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ABSTRACT

Tracing the broad movements in the teaching of English--both in theory and in practice--from its origin as a subject during the 1880's to the present day, this book focuses on the aspect of the teaching of English which has absorbed the greatest amount of teacher's time, energy, and enthusiasm: the teaching of literature. Chapters, following a chronological pattern, are "Early Traditions," "The Birth of a Subject," "A School for the People," "Science and the Teaching of English," "A Framework for Teaching," "Narrowed Goals," "An Academic Model for English," "Winds of Change," and "Afterword: The Problems Remaining." Appendixes covering important dates in the teaching of English, offerings in English in the North Central area from 1860 to 1900, requirements in English literature for college entrance from 1874 to 1900, the most frequently anthologized works from 1917 to 1957, the growth of English from 1900 to 1949, and major officers of the National Council of Teachers of English from 1912 to 1974 are included, along with a selected bibliography and an index.
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Tradition and **R** **Reform**

in the Teaching
of English:
a History

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EDUCATION & WELFARE
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EDUCATION

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No one present at that first conference [of the Eight-Year Study] will ever forget the honest confession of one principal when she said, "My teachers and I do not know what to do with this freedom. It challenges and frightens us. I fear that we have come to love our chains." . . . No one of the group could possibly foresee all the developments ahead, nor were all of one mind as to what should be done.

—The Story of the Eight-Year Study,
1942¹

Neither this book nor any other can say how a page should be read—if by that we mean that it can give a recipe for discovering what the page really says. All it could do—and that would be much—would be to help us to understand some of the difficulties in the way of such discoveries.

—I. A. Richards, How to Read a Page,
1942²

Communication is one of the five or six most crucial services of war. It is one with which a half-dozen major agencies in Washington are now urgently concerned, for home front and battle front alike, following the first imperative concern with military mobilization and war production. It is plainly the one in which our seventy-five thousand teachers of English can make the special war contribution we have been looking, hoping, waiting for.

—Lennox Grey, NCTE second vice
president, 1943³

The field of literature past and present is a vast one, almost as large in scope as occupational, health, and community living areas. The basic-course teacher would have to become familiar with this material in order to weave the reading (poetry, plays, novels, biographies, essays, etc.) into the current areas of concentration.

—English Journal review of Education
for All American Youth, 1945⁴

One of the joys of teaching is the opportunity to influence the development and growth of the young student. There are few experiences that evoke the glow the teacher feels in seeing a young person mature in language power, in human relations, in the personal satisfactions which may be derived from increased good taste in reading and listening, and in the power to use words orally and in writing so as to achieve adequate adjustment for himself and his teen-age friends.

—Commission on the English Curriculum,
1956⁵

Chapter VI

Narrowed Goals

The expansion of the English curriculum around the metaphors of experience and exploration was followed by a conscious narrowing of the scope and goals of instruction during the ensuing decades. Much of this occurred within the context of a movement toward "general education" that came to prominence simultaneously in the colleges and secondary schools of the late thirties.⁶ In part because the Depression left them with little else to do, students who would previously have dropped out early were remaining through the high school and even into the college years. This created a new band of students for whom neither vocational nor college-preparatory training would be appropriate; for these "general" students a new kind of education was needed. As the Progressive Education Association's Commission on Secondary School Curriculum put it, this would be "general education"—

education of post-elementary grade intended to foster good living. It rules out conventional planes of professional preparation and scholarship for its own sake when these prove extraneous to the single purpose of helping the student achieve a socially adequate and personally satisfying life in a democracy.⁷

How to educate for this "socially adequate and personally satisfying life in a democracy" was the major problem faced by the progressives during the 1940s and 1950s. Two major, complementary responses developed. The first involved a narrowing of the initial progressive concern with the social needs of the student into a concern with adolescent problems, in particular the problem of adjusting to the demands of the adult world. This narrowing will be the subject of the first part of the present chapter.

The second and complementary response was to focus on language and communication skills. This also developed as part of the general education movement, but it had deeper roots in academic traditions of language study, in particular in the general semantics movement and the work of the New Critics. Both of these—the one originating in response to the use of propaganda in the First World War, the other in the complexities of twentieth century poetry—emphasized the difficulties inherent in skillful use of language, with a concomitant need for close, analytic study if the reader or listener were not to be misled. The entry of the United States into World War II brought the functional aspects of such language studies once again into the foreground, relating all of them to a central concern with "communication skills." As a War Department spokesman explained the army view over NBC radio,

By English, the Army means skill in reading, writing, speaking, and listening, and above all, understanding what is read, written, spoken, and heard. Army men and women must be able to communicate clearly and accurately by any media; they must be able to understand the orders they give as well as the orders they receive."

Under the pressures of war, such a drastic reduction in the scope of instruction generated little rebuttal. Even the American Association of Colleges agreed that "educators are not prepared to assert to military authorities that the 'intangible values' of a liberal arts education would make soldiers better fighters."¹⁰ Under such pressures, spelling lists and vocabulary exercises proliferated, and reading skills became again an important concern of the secondary school teacher of literature.

Even as the new and narrower focus of instruction was developing, it generated a reaction among those who favored the traditional educational emphasis on intellectual training and cultural heritage. Critics of the progressives provided a discordant undercurrent from 1940 on, laying a foundation for an academic revival which eventually wrested the initiative in educational reform away from the progressives and returned it to college faculties of liberal arts. This academic revival will be discussed in Chapter VII.

Progressivism as the Conventional Wisdom

The Eight-Year Study

During the 1940s and 1950s, the educational policies of progressive education were widely accepted by American educators. The most highly publicized working out of these principles within the context of general education was the so-called "life adjustment

movement"; during this time the center of educational innovation shifted from the Progressive Education Association (PEA) itself to the National Education Association (NEA) and the U.S. Office of Education (USOE). Still the origins of the movement can be traced directly to the experiences of the thirty schools involved in the Eight-Year Study of the PEA. It was in these schools that the educational experience was gradually redefined in the terminology of mental hygiene and personality development.

The genesis of the study was the 1930 convention of the PEA, during which it became apparent that the major impediment to wider experimentation with school curriculum was fear that graduating students would not be able to fulfill college entrance requirements. In response to this concern, the association appointed a Committee on College Entrance and Secondary Schools, later renamed the Commission on the Relation of School and College. It was this commission, under the chairmanship of Wilford M. Aikin, director of the John Burroughs School (Clayton, Missouri), which proposed that students in a group of leading secondary schools be exempted from the normal entrance requirements, so that the schools would be free to reformulate their programs. Over three hundred colleges, including many of the nation's most prestigious, accepted the proposal; supporting funds were provided by the General Education Board and the Carnegie Foundation.¹⁰

Thirty schools were eventually invited to participate. Though they included a disproportionate number of private and laboratory schools, such large city systems as Denver and Los Angeles were also part of the group. The study began in 1932 and ran till 1940, with the commission from the beginning providing counsel and comfort but conscientiously avoiding prescribing specific curricula. Indeed until 1936, when a staff of three curriculum consultants was appointed, the schools had to rely entirely on their individual and pooled resources in developing new approaches. A series of five reports issued in 1942 presented the results of a major follow-up study of college performance as well as extensive descriptions of the problems that had arisen and the attempts that had been made to solve them. Perhaps in part because, as one of the reports described it, "the problems of mastering and using this new freedom straightway turned out to be so difficult, complex, and engrossing that the original problem of college entrance requirements was almost lost sight of and forgotten," the reports provide a detailed picture of the evolution of the courses of study in the schools.¹¹

Though the individual schools began and ended their curriculum reform at very different points, there were certain common threads of considerable interest. The most important for English involved experiments with "fused" or "core" or "correlated" courses—the kind toward which NCTE had turned its attention in its 1936 volume (discussed in the previous chapter). Almost all of the thirty

schools experimented with a combined social studies-English course, almost always organized chronologically, and all abandoned the attempt after a few years of experimentation. The initial fused course at most of the schools attempted to juggle and reorder traditional content in the two subjects, bringing the topics covered into line with one another. Social studies tended to dominate, and many of the values of both subjects as traditionally taught seemed—as the NCTE committee had worried—to be lost. Rather than returning to the traditional organization, however, most schools reorganized the core sequence around topical focuses. This “core” tended to be somewhat eclectic: at one of the schools it embraced such diverse topics as Vocational Guidance, War and Peace, and International Literature. This mixture served as a transitional stage in which the old and new concerns stood side by side; it moved from there to what became in a great many of the schools the final focus of the core: the life problems of the adolescent.¹²

The transition to adolescent “needs” as the organizing principle was aided by the work of two derivative PEA commissions: the Commission on Secondary School Curriculum, organized as an offshoot of the Commission on the Relation of School and College in 1932, and the Commission on Human Relations, itself a 1935 outgrowth of the Commission on Secondary School Curriculum. The individual reports of the Thirty Schools make clear that the work of these commissions provided the impetus for the jump from a focus on *important themes* to a focus on themes *important to adolescents*. One influential document was a summary of “Typical Points of Focus of Concerns of Adolescents” prepared by the Commission on Human Relations and reprinted in the final reports of the study. Six main topics were outlined: Establishing Personal Relationships, Establishing Independence, Understanding Human Behavior, Establishing Self in Society, Normality, and Understanding the Universe. All but the last (which was usually ignored as programs evolved) dealt with very specific adolescent problems: typical topics included “Longing for more friends of own age”; “How late to stay out”; “Shame over lowly origins”; and “Bullying.” Altogether there were over 40 topics and 140 subtopics in the outline—and these were presented only as a typical, not as an exhaustive list.¹³

The Commission on Secondary School Curriculum translated these concerns into specific programs in a series of publications between 1938 and 1941. The first, *Science in General Education* (1938), was important in the transition from “fused” to “core” courses. Offering a broader base than English and social studies alone, the science report generated courses such as “Everyday Problems” as the last stage of the evolution. The sophomore course in the Altoona (Pennsylvania) schools was typical of the sequence that evolved: it included Orientation to the New School, Family

Relationships, Consumer Problems, Communication, and Conservation of Human and Natural Resources. By this stage of their evolution, very few of the core courses in the more experimental schools showed any concern with the personal and social reform that had been so important in earlier stages of progressivism.¹⁴

