... that the BBC ... editors were working so fast that they had not time to plan their presentation...?"), the examiners are content with the piecemeal judgements above, on accuracy and clarity.

Finally, there is an opportunity to consider uses of language in a more analytic fashion; here the examiners ask:

"What evidence shows that [Mr. Jack Stubb's interview] is spoken English rather than written English?"

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While it may be interesting to itemise differences
between spoken and written, we suggest that it is import-
ant to consider meaning and intention - the effects that
the presenters are trying to achieve, and why.   (But, of
course, this would require a video-tape, not merely a
transcript).

In terms of reading processes, then, the examiners are
evidently calling for quite complex understanding.   Where
we should like to suggest development is in the evaluation
of the reporters and their intentions, and this could be
strengthened by a more analytic attention to the relat-
ionships between language use, meaning and intent.

How about the role and purpose offered the students,
though?   Interesting though these questions are they
still trap the candidate into the role of the examinee -
answering solely for the benefit of the examiner (who
already knows)!   How much more valid would the response
have been if candidates could finally have prepared a
report for suitable readers (classmates? - the BBC team?
- readers of the local newspaper?), using the understand-
ings prompted by those questions.   Although this would
be simulated, it is the kind of serious undertaking we
want students to get experience of, in preparation for
roles in their future lives.

                    * * * * *

The Northern Ireland board had an imaginative idea, for
a similar kind of exemplar.   Their material offers four
eye-witness accounts of a road accident.   Then the
student is told: "Put yourself in the place of a
policeman who has to write a factual report on what
happened and who was responsible.   Base the report on
your interpretation of the information given by the
witnesses".   In terms of role and purpose this seems
excellent (though we wonder if the policeman would be

called on to decide responsibility?).

However, though the reading process is certainly complex,
requiring a good deal of cross-reference, and interpret-
ation or judgements of individual perceptions, each
"account" is on the superficial side.   Here is the first,
for example:

> *Mr. John Black, aged 27 - Passer-by:*
>
> "The kid had no chance.   The car came speeding
> up the inside lane, he was just trying to avoid
> the queue in the other lane.   Next thing I
> knew was that the girl was lying across the
> bonnet of the Escort.   You should have heard
> the screech of brakes".

We find it difficult to believe that this is real, rather
than fabricated - and greatly simplified - testimony.
(How different it is from Mrs. Gill!).   Nevertheless, we
would like to see more exemplars on these lines, given
greater realism.   If this is agreed, we would suggest
that more sophisticated judgements about responsibility
may be needed so that students would have to analyse,
for example, where evidence was disputed and where there
was consensus (suggesting reasons why this might be so),
before proceeding to apportion responsibility.   Natur-
ally, this model could be applied to many other social
events, besides accidents.

<p style="text-align:center">* * * * *</p>

(b) - (d) Information Visuals plus Text

We want to treat as a group the four exemplars incorpor-
ating informative visuals.

There is an imaginative potential here, our seminar
believes, which is never quite realised.   Information in
our modern society is certainly being given in visuals,
such as schematised images, maps or tabulations, along-
side text.   So the Midland, Northern Ireland & Southern
Boards deserve credit for recognising this in their
exemplars.

Furthermore, the Southern Board has tried to set up a
genuine role and purpose for the student as reader.   For
example:

> a) "Imagine that you are a reporter on a local
>   weekly paper.   Write an article for the
>   page of your paper featuring "Day Trips"
>   describing your day out from Marylebone...
>   [and] pointing out the special attractions.."
>
> b) "Write a letter from the [Marathon] Race
>   Director to this year's entrants selecting
>   from the passage whatever information you
>   find appropriate".