The reports of the Eight-Year Study were published in the middle of the war and were largely ignored. That is not to say, however, that the study itself was without impact on teachers of English. It was simply that that influence came from the separate writings of the teachers in the various schools, working on committees and writing for journals throughout the period of the study. Most of the concern that had prompted the NCTE report on correlation, much of the emerging focus on adolescent needs—these first appeared in articles noting authors' affiliations with one or another of the schools of the Eight-Year Study. (It is an interesting aspect of the general distrust of the progressives in the Council leadership that, while other projects were often noted, the participation of these schools in the Eight-Year Study was rarely acknowledged.)¹⁵

Life Adjustment

The view of education that was emerging from the Thirty Schools and from the various commissions of the Progressive Education Association became during the 1940s the conventional wisdom of the professional educators—of the “educationists” as they would be called by their critics in the early 1950s. The Educational Policies Commission of the National Education Association, created in 1936 to speak with an authoritative voice on important educational issues, fell firmly in line with the PEA's focus upon the adolescent in a series of reports in the mid-forties: *Education for All American Youth* (1944), *Educational Services for Children* (1945), and *Education for All American Children* (1948). The first of these became the chief statement of the life adjustment movement.¹⁶

The commission used the device of sketching the educational programs in the mythical communities of American City and Farmville to present their proposals. They foresaw a much closer integration of school and community than has ever been attained, with national, state, and local programs supplementing one another to provide a full panoply of educational and health services. The curriculum itself centered on a “common learnings” course running throughout the secondary school program, and even somewhat beyond, providing a core of general education that followed the pattern that had emerged from the Eight-Year Study. Rather than a simple fused or correlated course, “common learnings” repre-

sented a complete restructuring of subject matter to focus (mostly through science and social studies) on topics such as choice of vocation and problems of family living.

The dominant concern with adolescent problems was finally taken up by the U.S. Office of Education and given the ill-chosen name by which it has since been known: "life adjustment." The USOE became involved in January 1944 when the Vocational Division began a study entitled "Vocational Education in the Years Ahead." The 150 vocationalists who carried out the study recognized a fundamental unity of purpose with the general education movement, as it had been working itself out in terms of the life experiences of the adolescent student. Charles Prosser used the final conference of the USOE study to offer a resolution that read in part:

It is the belief of this conference that . . . the vocational school of the community will be better able to prepare 20 percent of the youth of secondary school age for entrance upon desirable skilled occupations; and that the high school will continue to prepare another 20 percent for entrance to college. We do not believe that the remaining 60 percent of our youth of secondary school age will receive the life adjustment training they need and to which they are entitled as American citizens.¹⁷

This led to a series of conferences between representatives of general and of vocational education, to formulate an approach to the problem of educating the neglected 60 percent. Eventually a Commission on Life Adjustment Education for Youth was established to carry out a vigorous "action program." Its focus remained on what the earlier conferences had called "functional experiences in the areas of practical arts, home and family life, health and physical fitness, and civic competence." In spite of occasional disclaimers, the emphasis in both name and activities was on "adjustment," "conformity," and a stable system of values. The traditional concern of progressive education with the continuing improvement of both the individual and his society was submerged and ultimately lost in this formulation.

The Rejection of Correlation

The response of English teachers to the "life adjustment" movement was a paradoxical resistance to the outward form and capitulation, at least by a broad segment of teachers, to the underlying emphases. The genuine distrust of the core curriculum so evident in the report of the NCTE Committee on Correlation in 1936 was maintained from the first experiments with a fused social studies-English course to the final "common learnings" of the Educational Policies Commission. Again and again, when the teacher of English

attempted to go that route he found the peculiar virtues of his subject matter being quietly subverted—and it hardly mattered whether he defined those virtues as “practical English skills,” “liberal education,” or “exploration of self and society.” Though an occasional teacher of English reflected the enthusiasm of the thirties, no one during the decade of the forties managed a convincing description of a working program that circumvented the problems that the Committee on Correlation had foreseen.¹⁸

The objections to the core course were succinctly summarized in a 1946 response to *Education for All American Youth* (1944) prepared by Mark Neville, second vice president of the Council. Neville was English department chairman at the John Burroughs School in Clayton, Missouri—the school which had provided the initial impetus for the Eight-Year Study as well as its director, Wilford Aikin. Neville's review, presented as a sharing of experiences with Farmville, outlined the evolution of experiments with fused and core courses at the Burroughs School. The major experiments had involved a fused course and a second series called the “Core Course and Broad Fields” in which the broad fields were English, social studies, science, math, foreign languages, and the fine and practical arts. In the end it was the relatively traditional broad fields that came to dominate the curriculum; the core was gradually rejected by teachers, students, and parents alike. The most important objections involved some large gaps between the theory of correlation and its actual working out in practice. English skills, the responsibility of all teachers in the core curriculum, were hard to emphasize as they developed during the content work; teachers found that rather than achieving the integrated and comprehensive view that was sought, the program became stilted and artificial. Students in the course rejected it as “too broad in scope and too shallow in depth”; they preferred the broad field courses and eventually the core was reduced to an elective. Looking back on the whole experience, Neville concluded that the real accomplishment of the years of experiment had been to revitalize the individual subject areas. Though there were many cases in which English could be improved through discussion of content from other fields, the goal of developing “pupil personality, thinking processes, group adjustments, and concepts of living” could not be reached simply by correlating.¹⁹

Other reactions of English teachers to *Education for All American Youth* were equally firm in their rejection of its major curriculum implications. They attacked the lack of explicit provision for literature (as Marion Sheridan noted, depending on one's predisposition, literature could either be read into the report or out of the course); the neglect of subject matter (that is, language skills and knowledge of literature); and the reliance on the artificial unity of subject matter instead of the real unity of the teacher who has

successfully integrated his own knowledge. In general such attacks on the core were successful: a study at the end of the decade by a USOE worker quite sympathetic to the movement found that nationally only 3.5 percent of the course offerings in the junior and senior high school represented even the least ambitious forms of correlation, and these were concentrated in a few geographic areas. Over 90 percent of the core courses she did find, however, involved some blend of English and social studies.²⁰

English as Adjustment

Meeting Adolescent Needs

Even as they were vigorously resisting the curriculum proposals of the "life adjustment" movement, teachers of English were embracing rather indiscriminately the new focus on meeting the personal and social needs of adolescence. Teachers were already well conditioned to the implied empiricism, the inventory of activities now redefined as psychological conflicts or needed "competencies." They were ready too for the reestablishment of boundaries for their subject; the almost universal perspective of the previous decade no longer seemed feasible. Finally, by accepting adolescent needs as the focus of the curriculum, teachers were continuing their tradition of concern that the school serve the child, not the subject-oriented demands of the college.

"Needs" as they came to be defined by teachers of English covered a wide spectrum that began with problems of family life and ended in international relations. The characteristic concern at all points of the spectrum, however, was with the solution of practical problems of living. When the focus of instruction was shifted in this way, English at the personal end of the spectrum of needs became guidance. This had antecedents in programs suggested at the end of the reorganization period, and again in the late 1920s, but those early attempts had failed to win many converts. Teachers had recognized that the early proponents were naive in their choices of materials, and too limited in their goals for an age in which "experience" and "exploration" were central. By the late 1930s, however, the limited, antiprogressive goals of adjustment were very much in keeping with the emerging spirit in education, while the materials and methods could claim—not always accurately—support from neo-Freudian psychology.

Sarah Roody, department chairman at Nyack High School, New York, was a leading advocate of this approach. Describing it in 1947, she began by asserting that the "lessons" to be taught through "true-to-life" literature were very simple and could be

expressed "chiefly in nontechnical terms"—implying, of course, that there was a more esoteric body of knowledge behind her suggestions. The lessons she had in mind were really a catalog of psychoanalytic explanations of behavior; students would learn about the "fundamental motives from which the actions of all human beings spring," about the "ways in which many people try to evade reality," about "life-problems," normality, and maturity. And finally, of course, they would learn "how to develop the kind of personality one would like to have."²¹ If such a program sounded more like a course in psychology or guidance than one in English, that was the intent. Article after article proclaimed the special need for the teacher of English, particularly the teacher of literature, to provide guidance through the emotional conflicts of the adolescent years. As a librarian from Baltimore described it, the job of the teacher or librarian was one of suggesting stories "very much as physicians prescribe sulfa drugs, by familiarizing herself with old and new productions in the field, by prescribing as best she can, and by keeping a sharp lookout for reactions."²²

Human Relations

The social end of the spectrum of needs was dealt with under the general rubric of "human relations." The common thread in such studies was a concern with the smooth functioning of the various groups which make up the world; the focus of any given discussion ranged anywhere from the adolescent clique to international relations. This movement, too, had antecedents, all loosely related to the early progressive concern with education as an instrument of social reform. This concern had been carried through the years between the wars in the work of groups such as the NCTE Committee on International Relations and, later, in the arguments of the social reconstructionists. But it was Hilda Taba who gave the movement a focus and brought it to its fullest expression during the mid-forties. To understand the sorts of activities that emerged, it is useful to look first at her *Dynamics of Education* (1932), which can be seen as the revision of *Foundations of Method* (1925) that Kilpatrick never undertook. Taba based her arguments on the Gestalt psychologists' explorations of the structured nature of perception and cognition, abandoning Thorndike's behavioral approach. This, as Kilpatrick noted in an introduction to Taba's book, allowed the purposeful act to be joined in the service of "an all pervasive structure building." This structure building was crucial; it enabled Taba to conclude that education should be concerned with these grander structures rather than with the sorts of behavioral units that Bobbitt, among others, had attempted to detail. Instead, education would "endeavor to reach, through the

specific, and by the immediate qualitative context of the specific, the general, and the fundamental." In a sense, it was "the great idea" which she stressed, the idea which would provide a superordinate structure capable of subsuming ever-wider ranges of concrete experience.²¹

Racial strife, which produced the Detroit riots in July 1943, provided the immediate context for the application of Taba's general ideas to a major project in human relations. The National Conference of Christians and Jews, concerned by the increasing evidence of intolerance and the lack of coordination among existing groups, provided funds to the American Council on Education to support a Project on Intergroup Relations, with Taba as director. The project staff—which for the first months consisted of Taba alone but later grew to eight—were clearly in the tradition of Kilpatrick and the social reconstructionists, though milder in their rhetoric and more temperate in their goals. (Taba herself had worked with Counts as well as Kilpatrick during the thirties.) As Taba and her staff described it in the summary volume (1952), their project offered a model for the development of educational solutions to social ills.²² When the project began, the lack of methods and materials for dealing with problems of human relations made schools reluctant to undertake such studies even when they were convinced of the need. Much of the effort during the two and a half years of the main project was therefore directed toward filling this gap, with cooperating schools deliberately chosen to provide a heterogeneous sample of local and regional problems in intergroup understanding. In all, some 250 projects were undertaken in 72 individual schools in 18 school systems. In keeping with Taba's concern with conceptual structures, however, problems in human relations were approached preventively, by attempting to develop general attitudes that would subsume and prevent more particular problems of intergroup relations. Rather than studying minority groups, for example, the project staff decided to focus on what they called "common areas of living"—family, community, American culture, and interpersonal relations. Within these familiar areas, more powerful concepts could be generated through studying such recurring phenomena as "acceptance and rejection, inclusion and segregation, prejudice and discrimination" (p. 72). Taba consistently emphasized the importance of *process* in learning, in particular that the natural progression in discussion or other learning activities should be from the concrete and specific toward the abstract and general.²³

The Project on Intergroup Relations did not develop a specific curriculum in human relations. Its focus was instead on "action projects" organized at a local level, with the project staff helping schools to devise materials and activities related to their own particular social problems. To train as many teachers as possible in the techniques necessary to develop and test their own materials, a

series of summer institutes was organized; one was held in 1945, three in 1946, and one each in 1947 and 1948. Some 260 people were involved in these summer sessions where, as the project staff summarized it, they "prepared instructional units, worked out methods of studying children and communities, drew up plans for student guidance and for school activities, and prepared strategies for community action" (p. 3). The work of these institutes, of the project staff, and of the cooperating schools led to a long series of publications on human relations and intergroup education; these presented teachers throughout the country with practical, school-based approaches for all age levels and in many different curriculum areas.²⁶

Nevertheless there were major difficulties in the approach Taba and her staff advocated. The fundamental problem was naivete—a national naivete, not Taba's alone—which saw racial problems in the limited context of attitudes and dispositions rather than as manifestations of deeper institutional and economic forces. The concern was real enough, but the methods and assumptions were but a mild prelude to the civil rights movement which began almost as Taba's project finished its work. Simply to make people aware of the problem, to bring it out into the open as an issue to be dealt with rather than ignored, helped create an atmosphere in which the real roots could eventually be discovered and attacked. More immediately, there was too much similarity between the project's list of "common areas of living" and the lists of adolescent needs that were simultaneously emerging in "life adjustment." While this correspondence certainly made it easier for human relations studies to be taken up by the schools, it also made it easier for Taba's underlying concern with social reform to be short-circuited; the broader concepts she sought were often submerged in the specifics of present needs.

The pressures to preserve a limited and detached perspective were real and strong. George H. Henry, a Delaware English teacher turned principal, illustrated both the inherent reformist tendencies in human relations and the contravening community pressures in a 1947 article describing "Our Best English Unit." Students in his school, prompted to reveal their real areas of interest and "need," had turned to "the colored question" as a problem of considerable magnitude in their lives. The teacher and Henry had supported that interest, allowing the students to begin for the first time to explore the implications of racial attitudes and policies in their community. They never finished the unit; it was brought to an end by the school board after a torrent of public resistance.²⁷ That there were not more such conflicts was due simply to the reluctance of teachers to deal at all with ethical questions, especially in the atmosphere of suppression and censorship that developed as the Cold War began to capture the national imagination.

Organizing a Curriculum around Immediate Needs

The rejection of the core curriculum left teachers of English with the question of how to organize a curriculum designed to meet the new demands. One of the earliest attempts to solve the problem was that of the Stanford Language Arts Investigation, (1937-40), carried out under the guidance of the Stanford University education faculty with financial support from the General Education Board. H. D. Roberts, 1937 president of NCTE, was senior author of one of the reports, *English for Social Living* (1943). As he put it in the overview, "In the approach and throughout the work emphasis was given to teaching the language arts as a vital part of human living, and to the consequent replacement of routine and traditional teaching programs with those designed and tested to meet specific personal and social needs."²⁸

The report suffered from the faults that would plague virtually all attempts at curriculum reformulation during this period. The guiding philosophy of meeting needs was so oriented toward the immediate school situation that it provided no guidelines for sequence or scope in the curriculum. Rather than an outline of a program, *English for Social Living* was primarily a collection of activities undertaken in different schools by different teachers, grouped together under such general areas of concern as "democratization of the classroom," "building of personality," and the need to "study and serve the community." Ultimately this focus on general problems ran the danger of ignoring the particular strengths of the subject area which it was attempting to revitalize. *English for Social Living*, like *Education for All American Youth*, gave precious little attention to literature.

Lacking any external principles by which to determine scope and sequence, the accepted practice gradually deteriorated into a "multiple approach" in which the only criterion was that students be kept interested. Though virtually any method might be of use, the materials themselves were determined on the basis of the particular needs manifested by the class. These were to be determined by a process that represented an unsystematic revival of the child study movement, usually involving a simple report from the class to the teacher. Dwight Burton, for example, in an early article presented the results of asking his students to write about the problems they were having. Like most of the products of the life adjustment movement, his inventory of needs was both specific and lacking in emphasis on the moral and spiritual side of life. He ended up with six major categories: relations with parents, relations with other adolescents, problems of personality, school problems, relations with brothers and sisters, and "miscellaneous." The first of these was illustrated in detail, with examples ranging from "1. Father 'horns in' when friends gather at the house," to "30. Home respon-

sibility with father dead causes unhappiness." The "second step" in curriculum construction, as Burton presented it, was the selection of a "basic list" of novels "closely attuned to real adolescent problems."²⁹

Though Burton's article was one of the first by a teacher of English presenting such an inventory of needs as an explicit basis for selecting the themes to be studied in the literature program, it was by no means a lone example. During the next ten years English teachers would be offered many similar inventories, from other teachers as well as from such professionals as the chief of children's service at the University of Michigan Neuropsychiatric Institute.³⁰ Implicit in these surveys was a new stress on the use of themes instead of chronology or genres to organize the course of study. Thematic organization did not originate during "life adjustment"; it had been a minor part of the experience approach throughout the previous twenty years. Under the pressure of meeting adolescent needs, however, themes shifted from a convenient organizational device leading to units providing similar experiences (about boats, say, or animals or regional literature) and became instead the focus of instruction: students needed to learn about family problems, the generation gap, or brotherhood. Thematic organization in practice differed little from earlier approaches, but it became the favorite method of organization in "life adjustment" classes and produced a few methodological variants of its own. Bertha Handlin, head of English at the laboratory school at the University of Minnesota, wrote in 1943 of themes as a way to allow members of a class to read different books and yet all be able to contribute to the same class discussions. Dwight Burton's suggestions, based on his teaching at the same school, were similarly focussed on selecting books whose themes were clearly related to important issues in the lives of teenage students. Although organization by chronology and by types dominated the high school course in the late 1930s, by the 1950s organization by themes or topics (which in practice became indistinguishable) had relegated both to a less important role.³¹

Selecting Materials

In a curriculum based on immediate needs, the teacher served as a resource center, providing the book to meet the need of the moment. One way to accomplish this was to redefine the values of the traditional works in the jargon of "life adjustment," just as earlier they had been redefined in terms of experience. As usual, there was no end to the flexibility of any given work: *Macbeth* was to be taught as an example of what happens when we are "willing to get our desires at all costs"; the object lesson provided would help students "begin to achieve self-control and self-direction." *Up from*

Slavery was presented as a good way "to understand how people with handicaps feel and [to] stimulate us to face our own handicaps be they large or small." "The Ransom of Red Chief" was paired with *Tom Sawyer* in a unit to help students "understand themselves and the younger members of their family better." "Love" became "a natural subject for discussion" after a class had read "The Courtship of Miles Standish." *Silas Marner* offered a "storehouse of information necessary for understanding friends, family, and one's self."³²

Teachers more fully committed to general education and "life adjustment" provided bibliographies organized around the major focuses of adolescent needs: *The Reader's Guide to Prose Fiction* (1940) was the earliest and most comprehensive. Produced for the Committee on the Function of English in General Education of the PEA Commission on Secondary School Curriculum by Elbert Lenrow, head of the English Department at the Fieldston School, New York City, the book was a topically-arranged bibliography with a lengthy introduction setting forth the author's view of literature in the secondary school. Lenrow's emphasis was very close to Rosenblatt's, and he abbreviated his own discussion somewhat by referring the reader to *Literature as Exploration* (1938). He was, however, more concerned with classroom procedures—with the question of which books to use with whom, and to what end. Accepting the general principle that literature was a means by which the student could explore both himself and his society, Lenrow noted that "the novel is par excellence the medium for the artist who would portray with amplitude both the macrocosm and microcosm of modern life." He accordingly limited the selections in his bibliography to prose fiction, quite a common approach throughout the period of "life adjustment."³³

Lenrow assumed that students would "identify" with literary characters, manipulating their identifications "in such a way as to derive unconscious satisfactions, either of deprivations and inhibitions, or of goals, aspirations, ideals, and the like." It was only through such identifications that adolescents could "carry on those attendant and subsequent processes—exploration of self and formulation of attitudes and goals and outlook on life." To facilitate identification, Lenrow suggested books corresponding to the student's own situation. Contemporary works were more likely to show such a correspondence, but classic texts were allowed some place if taught by a skillful teacher.³⁴ His concern with presenting realistic life situations led Lenrow to confront "the troublesome question of how much frankness in books is appropriate for adolescents." Here he presented three major arguments against censorship. First, if the reader is really unsophisticated, he will not react to the implications of the "realistic elements." Second, if he does understand, it is better that his questions be answered "through serious literary

works rather than through devious and possibly distorted sources." Finally, adults usually underestimate the amount of knowledge adolescents already possess: "Those whom sentimental people are anxious to 'shield' could often turn about and give instruction." Lenrow was well aware, however, that many teachers and schools would reject his argument that adolescents should have free or nearly free access to mature books. Even one of the librarians who worked with advance copies of the bibliography had been obliged to note that many of the titles listed were prohibited in her library because of "Frankness or 'ohscenty'" (pp. 47-48).