These contrast favourably with the rather arbitrary facts
and comparisons demanded of the students by the other
boards.   Why, the intelligent students might ask, tell
the Northern Ireland examiner "What is twenty-four miles
from the town of Corfu?", or "What can be found about a
mile from the town of San Stefano?"   Or why tell the
Midland examiner about the "differences and the
similarities" - nothing else - between the three
proposals for the Channel Tunnel?   We recognise that it
is important to extract factual information from
tabulations and diagrams, but only information that is
"relevant to specific purposes" (as the National
Criteria point out).

However, what worried our group over these four
exemplars were the difficulties that examiners obviously
got themselves into.   When there are situations where
technical and factual interests predominate (and human

interests seem to be less important), it is more easy
for English examiners to go astray and overload their
students with informative material (often of a limited
nature), or to set up arbitrary, even crude questions,
which can be predominantly technocratic.

The strength of the English teacher, surely, is to keep
human concerns in focus and to make factual information
serve them.

* * * *

Understanding and Response to Persuasive/Argumentative Material

Every day we encounter many different kinds of persuasion, discussion and argument. Advertisers try to persuade us to buy their products; charities and voluntary associations appeal for our help. Members of committees, clubs, unions and political parties try to work out a common line of action and convince others of its validity.

Persuasion is a two-edged weapon. So there is always the danger that it is carried on egocentrically, solely in the interests of the persuader, not the persuaded. Unscrupulous marketing, the clever tricks of political propaganda, with the covert sliding in of false assumptions and premises, these are part of our common experience. And in the last two or three decades television has become a dangerous new force, in its ability to shape people's attitudes and values - with its army of backroom researchers well versed in depth psychology in the creation of brilliant images juxtaposed with language, in the skilful use of rhetorical devices : an entire industry controlled by a tiny minority.

However, the effort to convince, to discuss what's right, and to argue for it, to make well-grounded and rational choices does need to be based on an appeal to better feelings, in the better interests of the person or the community as a whole.

There are very important forms of moral, social and political understanding to be learned, and English teachers and examiners are naturally to be found at the centre of such work.

* * * * *

Surprisingly, only three exemplars fall into this category - and in two cases we have to stretch a point to include them:

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a) one uses a set of extracts from guide books,
   two of which use language emotively;

b) one uses an advertisement for an educational
   book club;

c) one uses a letter of protest to be replied to.

The narrowness of this sample, and the uses it was put to,
is disappointing.   Perhaps the   ..rds should reconsider
this position.

a) Guide Book Extracts . St. Michael's Mount

Once again there was an imaginative idea to start from,
this time from the Midland board.   The three extracts
involved quite different purposes and uses of language,
with a range from factual information to a romantic
appeal.   So at one moment the candidate is concerned
with mundane matters (such as the time the guided tours
leave, the prices of admission, and the telephone number
for special educational visits), and the next with "a
unique blend of nature, romance and architecture ... all
smiling welcome ... regarded as sacred ...".

The examiner's difficulty, as our group saw it, lay in
defining a suitable role and purpose for the student.
Two were offered:

> 1. *The extracts you have just read are all
>   from guide books.*
>
>   *Suppose you are writing an account of
>   St. Michael's Mount suitable for some of
>   your friends to read, and wish to include
>   a paragraph that describes the history of
>   the Mount.   Write the paragraph in up to
>   about 150 words.*
>
> 2. *Your school Parent-Teacher Association has
>   organised a trip to Cornwall for one week*

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> *in June and you have been asked to recommend*
> *places to visit.   Using the information*
> *given in the extracts write a report for the*
> *Association's Committee in favour of a visit*
> *to the Mount and suggest how a day there*
> *might be organised.*

These are two very different tasks, in terms of <u>reading</u> <u>process</u>. To judge by the marking guidelines, the first task simply calls on the students to abstract out, and order, eight "historical details but not necessarily with all the dates".   So this appears to fulfil the National Criteria objective to "select what is relevant" - an important form of understanding.   But the second half of the objective says "relevant to specific purposes" : is that list of historical facts really "suitable for some of your friends to read", we wonder? Is this a real <u>role</u>, or once again an examiner's exercise?