The bibliography itself was an effective working out of the principles laid out in the introduction. Some fifteen hundred novels were included, with annotations designed to give a student or teacher a quick idea of whether a book would be interesting or appropriate. Only 17 percent of the titles had been published before 1900; a third were classic texts "which have stood or are standing the test of time." There was a great range in number of titles listed under the categories; some such as "Birth Control" had none; others like "Family Life" had fifty to sixty. Adhering to his belief that the books included should be appropriate and worthwhile, even if not classic, Lenrow made no attempt to "fill in" under-represented categories; indeed, the entire list of books was chosen before the topical arrangement was begun.

The resulting bibliography was a valuable reference work for teachers who accepted its general principles. Like no other source that grew out of "life adjustment," it offered an extensive list of materials organized according to specific topics of instruction. All it lacked was sequence, but that was deliberate since sequence was to come from the problems of each student at a given point in time. In spite of its thoroughness the book was not widely used by high school teachers, largely because its annotations and classifications were frank and direct, dealing with questions that were usually edited out of school editions. The seemingly safe topic, "Adolescence," for example, included Gide's *The Counterfeiters* (annotated as an examination of "the young Olivier and his delicate lover Edouard") as well as Tarkington's innocuous *Seventeen* (p. 119). More dangerous topics such as "Psychology of Sex" were not less explicit.¹⁵

Of considerably more influence was a later bibliography, *Reading Ladders for Human Relations* (1947).¹⁶ This was a product of a committee of school librarians working under the general direction of Margaret Heaton, one of Taba's staff members. In retrospect, and in comparison with *The Reader's Guide to Prose Fiction* (1940), the original editions of this pamphlet seem slender and unimpressive; but it represented a coherent application of Taba's general principles, as the introduction pointed out. Three points about the book are important. First, the books chosen for inclusion, though

few in number, were standard school texts; hence they were acceptable and accessible to a majority of teachers. Second, the topics under which they were organized were related to the general topics that the Intergroup Relations Project had chosen to emphasize, so that though not particularly impressive on their own they could be seen in the perspective of that larger framework; typical lists were based around Patterns of Family Life, Differences between Generations, and Rural-Urban Contrasts. Third, and probably most important, the selections were organized in "ladders" of ascending difficulty. Though strongly reminiscent of the "broad easy stair steps" of *An Experience Curriculum* (1935), these ladders were derived directly from Taba's theoretical concerns. She had argued earlier (1932) that education should be a continuing process of reconstruction of experience,³⁷ a principle that found expression in a stress on the importance of a cumulative program achieving its purpose through reconstructing experience at ever more advanced levels, rather than through a concentrated but short-term effort. The reading ladders, though they involved relatively few selections and even fewer levels of maturity, did imply that a curriculum could be constructed out of familiar materials that would be relevant to the new demands and still be coherent and sequential. It was this implication of sequence that virtually all other attempts to place personal or social needs at the center of the curriculum had lacked, and which teachers of English took from *Reading Ladders*. The success of this pamphlet, which has continued to be revised and expanded to the present day, is perhaps the best testimony to the wisdom of Taba's approach to curriculum reform.

Studies of reading interest, with their roots in the child study movement, also continued to be used to select teaching materials. This approach was more tolerated than motivated by life adjustment theory, but it culminated in George Norvell's definitive survey, published in 1950 as *The Reading Interests of Young People*.³⁸ As supervisor of English for New York State, Norvell systematically collected students' responses to works studied in class. Over a twelve-year period he gathered data on 1,700 selections taught to over 50,000 students by 625 teachers. Each book was rated on a three-point interest scale; 1,590,000 such reports were gathered, tabulated, and used to calculate "interest scores."

The tabulated data, in addition to providing an authoritative reference about the interest level of individual titles, allowed a number of generalizations about taste in literature. There was very little shift in interest levels between grades eight and eleven, only two percentage points for most selections. One of the most important—but neglected—discoveries was that there were few differences between the reading interests of superior, average, and weak pupils. Content, rather than reading difficulty, seemed to be the major determinant of interest; neither age nor IQ made a marked

difference, though sex was an important factor. Norvell described the content factors he found:

The special factors which arouse boys' interest in reading materials, as revealed by the current study, are: adventure (outdoor adventure, war, scouting), outdoor games, school life, mystery (including activities of detectives), obvious humor, animals, patriotism, and male rather than female characters. Unfavorable factors for boys are: love, other sentiments, home and family life, didacticism, religion, the reflective or philosophical, extended description, "nature" (flowers, trees, birds, bees), form or technique as a dominant factor, female characters (p. 6).

A similar list was provided for girls, together with the suggestion that the points of overlap be used to restructure the program of common reading around topics that would be of interest to both. Norvell himself used the results to compile a series of anthologies for D. C. Heath.⁴⁰

Literature for the Adolescent

It was almost inevitable that the focus on narrowly defined adolescent needs would soon prompt and cultivate an extensive body of literature dealing thematically with the specific problems toward which teachers were turning their attention. The first serious professional attention to "adolescent" or "transitional" literature stemmed from Dora V. Smith's concern that the literary preparation of teachers gave too little attention to the literary interests of high school students.⁴⁰ By 1930 she had organized one of the nation's first courses in literature for adolescents as part of the teacher training program at the University of Minnesota. Her program generated only moderate interest, however, till adolescent needs began to emerge as a focal point of the curriculum during the 1940s. Though Smith's original emphasis had been on good books suitable for children, the forties saw the development of a new literary genre with its own authors and highly specialized audience of "adolescents" as defined by the "life adjustment" educators. Dwight Burton was one of Smith's students and became a leader in the movement to legitimize these works as part of the program in literature. Beginning to write about them in the late forties, he continued his interest after moving to Florida State University and assuming the editorship of *English Journal* in 1953. Under his guidance, the *Journal* devoted considerable attention to such works. Bibliographies were offered on "Books to Promote Insights Into Family-Life Problems"; the lead article of literary criticism was replaced once or twice a year with an article dealing specifically with adolescent literature; reviews of new titles were included as a regular feature of the "Books" section.⁴¹

The results of this attention were decidedly mixed. On the one hand a number of good books did begin to receive serious attention from teachers, especially in the junior high schools. *The Yearling* (1938), *The Diary of Anne Frank* (1950), and *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951) are among the better examples of what came to be considered appropriate adolescent literature. The problem in the movement was the rigid definition of books that would be interesting to adolescents as books that dealt with the specific (and often rather superficial) life problems reported when students were asked, "Now, what is bothering you today?" As Richard Alm of the University of Hawaii noted in a sympathetic review of the movement, "The last twenty years have seen not only the coming of age of the novel for the adolescent but also a flood of slick, patterned, rather inconsequential stories written to capitalize on a rapidly expanding market."⁴² Since the interest in such literature was formulated exclusively in terms of the problems dealt with, there was nothing to caution the teacher against bringing such formula novels into the curriculum along with others of some independent merit. Indeed, because justifications were formulated in terms of the *problem* rather than its *solution*, there was little attention to how the popular adolescent novels solved the problems they posed. As a much later analysis pointed out, the formula-plots had a number of common implications:

- (1) Immaturity . . . is somehow to be equated with isolation from the group.
- (2) All problems can be solved and will be solved successfully.
- (3) Adults cannot help you much. . . .
- (4) Solutions to problems are . . . either brought about by others or discovered by chance.
- (5) Maturity entails conformity.⁴³

Such implications, which were shared by many other activities suggested at this time, eventually engendered the violent and effective reaction against the "life adjustment" philosophy which is discussed in Chapter VII.

Developing Competence in Language

Language and Communication

If one aspect of the general education movement was a concern with adjustment, a second sought to insure that the general student would have the "competence" necessary to meet the varied demands of life. As this emphasis was worked out in the teaching of

literature, it merged with studies of semantics and, ultimately, with the principles of the New Criticism to provide a broader definition of reading skills. Carried to their logical conclusion, the principles of this movement implied the study of literature as form quite divorced from experience or adjustment, but at least until the mid-fifties such broader implications were carefully ignored.

Most discussions of the experience approach to literature had assumed that students, if given the appropriate book, would in fact be able to understand what they were reading. Rosenblatt's discussion in *Literature as Exploration* (1938) had questioned that assumption by posing the task of the teacher in terms of helping the student reflect upon and thus refine his responses. The discussion she provided, however, had few examples of how this would be done; what she did offer—the example of sophisticated adult conversation about books—implied quite a high level of initial response.

The twenties and thirties, however, also saw the beginnings of a new body of scholarship concerned with language as a vehicle for conveying meaning. Originally prompted by the use of propaganda during World War I, the work of I. A. Richards, C. K. Ogden, and Alfred Korzybski sought to explicate how systems of meaning operate and, as a corollary, how meaning can be distorted.⁴ In the late 1930s, with war drawing near, Americans became especially interested in such studies, especially as they related to newspapers, radio, and film. An Institute for Propaganda Analysis was set up which took an active interest in school programs; later a Harvard Committee on Communication provided more sophisticated suggestions for school work. I. A. Richards, both through his writings and through his work with teachers (he was involved in the Harvard Committee, for example) had by far the greatest influence on school programs, but other forces also contributed to the methods that evolved. S. I. Hayakawa's *Language in Action* (1941) was especially influential in bringing the term "semantics" into popular parlance; through his work semantics became a topic in its own right in the English curriculum, often as part of the analysis of propaganda or advertising.⁵

The earliest full exploration of the implications of these new language studies for the teaching of literature was provided by the same PEA commission that had sponsored *Science in General Education* (1938) and *Literature as Exploration* (1938). Its Committee on the Function of English in General Education understood its charge to refer to the nonliterary aspects of language studies, putting its work in the traditions of grammar, rhetoric, and composition rather than of literature. The final report, *Language in General Education* (1940), was nonetheless to share the fate of earlier studies in these traditions: though conceived and presented

as a separate discipline, it was taken up by many teachers as a useful technique for the study of literature.⁴⁶

The report began fully in harmony with the concerns of "life adjustment." It talked of achieving "optimum development of personality"; of helping the student "find his place and his direction"; of providing the general education "that alone could be justified in the schools of a democracy." For this committee, however, such a charge implied that all children must be given the necessary tools for successful living; and the prime tool, that without which all others would be useless, was language. As the opening paragraph put it, the committee centered its work "around a concept of language as an indispensable, potent, but highly fluid set of symbols by which human beings mentally put their feelings and experiences in order, get and keep in touch with other human beings, and build up new and clearer understanding of the world around them" (p. 3). This would be studied as a system of oral and written communication, requiring the techniques of "critical thinking": "classifying, sorting, ordering, clarifying experience" (pp. 61-63).