The second task does ask for persuasive uses of language "in favour of a visit".   But, again, our seminar group wondered how many 16 year-olds would feel confident in the <u>role</u> of organising a day for a P.T.A.

Incidentally - and we shall be returning to this - the students were given only 45 minutes to read and digest the three extracts and to produce both the written documents (the second of which involves much searching to find enough relevant activities to fill out a whole day).

b) <u>Advertisement for Book Club</u>

Manifestly it is important for students to assess advertising material, as part of the English syllabus, and credit must go to Northern Ireland for being the only Board to offer such an exemplar.   In the event they chose an advertisement inviting parents to join a

club offering a monthly choice of "Books for Children" -
an important service, if well done.

The task proposed was as follows:

> 3. *Look carefully at the attached advertisement.*
> *You should look particularly at the picture,*
> *the headline and the other words.   Write*
> *about the advertisement making clear how you*
> *think it makes its appeal to the public.*
>
> *Give reasons why you think it might or might*
> *not be effective.*

Thus, the rubric directs students to three important
elements : "the picture, the headline and the other
words".   These cues to <u>reading process</u> are important -
but our seminar group believed they could profitably be
extended.   Consider, in the headline for example :
the type-face used, the choice of names, the form of
appeal ...   In the main body of the text, for example,
how is the cost to parents dealt with in the following
two paragraphs?

> *Books for Children are offering all 8 of the*
> *Oakapple stories for just £1.60 (plus*
> *postage).   That's only 20p a book, saving*
> *you £14 on the publishers' price - as an*
> *introduction to a book club that's unique.*
>
> *Books for Children will offer your children*
> *a planned, comprehensive introduction to the*
> *world of books.   We aim to help you choose*
> *the best children's books from the hundreds*
> *published each month - as well as saving you*
> *up to 50% on the publishers' prices.*

In general we believe that students will need more
detailed guidelines or prompts, especially when there is
such a body of text as in this case.

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Our second main point concerns the last sentence of the
rubric : "Give reasons why you think it might be
effective".   The first question is : Who are students
giving reasons to? - what exactly is their _role_?   And
this is related to our second question : "Effective" for
whom? - for the advertiser, or the parent?   Are we
simply concerned with the selling of the product, or do
we want students to evaluate how it is being sold?   The
latter is a central question, which the Board seems to
have overlooked.

c) A Letter of Protest

We were very disappointed to find that only one Board -
Northern Ireland - had tackled understanding and response
to written discussion and argument. (The other exception
was the Midland Board, which set a question in its Aural
Exam asking students to give the "opinions" of one of
the speakers and to say where they would agree or dis-
agree).   This serious omission links up in our minds
with the paucity of written discussion and argument in
course work folders - a topic discussed in an earlier
booklet (2).

Yet, as the N. Ireland examiners showed, a very straight-
forward and adaptable format is available.   Here is
their question:

*The following letter appeared in the 'Belfast
Telegraph'.   Read it and using the correct letter
format write a letter to the Editor, Belfast
Telegraph, Royal Avenue, Belfast BT1 1ES, giving
your response to the points raised.*

Thugs run the streets

*I am writing to inform you of events which
occurred in Belfast City Centre on Saturday last.
I hope that by bringing these matters to public
attention something will be done to ensure that
they do not occur again.*

I brought my four year old daughter with me into town to do some shopping. As soon as we got off the bus we became aware of crowds of young people, both boys and girls of about 16 years old standing around corners and in the doorways of some shops. It was clear that some were in gangs of one kind or another by their dress, hairstyles and general behaviour. I was shocked when suddenly they began to run at each other; my daughter was knocked to the ground and, naturally, became very frightened by this stampede. She became quite hysterical and I had to call a policeman to assist us in getting back on to the bus.