The sorts of activities which the committee envisioned were illustrated at a number of points, though no attempt was made to offer a pattern curriculum in the various semantic concepts. Though there were some inconsistencies in the report, the committee clearly did not think that the techniques of reading could be developed incidentally. At one point they even described the language "text-book of the future" as a series of graded exercises (p. 156). A few pages later it was suggested that such teaching could instead arise naturally in the course of other studies. One suggestion pointed out that when a class "runs across the sentences: 'His whole life was devoted to one *cause*. . . His devotion ultimately proved to be the *cause* of his death,'" the shift in meaning would be easily recognized (p. 161). Though one would be hard pressed to defend such an example as improving the students' reading of that particular passage, it does illustrate one way in which semantic studies were absorbed into the curriculum.

Richards himself provided more convincing illustrations of the usefulness of close and rigorous scrutiny of the semantics of a text. He was careful to put the emphasis on the act of reading, however, rather than on such generalizations as "meaning shifts"; as he pointed out two years after the report of the PEA committee, "The belief that knowledge of linguistic theory will make a man a better reader comes itself from . . . a misunderstanding." In *How to Read a Page* (1942),⁴⁷ he illustrated at length the techniques involved. One example came from R. G. Collingwood's *Metaphysics*, the first line of which read "Among the characteristic features of a pseudo-science are the following." Richards' reading began:

Line 1. The unpleasant flavor of *pseudo* spreads to make *characteristic features* and *among* reek with the same scorn. *Charactoristic* is very

ready to take it. Nine times out of ten when we say "characteristic of her, isn't it?" we are *not* admiring. *Features* when they cease to be portions of the face or of a landscape, and become abstract, tend to suggest a sort of nondescript, what-you-may-call-'em character. If we were favorably inclined we would be more likely to say *characters, qualities, attributes, or marks*. *Among*, of course, reflects the implication that there are any number of other nasty features (pp. 59-60).

After carefully dissecting the rest of Collingwood's argument, Richards concluded that in fact it did not hold together.

Teachers of literature immediately grasped the implication that reading is hard work, full of obstacles to be overcome on the way to appreciation and enjoyment. As the head of the English department at Metamora (Illinois) Township High School put it in 1944, "The act of reading occurs when the reader surmounts the obstacles in his way": his solution was to use a reading program to replace that in literature "which the majority of the students could not read." Most teachers were not so ready to abandon literature altogether, preferring instead to replace talk of "experience" and "breadth" with "small, intensive studies . . . that can operate to make all reading more meaningful"—the justification, incidentally, that Richards used for the exaggerated detail of *How to Read a Page*.

Such an approach to the teaching of English won immediate favor for the same reasons that the principles of "life adjustment" were so quickly adopted: the goals were precise and limited: the content was clear: and the philosophy indicated a continuing concern with the needs of the student. These reasons alone would have insured that some such attention to language became important after 1940: the exigencies of war speeded up the process. When an NCTE committee working in the months just before American entry into World War II prepared a list of "Basic Aims for English Instruction in American Schools," its first point was that language "is a basic instrument in the maintenance of the democratic way of life." Though it also included attention to other goals, the NCTE committee followed the lead of *Language in General Education* (1940) in placing the emphasis on the "four fundamental language arts: reading, writing, speaking, and listening."⁴⁸

This emphasis on the unity of the language arts was furthered by programs set up in some colleges to meet the problem of illiteracy in the armed services. These programs usually united departments of speech and of English under the blanket term "communications." Lennox Grey of Teachers College, Columbia, helped to popularize this term among secondary school English teachers. Outlining the background in "An Urgent Letter" (1943) published while he was second vice president of NCTE, Grey found antecedents for communication studies in prewar concern with propaganda, in studies of the mass media, in the work of Edward Sapir and of George Herbert

Mead, and in courses in communication that had appeared in experiments with a core curriculum. But the real impetus came from the importance of communication in a nation at war. Grey successfully focussed NCTE's efforts around communication, even securing a Board of Directors resolution to that effect at the 1942 convention. When the USOE (with NCTE prompting) later called a two-day conference on English in the Victory Corps, the list of goals that emerged placed effective communication ahead of all other concerns.⁴

After the war, the concern with communication and with the "four fundamental language arts" continued as a separate, though not a conflicting, emphasis from the concern with adjustment. Both movements could and did point to *Literature as Exploration* as providing the fullest expression of their philosophy; the difference was in which chapters they chose to stress—the goals of acculturation or the techniques of careful refinement of response. The rapprochement between English and speech, however, was less successful, though NCTE continued to emphasize speaking and listening as part of the English program. After a 1947 meeting about communications programs in the freshman college course was jointly sponsored by NCTE and the Speech Association of America, the two organizations again went their separate ways. The Speech Association founded a National Society for the Study of Communication during the following year, and NCTE countered in 1949 with a permanent Conference on College Composition and Communication as part of its own organizational structure.

Reading

During the 1940s, teachers of English as well as of reading began to take a new interest in the problems of the relatively mature reader. Propelled in part by the new evidence of how difficult accurate reading could be, this concern led eventually to the inclusion of "developmental reading programs" in many secondary schools.

The methods adopted in these programs were strongly influenced by the remarkably successful training units set up during World War II to teach illiterate inductees to read. "In these programs, instructional materials were based primarily on the adventures of "Private Pete" and his friends, who were introduced in carefully graded films, comics, and basic texts which kept as closely as possible to the experiences and vocabulary of army life. Postwar schools attempted the same sort of match by selecting materials to meet life needs (sometimes reconceptualized in Robert Havighurst's terms as "developmental tasks") and by grading the selections using statistical measures of "readability." These measures derived from studies by William S. Gray and Bernice E. Leary (1935) and

seemed to offer a scientific precision of the highest order.⁵¹

Even before the wartime programs, *Reader's Digest* encouraged a similar approach. To many secondary school teachers it seemed to provide contemporary writing on topics of general interest while insuring that the materials were of an appropriate level of difficulty. Though for adults habitual reading of *Reader's Digest* might be a rather limiting experience, for children in developmental programs it offered just enough challenge and diversity to insure continued growth of skills. In 1941 the *Digest* issued a school edition with a supplement of suggested questions and activities prepared by Stella Center and Gladys Persons, both of whom had been very active in NCTE. Initial experiments comparing classes using these materials with others not using them seemed to bear out the claims which had been made for the program and certainly helped to bring the materials into wider use.⁵²

The *Digest* edited its materials to a standard format, simplifying and clarifying as it thought necessary to "get the message across." A similar motivation led to a revival of interest in simplified editions of popular novels. As one summary described them, "Long expository passages, tedious descriptions, and turgid narrative sections have been telescoped. The impatient reader may now get on with the tale." The "scientific" readability indices were of considerable importance here, the object being to produce texts appropriate for a given grade level. Still, the list of books that were eventually offered teachers in "simplified" editions is rather astonishing; *Black Beauty* and *Pinocchio* stand with *Ivanhoe* and *Les Misérables* among those submitted to the editor's blue pencil.⁵³

The other aspect of the army programs which had considerable influence on schools was the concern with careful specification and orderly sequencing of component skills. Reading was broken down into such factors as "word attack," "sentence comprehension," "reading speed," "phonics," and "vocabulary," each of which could be separately drilled through workbooks and study exercises. Dean William S. Gray of the University of Chicago, long a leading figure in the field of reading, was coeditor of *Basic Reading Skills for High School Use*, a workbook covering such topics as phonics, vocabulary, and dictionary use. Many other publishers offered materials following a similar format. At a somewhat less mechanical level, *Reader's Digest* extended the editorial approach of its magazine to a series of texts, *Reading Skill Builders* and *Secrets of Successful Living*. Science Research Associates later used the same concept of controlled level of difficulty and accompanying comprehension questions to structure its Reading Laboratory, a kit of individualized reading lessons. Such materials found quite wide acceptance, especially in the junior high school and with lower track students.⁵⁴

In spite of their popularity, such approaches failed to recognize certain limitations in the "science" which supported them. In particular they tended to ignore two important lessons that earlier experience should have taught them: (1) the range of ability within a given grade level is as wide as the range between the high school years, so that a difficulty index of, say, "grade 6" has very little meaning, and (2) interest level is of more importance than the linguistic and syntactic elements that were used in arriving at measures of "readability."

The New Critics

Changes in Literary Theory

The concern with language and meaning which led the high schools to emphasize communication was part of the development of a new school of literary criticism with many of the same antecedents. The "new criticism" (as John Crowe Ransom called it in 1941) was a general reaction against the impressionistic and sentimental criticism that prevailed during the early twentieth century. It was simultaneously a movement that attempted to provide techniques and a rationale for discussing the modern poets—Eliot, Auden, Yeats, and Pound, among many others—who seemed to violate the now traditional Romantic and Victorian literary precepts.⁵⁵

To deal with the new poets and to escape from the impressionistic focus on "message," the New Critics turned to studies of the language and form of literary works, especially of poetry. *How* a poem means, rather than *what* a poem means, became the first question to be answered; questions of meaning were held to be inextricably intertwined with questions of form. These critics simultaneously excluded from the area of primary concern questions of history, biography, or ethics; their special task was to explore the structure (and hence meaning) and the success (and hence worth) of a given piece of literature, with the success itself being judged on the basis of structural principles.