This situation cannot be allowed to continued. Decent people cannot come into town while these thugs run the street. The authorities will have to do something to keep young people off the streets. It is clear that young people of today lack common sense, maturing and consideration for others. Young people of my generation did not behave like this, possibly because their parents had control over them. If parents cannot control their children then it is up to the Government, the City Council and the P~   As a rate payer I demand that somet   ould be done.

(Mrs) Joan White.

We note first that there is a very clear <u>role</u>, directly related to everyday life. And a 'etter about young people's behaviour is very likely to stimulate students to respond, giving them a realistic sense of purpose.

Our only qualifications concern the guidance which we feel students will need. The letter-writer tells the story in paragraph two of an incident that ought to enlist the readers' sympathies. However, in paragraph three she becomes rather emotionally irrational in her assertions about "young people of today", compared with

"my generation".   Our seminar group could imagine many
students who would find it difficult to stay cool under
such provocation!

Would it be helpful, with material of this kind, if we
tried to offer students clearer guidelines about the
need to answer such letters rationally, while bearing in
mind that certain feelings and attitudes may be quite
understandable?

* * * *

Understanding and Response to Autobiographical and Imaginary Stories

Up to this point we have been looking at attempts radically to transform what used to be called "comprehension". In this section we turn to something new and different - response to literature. Within GCS this was traditionally dealt with in English Literature papers. But the National Criteria are quite clear that the new subject, English, should "develop the ability of students to enjoy and appreciate the reading of literature" and to "understand and respond imaginatively" to it.

The challenge to the examiners, then, was to find ways of eliciting appreciation, understanding and imaginative response, not in the frame of specialist English Literature, but in a general English course. It is not an easy task - since effectively the whole age group at 16 are going to be candidates. What makes it even more demanding in the initial phases are the serious, even crass, mistakes that have become traditional in Literature examining, and which our group has discussed in detail in two previous booklets (3).

* * * * *

There were as many as nine exemplars in this category:

- one used autobiographical material (two episodes);

- the remainder used either complete imaginary stories or extracts.

We intend to treat the whole set of exemplars under three headings:

a) How far does the language introducing the passage and talking about it help the student achieve an imaginative engagement with the characters and their experiences?

b) How suitable are the passages for the majority of sixteen year-olds, given that they must read them in silence and with strict time limits?

c) How helpful are the questions as guidelines to enable students to "articulate and express" what they have understood, felt and imagined?

* * * * *

a) The Language Introducing and Framing the Passage

In the classroom, teachers frequently prepare for a reading by establishing a context. Somehow or other this practice seems to have been lost in the examination tradition. All the more welcome, then, to see two of the Boards trying to use language to draw the student into the experience. Here is the first, from the Southern Group (the better of the two they offer):

From Intimate Relations by Jacqui Durrell.

Jacqui Durrell shares with her husband, Gerald Durrell, a love of animals. In the following episode she gives an account of an Emperor Tamarin monkey. This pet is particularly troublesome and has a bad influence on others in their care!

There is a sympathetic understanding here, both of the passage and of the student. The language is accessible and direct; the touch of wry humour is an excellent preparation for what will follow.

The second example comes from London & East Anglia : it introduces two passages, one from Adrian Mole's Diary, the other describing a girl's visit to an Old Ladies' Home:

Read the following passages. Both give accounts of teenagers meeting some old people. As you read,

you should consider the following:

> *each person's behaviour, feelings and attitudes towards the old people;*
>
> *the old people's feelings about them;*
>
> *and the ways in which things are described.*

You will be asked questions on these points in Part II.

You have fifteen minutes' reading time. You may make notes on details of the passages in your answer book.

The emphasis in this introduction is rather different. The context is given briefly, almost perfunctorily : "Both give accounts of teenagers meeting some old people". On the other hand it tries to direct the readers towards "people's behaviour, feeling and attitudes" and "the way things are described" - important aspects of both passages. As well as making clear the organisational procedures, it also gives some practical suggestions about making notes on details, in the course of reading.