The men who can be grouped together as the New Critics range from I. A. Richards and T. S. Eliot to Allen Tate, Cleanth Brooks, and Robert Penn Warren; they differed markedly in the details of their approaches and in the general evolution of their points of view. Nonetheless they shared the initial focus on the work itself and owed allegiance to the same intellectual and critical traditions. T. S. Eliot is generally viewed as the forefather of the New Critics, and his was the first strong voice urging that attention be turned

back upon the poem itself. I. A. Richards, with his semantic and psychological interests, is primarily responsible for the methods that were taken up to carry out Eliot's concerns. His *Principles of Literary Criticism* (1924) and *Practical Criticism* (1929) tied the evolving critical theory into the broad stream of concern with semantics and language studies, a natural and fruitful union.⁵⁶

The twenties and thirties, however, were years of development in which the New Critics were evolving techniques and experimenting with approaches; academic scholarship remained dominated by other approaches. The late thirties and forties saw the flood of influential books that eventually moved the New Critics into the dominant position which they have held since. Cleanth Brooks' *Modern Poetry and the Tradition* (1939), John Crowe Ransom's *The New Criticism* (1941), René Wellek and Austin Warren's *Theory of Literature* (1949), and Brooks' *The Well Wrought Urn* (1947) provided a theory and technique which gradually replaced the earlier emphases. Though Brooks could write in 1943 that the New Critics "have next to no influence in the universities," by 1953 Wellek was observing that such interests completely dominated the younger staff members and would inevitably come to dominate graduate training.⁵⁷

The single most important influence in transforming such critical theory into classroom practice was *Understanding Poetry* (1938), an introductory anthology for college students compiled by Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren. The book was a thorough illustration of the implications of the New Criticism for instruction in literature, and was carefully designed to insure that its purposes could not be subverted. The opening "Letter to a Teacher" directly attacked previous methods of teaching:

This book has been conceived on the assumption that if poetry is worth teaching at all it is worth teaching as poetry. The temptation to make a substitute for the poem as the object of study is usually overpowering.

The substitutes are various, but the most common are:

1. Paraphrase of logical and narrative content;
2. Study of biographical and historical materials;
3. Inspirational and didactic interpretation.

In place of the three "substitutes" for a poem, the editors offered their own list of principles that "a satisfactory method of teaching poetry should embody":

1. Emphasis should be kept on the poem as a poem.
2. The treatment should be concrete and inductive.
3. A poem should always be treated as an organic system of relationships, and the poetic quality should never be understood as inhering in one or more factors taken in isolation.⁵⁸

Brooks and Warren were well aware that such an approach was not common in the colleges, and hence gave their anthology a highly unusual form. Instead of a collection of poems with perhaps an introduction and "questions for study," they presented elaborate, illustrative analyses of the way a poem should be read. One might say that the book provided both the materials for study and the lectures on them—lectures which would have the effect of educating the teachers as well as the students (a fact which Brooks and Warren were diplomatic enough *not* to point out). Selections were arranged in a rough scale of complexity that began with simple narrative and ended with complex studies in metaphor and ambiguity. The analyses focussed on each poem as a whole, however, taking into consideration all of the various elements that together made up the structure. Brooks and Warren explicitly rejected earlier attempts to concentrate on literary form through such studies as "figures of speech" or "metrics," arguing that the effect of a work "can only be given accurately by a study of the relations existing among all of the factors" (p. xiv). The book was widely used, and was soon followed by companion volumes, *Understanding Fiction* (1943) and *Understanding Drama* (1946).

The New Critics and School Programs

The first use which high school teachers would make of the New Criticism was foreshadowed by Allen Tate in a 1940 review of *Modern Poetry and the Tradition* (1939). One of the major conclusions which he drew was that "modern poetry is difficult because we have lost the art of reading any poetry that will not read itself to us."²⁰ The implication that literature offered special problems of reading, that indeed it required close study before one can expect to appreciate it, was of course directly parallel to the conclusions that were being derived from studies of semantics, and served to reinforce them.

This concern with reading techniques was not in conflict with the concurrent stress on adolescent needs, but by the end of the forties it was gradually becoming clear that there was a fundamental antagonism between the basic principles of the two movements. As long as teachers responded only to the concern with the full range of meaning, they could apply the techniques of the New Critics with little problem. When they also took up the criteria of value based on formal coherence, the doctrine of needs (with its stress on content) and that of the New Critics were in serious conflict. Even here, however, the full extent of the incompatibility was somewhat ameliorated by the fact that one was primarily interested in prose, the other in poetry.

If there was any doubt in teachers' minds about the true import of the concern with form, it must have been thoroughly dispelled

when the Bollingen Prize "for the highest achievement in American poetry in 1948" was awarded to Ezra Pound for his *Pisan Cantos*; the resulting controversy was covered in detail in the *English Journal*. The Bollingen Prize was awarded by the Fellows of the Library of Congress in American Letters, with money provided by the Bollingen Foundation. In 1948 the Fellows included Leonie Adams, Conrad Aiken, W. H. Auden, Louise Bogan, T. S. Eliot, Paul Green, Katherine Anne Porter, Karl Shapiro, Allen Tate, and Robert Penn Warren—a highly respected group dominated by proponents of the New Critics. Although Pound was an expatriate American under indictment for treason, the jury concluded that

... to permit other considerations than that of poetic achievement would destroy the significance of the award and would in principle deny the validity of that objective perception of value on which any civilized society must rest.

Such a statement was a clear and direct challenge to any theory of literature which granted a place to *what* was said as well as *how* it was said in establishing a hierarchy of literary values. It provoked an angry, even savage, reaction led by the Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Robert Hillyer; his first articles—"Treason's Strange Fruits" and "Poetry's New Priesthood"—were published with editorial endorsements in the *Saturday Review of Literature*.

Hillyer's attack charged the New Critics with "sterile pedantry" and a "blurring of judgment both aesthetic and moral"; he prophesied that the award had "rung down the curtain on the inglorious Age of Eliot with all its coteries and pressure groups."⁶³

Rather than the end of an era, however, the award of the Bollingen Prize to Pound marked the emergence of the New Criticism as the established and conventional wisdom. Hillyer's vilification, though initially tapping a current of uneasiness about the award, was soon criticized by such varied sources as the *New York Times*, the *New Republic*, the *Hudson Review*, and the *Nation*. The men he had been attacking were now the grand old men of letters; Eliot, Pound, and Ransom, for example, were all in their sixties. "Modern poetry," concluded a December 1948 article in *Poetry*, "is in fact in secure possession of the field, and its heroes are aged men with a long public career behind them."⁶⁴

Though the New Critics were beginning to dominate scholarship and criticism during the 1950s, the rhetoric of "life adjustment" dominated the high schools. Though younger teachers trained in the New Criticism in their college programs were beginning to come into the schools, the much earlier report on *Language in General Education* (1940) represented the most extreme statement of their views that received anything like widespread support. Critical theory which emphasized form as the essence of literature, and

which derived standards of value from the coherence of that form, had no place. It would not be until the early sixties, when the life adjustment movement had been thoroughly discredited and a new generation of teachers had assumed control of the English program, that the implications of the critical theory as well as the reading techniques of the New Critics would begin to affect high school programs.⁶²

The Changing Curriculum

The NCTE Curriculum Studies

The most elaborate attempt to outline the form and substance of an English curriculum to reflect postwar concerns was that of the NCTE's Commission on the English Curriculum. Organized in 1945 under the general direction of Dora V. Smith, the thirty-one-member commission worked through a series of subcommittees involving some 150 other teachers and scholars to produce a series of five reports. These illustrate both the implications of "life adjustment" for instruction in English and the striking inability of the movement to provide a coherent set of principles to give order and structure to the curriculum.⁶³

The first report of the commission, issued in 1952, presented an overview of the curriculum from preschool through graduate school, as well as an outline of the general approach to curriculum study which had been adopted. The commission's description of *how* to make a curriculum is interesting for what it says about the functioning of the commission itself: most of the emphasis is on insuring a wide representation of the various interest groups in the community, and of having them arrive together at a mutually acceptable consensus. It is interesting to note in this description how much the process has changed from its earlier formulations. Though the Clapp report is mentioned briefly, there is no serious attention given to empirical specification of life demands. Indeed, the "desired outcomes" of the program have become part of the process of consensus in the first stage—part of the "platform" of the Curriculum Commission itself. It is probably inevitable with such an approach that the goals arrived at will be both global and unsystematic. And as Bobbitt had pointed out many years before, imprecise formulations of what the schools were trying to accomplish would be of little value in organizing a curriculum. Even the illustration of the process provided by the commission shows these problems. A goal such as "Personal Values" is given such "specific" subtopics as "1. Development of personality—a sense of belonging and of being accepted," and "6. Establishment of enduring and worthwhile personal interests."⁶⁴

The empiricism which in earlier curriculum discussions had focussed on the list of goals was now turned toward the description of characteristics of the students. Such an approach was essentially static: it provided a description of a given point in time, and very little else. If such a description were the most that could be available, then the teacher would have to be constantly and individually making similar assessments—learning the characteristics of each student so that he could define the “needs” toward which instruction should be directed.

The activities suggested as relevant “experiences” to be included in the curriculum would then be those which could be seen as reflecting the specified goals at a level of difficulty suitable to the outlined characteristics of the student. Given the global nature of the goals and the static nature of the description of the students, virtually any kind of activity could find its place as a valid “experience” in the curriculum, and the experiences themselves could in turn serve as the setting for any number of practical English skills. Thus, for example, “Correct usage” and “Forms of Introduction” were both listed as incidental learnings derived from the outcome “Development of personality” (p. 62).

The task given Volume I was global; later volumes were to give practical guidance at each curriculum level. Angela M. Broening, who had edited the earlier report, *Conducting Experiences in English* (1939), was head of the Production Committee for Volume III, the secondary school report. This volume (1956) had the benefit of several more years of life adjustment theory, and is even more explicit in its acceptance of the general philosophy. The Production Committee for Volume III saw students as shaped by two sets of forces. The first was external, and embodied the demands that a complex and rapidly moving modern world made upon its citizens; the second was internal, reflecting the changing physiological and psychological nature of the organism. These were explicated with a detailed list of characteristics, subdivided into one section of Physical, Mental, and Emotional Characteristics and another section of Language Characteristics. Physical characteristics reflected recent attention to growth curves and physiological influences on behavior. Twelve- to fifteen-year-olds, the committee noted, “undergo internal changes involving the heart, gland, and bone structure; the heart grows faster than do the arteries, thus causing strain on the heart and often conflicts and emotional upsets.” The list of “language characteristics” treated language as an incidental activity: the first characteristic listed, for example, is “Desire to have fun, a fact which manifests itself in language expression related to sports, amusements, and humorous situations.”⁶⁵

When the committee turned to the problem of appropriate activities for the curriculum, it became clear that incidental teaching of

the language arts really justified virtually any activity with which the teacher might feel comfortable. The committee emphasized unit teaching as the best approach to building up a curriculum, but their definition of unit was rather all-encompassing: "All that is meant by the term here is that varied activities in the language arts are developed around a central theme or purpose, clear and significant to the student" (p. 69). The Production Committee and the Curriculum Commission itself, because they stressed needs narrowly defined as immediate problems and left the language arts as incidental, never did attempt to limit what would be "clear and significant."

Literature was dealt with in two sections whose differing titles emphasize the twin strands of psychological needs and essential skills that were part of general education. One section was called "Meeting Youth's Needs through Literature," the other, "Developing Competence in Reading." Neither section offered much more than a series of echoes of the fuller discussions in *Literature as Exploration, An Experience Curriculum*, and the professional literature during the ensuing two decades. Literature was to be taught for "discovery and imaginative insight"; it would "meet the needs of youth and promote growth"; "general traits as well as individual characteristics must be taken into consideration"; "students differ"; literature can provide "broadened thinking and experience"; it is a "source of pleasure" and can aid in forming "moral values."⁶⁶ The phrases are glib and are offered with little elaboration or defense.

The section on reading skills is striking in its disregard of the kinds of skills which the New Critics were stressing. The important skills it did list for reading literature were "Evaluating truth to human experience"; "Discovering theme or central purpose"; "Relating detail to central theme or purpose of the selection"; and "Following different types of plot structure." Points of importance in the reading of poetry included rhythm, rhyme, "word color," figures of speech, and "mechanics." The general level of instruction is indicated by the final sentence: "Practice and group reading and discussion of poetry will make the inverted sentence pattern familiar."⁶⁷ It is indicative of the general emphases that Max Eastman is cited in the bibliography for the literature section: W. S. Gray (extensively) in the bibliography for reading; Richards, Brooks, and the other New Critics in neither.

The ultimate difficulty was that the curriculum specified by the commission lacked a set of structuring principles. The members found their metaphor for education in the concept of "growth," which involved "a definite sequential pattern" whose dimensions were clear enough: "The normal child grows constantly more complex, more effective, and more mature in each of his patterns" (p. 31). Yet they had no theory of cognitive or moral development which would allow them to state any more specifically the nature of

the "growing complexity," the changes involved, or even the natural next stage of development. Instead, all they could offer was the static delineation of what the child is like at a given point in time so that activities could be structured to change him. Any number of activities, unfortunately, could be justified as "more difficult," "more complex," or "meeting a need," and all kinds of activities were offered.⁶⁸

The Course of Study

In 1959 Arno Jewett, English specialist at the U.S. Office of Education, published a survey of 285 courses of study from 44 states, the District of Columbia, the Canal Zone, and Hawaii. His findings suggest that such guides reflected the emphases evidenced in the work of the Commission on the English Curriculum, though he felt that the guides described programs that were "less traditional, more flexible, and more closely geared to local needs" than those of schools not engaged in curriculum work.⁶⁹

Jewett found that "almost all" of the courses included in the survey provided a definite sequence for the curriculum, with topical or thematic units almost totally replacing lists of classics as the method of organizing the work. Units often cut across the language arts, attempting to provide (as the Curriculum Commission had suggested) a wide base for incidental teaching of language and communications skills. Topics varied greatly, but "the importance of student interest as a means of facilitating and strengthening learning" had been "generally accepted." The junior high years tended to stress thematic units organized around the interests and needs which various traditions of research on adolescents had delineated—animal stories, adventure, and mystery from reading interest studies, for example, and family life, growing up, and making friends. About half of the junior high curricula included developmental reading programs.⁷⁰

In the upper grades, Jewett found a much more traditional pattern, but most programs had been modified to include several different approaches. The most common pattern in grade 10 was the study of types; but in grade 11, with its now-traditional course in American literature, a wide variety of units were being taught: "Chronological, thematic, regional, literary, works of famous authors, American ideals and principles, and various others" (pp. 65-66). In the twelfth grade program the traditional course in English literature had begun to lose ground and was being replaced by a variety of electives. The most frequent substitute, however, was a course in world literature in which English literature played a substantial and usually predominant role. Some 13 percent of the courses of study included a required world literature course in grade

12. and another 10 percent offered it as an elective. Smith in 1932 had found virtually no attention to such studies.

Jewett also found that schools were incorporating the concern for language and communication that had developed during World War II. Over half of the courses of study that he examined included such studies, those published earlier focussed on propaganda analysis and critical thinking while later courses emphasized semantics and the nature of language.

The Anthologies

Jewett's findings indicate that those in charge of the courses of study—in general the more active and dedicated teachers in a given community—were responding to the emphases in the professional literature. Courses of study, however, are only one of the factors influencing what actually happens in the classroom; in this period as in the previous one, the literary anthology is at least as important. Two detailed studies of anthologies are available, one in general sympathetic and the other part of the reaction against the program of secondary education that developed during the postwar period. Together they provide quite a complete picture of the program in literature which the anthologies represented.

The more sympathetic discussion is James Olson's summary of trends between 1946 and 1957. He found a gentle evolution rather than a major shift from the pattern that had been developed during the 1930s. Those series that had not yet reorganized their ninth and tenth grade texts around thematic or topical units did so; and the topics themselves were shifted toward the more immediate needs and interests of adolescents. In the eleventh and twelfth grade volumes, the major change was the introduction of a thematic unit in contemporary literature at the beginning of the volume before returning to the standard chronological presentation for the rest of the text.⁷¹

The increasing concern with practical problems of living was evident in both the organizing themes and the editorial apparatus provided. The 1950 Singer anthology dropped its opening unit on "The Short Story," replacing it with one titled "Understanding Ourselves and Others"; a subtopic covered "Family Portraits and Problems." The parallel Scott, Foresman text introduced a unit titled "Families Are Like That" in an edition issued the following year. Even the anthology titles began to reflect the new orientation: Harcourt, Brace and Co. started a *Living Literature* series in 1949; Holt followed in 1952 with one more explicitly titled *Read Up On Life*.⁷²

Responding to the concern with human relations, the anthologies also began to give attention to world literature. Some combined it with the study of English literature in the twelfth grade; others

issued separate volumes. An ungraded Harper and Brothers text, *World Neighbors*, illustrates even in its title the limitations on the goals for such studies. The preface emphasized world peace and domestic harmony, and the selections themselves were surrounded with "practical" study questions. After reading Bernier's "The Divided Horsecloth," for example, students were asked: "Besides teaching married couples how to treat their parents, what does the story teach parents concerning their money?" Synge's *Riders to the Sea* demonstrated the "comfort" of religious faith but also illustrated "stupid beasts who allow a malignant nature to dominate their lives."⁷³

As in previous periods, there was considerable difference in emphasis from series to series, with those collections designed most specifically for upper-track and college-bound students maintaining the most traditional focuses, and those for vocational students or the lowest tracks going furthest in the direction of "life adjustment."

One can conclude from Olson's survey that "life adjustment" brought no major change in the organization or content of high school anthologies. They continued to exert a moderately progressive influence on the curriculum through both their increasing attention to modern literature and their continuing de-emphasis of studies of form and technique. There is no indication that the anthologies—any more than the Commission on the English Curriculum of the NCTE or the state courses of study—had responded to the implications of the New Criticism: even the conservative editions for college-bound and upper-track students emphasized older methods of scholarship: biographical and historical studies, the characteristics of genre, and rhetorical devices predominated.

A trenchant and detailed critique of the anthologies by James Lynch and Bertrand Evans documents exactly what was happening to literary values. As a status study rather than a history, it treats the form of the anthology as a given in need of change, rather than as an evolving set of materials. To choose texts for study, the authors solicited information on state adoptions, surveyed practices in two hundred cities, corresponded with publishers, and checked their results with practicing teachers. They concluded that their final list of seventy-two texts represented all of those in major use. The sample overlaps Olson's but includes only five from the forties and some fourteen editions published between 1958 and 1962; most of these were minor revisions of earlier texts, however, so that the Lynch and Evans statistics probably provide an accurate picture of the texts Olson surveyed.⁷⁴

Their report, *High School English Textbooks* (1963), is a good illustration of the fundamental antipathy between the emphases that had been developing in the secondary schools and the emphases of the New Critics. The task of the English teacher as Lynch and Evans saw it was "the teaching of the reading of literature"

(p.5). Their emphasis was firmly on literature as literature: anthologies "should be the repositories of the very best ever thought and written in the spirit of the humanistic tradition and the Anglo-American heritage; whatever does not fulfill these criteria has no place in an anthology, regardless of grade level or the kind of reader to whom it might be directed" (p. 409). Given the professional emphases over the preceding fifty years, it was inevitable that the anthologies would not fare well in their eyes. Literary values had not been the primary emphasis in the selection of materials; much of the "very best ever thought and written" had been deemed inappropriate; the second best had often been found useful.

Lynch and Evans made a number of major criticisms of the anthologies, documenting each point somewhat repetitively as they took up each genre in turn. Their major charge was that the selections were inadequate and "second-rate," placing too much emphasis on such "currently popular topics as the space age, electronics, travel, and communication"; attention to "information, 'real-life' adventure, and social behavior"; selection for "sociological or historical reasons." To these considerations Lynch and Evans counterposed "ideas and the exercise of thinking logically and critically," "literary quality," and "promise of permanence" (pp. 64-73).