Our only further reservation is that there is an unnecessary formality about some of the language, "You should consider the following", for example. Would something like "try to keep in mind - to imagine as vividly as you can" be preferable?

The remaining boards offer nothing at all by way of introduction, or else something along the lines of:

> "Read the following extracts and then answer ALL the questions which follow".

A surprisingly peremptory tone to introduce an experience of <u>enjoyment</u> and <u>appreciation</u>!

b) Suitability of the Passages

This is where the major effort seems to have gone, in designing the exemplars; there is a genuine attempt to engage sixteen year-olds in experiences they can recognise, empathise with, and learn something in doing so. There is a strong, raw school experience, with interesting undertones, from Northern Ireland; a more delicate but graphic movement in young adolescence from the Northern Association; a glimpse of the grave, even terrible responsibility in a vet's work, from Southern; a dense, symbolic evocation of dependence and release, of a boy and his mother, from the Midland Group ... and so on.

We do have one major reservation, however. Three of the Boards give two extracts, to be read one after the other, before the student comes to the questions. This seems to our group, an unnecessary burden in a timed examination, likely to inhibit or prevent a full response to either passage.

c) Questions as Guidelines to the Articulation of Response

Despite the bad traditions of the past, the boards have manifestly tried to engage the student imaginatively, and in a variety of ways.   Here is some of the range:

- Imagine you are another pupil in M's class. Write your impression of the atmosphere in the classroom during the incident ...

- How do you think J regarded his mother and his relationship with her?

- Why do you think the snowdrops are important to the story ...?

- What do you learn ... about the feelings and attitudes of the various humans to the animals concerned?

- Carrying the girl to the road has a great
  effect on S.   In your own words describe how
  he feels while he is doing this.

A minor point needs re-emphasising here : there are no
grounds in theory or practice for treating the reader as
a passive consumer rather than an active agent construct-
ing an imaginary experience from the linguistic signs in
the text.   Thus for "what impressions are given" read
"what are your impressions";   for "what evidence is
there"   read "what evidence, if any, do you find";
"for what reasons is J so keen to get money" read "from
what you understand, why is J ...", and so on.

So much for the positive side.   However, it must be
said that some of the sets of questions caused our group
grave concern.   It seems that some Boards have not made
up their minds that it is literary response, not some
sort of factual comprehension, they are after.   They
seem to have fallen between two stools - the passages
are treated in part as if they conveyed information (of
an instrumental kind), and in part as imaginary exper-
iences.   How can students be expected to reconcile the
differences in tone between two totally conflicting
views of literature?   On the one hand there are the
kinds of imaginative questions we have quoted.   On the
other, there are these kinds of questions:

- Write down five points about M's physical
                    appearance.

- Give a brief outline of the progress of B's
                    business career.

- In your own words, explain what you understand
                    by the following.

- From what you have read here, what seems to be
  the usual view tourists from abroad have of
  England ... as they begin their visit?

Finally, strong as some of the sets of questions are, in their current form they demand anything from five to ten separate short replies, with the constant stress on the student to attend to the examiners' requirements as well as the text. Our group believes – on the basis of practical experiments – that students as a whole would do better if they were encouraged to use a sequence of questions as "guidelines", helping them to build up a piece of continuous prose. This offers students – including less able writers – the opportunity to articulate with increasing fluency and complexity what they have actually gained from their reading, with the tactful support of the teacher-examiner.

We owe our own understanding of this approach to the Cambridge Plain Texts group, and our own experiments testing the method across an ability range are fully documented in our last booklet, "Examining Poetry – the Need for Change".

* * * * *

The Implications of Examination Constraints

As our group worked through this material, and began to
stand back from it, they raised fundamental questions
about the value of timed exams as instruments for
assessing reading with understanding.   The constraints
on the examiners - and thus on the students - are far-
reaching and seriously reduce the hope that the central
intent of the GCSE, to assess positive achievements at
each grade level, can actually be fulfilled.   Thus:

a) <u>Context</u>.

Unlike the classroom teacher, the examiner has no
opportunity to build a context, where a passage (or
tape) is going to form part of a wider enquiry. Text
cannot be placed within drama, interviews, discussion,
presentations and other activities that can give it
richer meaning.

b) <u>Harnessing interests</u>.

No single passage is equally interesting or relevant
to all candidates; for some it is bound to appear a
chore.   By contrast, in a classroom where choice is
given, individual students can be offered opportun-
ities to search out texts they want - and need - to
read with great care.

c) <u>Enjoyment & Appreciation</u>.

In particular, examiners cannot be expected to find
a single imaginative narrative that all students
will find enjoyable to read silently, in the exam
context.   Nor, after a hurried reading, are a set
of examiners' "questions" likely to elicit personal
appreciation - especially if they are treated as
requests to score points (detailed in the margin),
rather than prompts to help students to articulate.

d) <u>Range of kind & difficulty</u>.

The most advanced students at 16 are capable of

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reading sophisticated texts that even their teachers
would find demanding.   It is impossible to set such
work in an exam because many other students would be
outfaced.   Thus there are bound to be constraints on
the range of difficulty in exam material. Similarly,
an examiner has only time to cover one or at the most
two of the immense range of purposes for which we
read and respond with understanding.   Not all stud-
ents are equally good across the range, thus there is
an inevitable arbitrariness in what they are faced
with in the exam.

e) Simulated/real roles.

A timed exam inevitably places students in a simulated
situation for reading with understanding and putting
it to some use.   Simulations have their value, (4)
but principally when they are closely related to
reading (and responding) for real purposes and reader-
ships.   It is classroom teachers who can make
opportunities for such real situations to occur.

f) Drafting and criticism.

Few of us would publish work in response to our
reading without finding a friendly critic and allowing
time for re-drafting.   Normally, an examiner has to
rule out both processes.

g) Time.

Some people read slowly, some fast.   A timed exam
can take no notice of these differences.   Indeed all
of the above - the building of a context, the
harnessing of interests, the provision for choice of
material and range, the induction into a simulation,
and the process of drafting - have to be sliced back,
if not obliterated.

Critical awareness of this kind has led us to realise
how much students (and Boards) will depend on a course-
work folder for a valid representation of their positive
achievements as readers - let alone their abilities as
viewers and listeners.

However, course-work folders will only display students' real potential if the Boards encourage teachers not to model themselves on exams, but to exploit the additional opportunities they enjoy.

Let us close with an example. Dave Kessel, one of our group, was recently approached by two of his Fourth Years who wanted to enter a science competition, submitting a script for a television programme on Joseph Priestley. After 'consultation' with Dave and their science teachers they read a series of texts about Priestley's life and work, decided on a structure for their product; selected appropriate material from their reading; studied and mastered the conventions of script-writing; conceived a visual interpretation, with a sequence of visuals to write alongside the (oral) text; considered appropriateness to a television audience - and finally produced a 26-page typed version for submission.

No timed exam could ever accommodate this kind of learning.

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(3) Dixon, J & Stratta, L. Character Studies - Changing
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    Dixon, J & Stratta, L, with Preece, M & Munnery, N.
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                            for Change.   Southern
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(4) See for example one of our previous SREB booklets
                            Writing Within Simulations
                            (1984).

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THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD DELEGACY OF LOCAL EXAMINATIONS
WRITING DEVELOPMENT GROUP

This group

- meets regularly to discuss a variety of uses of writing

- is currently working on how to optimise what students can learn from writing in the course of group or individual enterprises

- wants to set up a dialogue with other teachers of English and Communications in schools and FE colleges.

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How to contact:

If you find these ideas useful, we
would be very pleased to have feed-
back from you and your students.
We'd be equally glad to hear about
problems, additions and modifications
you would like to suggest.

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