In the anthologies' treatment of each genre Lynch and Evans found a core of "respectable quality" which filled out the lists of "most frequently printed selections." These, however, were a very small percentage of the total; the frequently anthologized short stories, for example, made up only 4 percent of all short story selections. Observations of the remainder led Lynch and Evans to conclude that "the short story is not commonly regarded as a serious literary genre, but rather as an attractive short piece easily handled by the teacher and 'appreciated' by students with a minimum of teaching." The most frequent sources of the stories were, in descending order, *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Collier's*, *The New Yorker*, *Scholastic Magazine*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, *Esquire*, *Cosmopolitan*, *This Week*, *Story*, *Boy's Life*, *Seventeen*, *Harper's*, *American Girl*, and *Ladies' Home Journal*. Seventy-three percent of the selections appeared in only one anthology and were "commercial" or "formulary." To Lynch and Evans the results were a disaster:

... the principal criticism to be made is not that such stories are not worth reading but that as entertainment they do not deserve a place in the textbooks prepared at considerable expense for high school classrooms. To give such stories as much space as more enduring works of genuine literature is at once to blur distinctions between the great and the mediocre (thereby frustrating the development of taste). (pp. 38-39).

Their parenthetical note is of particular interest, since it is a direct contradiction of the assertions of the experience approach. The question of the processes involved in the development of taste is the central pedagogical issue, but it has never been successfully addressed by proponents of either point of view.

Their second set of criticisms dealt with alteration of selections, a practice that had reached such proportions that nearly half of the selections in some texts were not presented in their original form. Many of the alterations represented unacknowledged "silent editings"; others involved major omissions noted with a simple ellipsis or misleading footnote (p. 442). Such changes were a source of continuing irritation to Lynch and Evans, who contended that they violated the duty of the anthology to present "the work as the author wrote it"—a necessary first step, of course, if the techniques of the New Critics were to be applied in teaching.

Another general point of criticism was the domination which the system of organization seemed to have over the selections included. As many as three-fourths of the volumes seemed to have been organized before the selections were picked. Topical (thematic) and chronological patterns of organization were the chief villains here, because both imposed a set of extraliterary considerations on the materials to be used. The study found too that such topical and chronological anthologies were the dominant forms, the first in grades 9 and 10, the second in grades 11 and 12. Lynch and Evans blamed the overemphasis on "miscellaneous nonfiction" directly on the use of topical units, which led to collections "that are more accurately described as socially therapeutic than personally and humanely educative" (pp. 79-80, 410). Again, of course, what they find offensive is a result of the success of the anthologies in responding to the concerns of the secondary school.

Lynch and Evans also criticized the fact that over half of the selections were from the twentieth century; literature written before 1800 was hardly represented at all. Looking for a reason, they found that the "correlation between the topical organization and proportion of recent literature is obviously very high," from their point of view providing another bit of damning evidence against this approach. Their worry about the displacement of "major authors in the Anglo-American tradition" also led them to object to the emphasis upon world literature in some collections: "It is at least questionable whether a high school student inadequately read in the poetry of his own culture is prepared to undertake the study of another" (pp. 113, 150-58).

The last general criticism that Lynch and Evans had to offer dealt with the tone adopted by the anthologists: in particular the "fear of difficulty" and the "deliberate catering to the adolescent mind even to the point of embarrassment."

Pieces are chosen because they lie within the narrow boundaries of the teen-age world, and their heroes and heroines are Dick and Jane just a few years older, now dating instead of playing, going to a dance instead of the local fire station, saying "round, round, jump the rut, round, round, round, jump the rut, round, round—" instead of "Jump, Spot, jump," but otherwise hardly different. The "image" of the American Boy that emerges is of a clean-cut, socially poised extrovert, an incurious observer of life rather than a participant, a willing conformer, more eager to get than to give, a bit of a hypocrite but a rather dull companion—a well-adjusted youth not much above a moron. And the "image" of the American Girl? She is the one who likes the American Boy (pp. 412-13).

It was to end the catering to that moron, to restore the anthologies to the state of "textbooks, *to be studied in and taught from*," that the criticisms of *High School English Textbooks* were ultimately offered.

It should be clear that what Lynch and Evans were challenging was not the anthologies' success at the task undertaken, but the definition of the task itself. In a sense the fact that their study needed to be conducted at all is the strongest testimony to the domination that had been achieved by the progressive movement.

Summing Up: Literature in the Progressive Era

Lynch and Evans conducted their study in the early sixties, safely in the midst of a vigorous collegiate reaction against such trends: they were professors at Berkeley themselves. The attacks were on "life adjustment" and the narrow focus on adolescent needs, but since these were the final stages of progressivism it was the movement as a whole that was eventually discredited. The loss of the impetus toward reform and progress, with its concomitant de-emphasis of academic achievement, provided the rallying point for a variety of forces to unite against the unfortunate image of a brave new world filled with legions of school children in gray flannel suits, an image which "life adjustment" managed—not without justification—to bring upon itself.

The attack on "life adjustment" would simultaneously end John Dewey as the basic reference point for educational thought: he and his followers became the villains instead of the heroes in the new educational rhetoric. Yet though the name was discredited, the progressives made many solid and continuing contributions to the teaching of literature in American schools. Any list will of necessity be limited and thus misleading, but the following points give some sense of their accomplishment.

- (1) They effectively ended the limitation of the literature curriculum to the nineteenth century canon of classic texts, opening the way for the inclusion of more, and more modern selections as well as for important examples of world literature.
- (2) They documented the wide range of individual differences in ability and achievement that could be expected within any high school classroom, and experimented with ways to provide a meaningful program in literature for all students.
- (3) They recognized the importance of student interest in any successful program in literature; they developed a wide variety of techniques to insure that interest would be present; and they described patterns of interests in children and adolescents that remain valid today.
- (4) They began the debate about the nature of the development of taste and discrimination, recognizing that it is the essential question which should shape the curriculum in literature.
- (5) They gave English a place at the heart of the curriculum and defended literary studies as a part of English even when unable to define their values precisely or well in the face of demands for social relevance, efficiency, or adjustment to life.

The failure of the progressives were also major and contributed to the rapid rate at which their views of the curriculum would fall from favor.

- (1) In turning from literary scholarship toward the relationship between the student and literature as the basis for the curriculum, they abandoned the old pattern before they had developed a new set of practical criteria for determining the relative value and the proper order for classroom studies. They sought growth in response without a useful philosophy of what growth entailed.
- (2) In part because of their lack of structuring principles, they allowed the program in literature to be dominated by peripheral activities often having little to do with "literary values"; in the end the rhetoric, at least, gave literature a function which other activities could and did fulfill as well.
- (3) In their concern with general education for the general student, they adopted a condescending position that removed virtually all "striving" and challenge from the activities suggested, especially for the noncollege-bound students. They allowed their empiricism and pragmatism to narrow their definitions of needs to the point that they were trivial and dull.

- (4) In their fear of college domination they lost touch with scholarship in their field, thus setting the stage for confrontation with the New Critics, rather than the reconciliation and accommodation that might have revitalized the movement.

CHAPTER VI NOTES

1. Wilford M. Aikin, *The Story of the Eight-Year Study* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1942), p. 16.

2. I. A. Richards, *How to Read a Page: A Course in Efficient Reading with an Introduction to a Hundred Great Words* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1942), p. 10.

3. Lennox Grey, "Communication and War: An Urgent Letter to English Teachers," *English Journal* 32:1 (January 1943): 12-19.

4. Frances Broehl, "The Teacher of English and Education for All American Youth," *English Journal* 34:7 (September 1945): 403-06.

5. Commission on the English Curriculum, *The English Language Arts in the Secondary School* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1956), p. 15.

6. "General education" is a term that has been used to cover a multitude of sins; almost all approaches to education have been encompassed under the term by one writer or another. Discussion here will follow the Fifty-first Yearbook of the NSSE in denoting by general education the concern with the nonspecialized student with specific personal needs to be met through the schools, and in considering it an alternative to "liberal education," by which will be denoted a more subject- and culture-oriented program. See also the discussion of the Harvard report at the beginning of the next chapter. National Society for the Study of Education, *General Education*, Fifty-first Yearbook, Part I (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952). See also NSSE, *General Education in the American College*, Thirty-eighth Yearbook (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939).

7. Cited by Elbert Lenrow, *Reader's Guide to Prose Fiction: An Introductory Essay, with Bibliographies of 1500 Novels Selected, Typically Classified, and Annotated for Use in Meeting the Needs of Individuals in General Education*. For the Commission on Secondary School Curriculum (New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1940) p. 3.

8. "Summary and Report," *English Journal* 33:1 (January 1944): 49-52. The speaker was Brigadier General Joe N. Dalton.

9. "Summary and Report," *English Journal* 32:5 (May 1943): 285-87. The statement originated in a committee of the American Council on Education and was later accepted by the American Association of Colleges. For statements of the relationship between general education and English before the war, see Lou LaBrant, "The Place of English in General Education," *English Journal* 39:5 (May 1940): 356-65; and Dora V. Smith, "General Education and the Teaching of English," *English Journal* 29:9 (November 1940): 707-19.

10. On these developments, see C. A. Bowers, *The Progressive Educator and the Depression* (New York: Random House, 1969), pp. 216 ff., and Lawrence A. Cremin, *The Transformation of the School* (New York: Vintage Books, 1961), pp. 251 ff.

11. The series was titled *Adventure in American Education* and published by Harper and Bros. (New York) during 1942. It included Wilford M. Aikin, *The Story of the Eight-Year Study*; H. H. Giles et al., *Exploring the Curriculum*; Eugene R. Smith et al., *Appraising and Recording Student Progress*; Dean Chamberlain et al., *Did They Succeed in College?* and *Thirty Schools Tell Their Story*. The quotation is from Chamberlain, p. xviii.

12. See Giles, *Exploring the Curriculum*, and Chamberlain, *Thirty Schools*, for more detailed discussions of this evolution, the first from the point of view of the curriculum consultants, the second from that of the individual schools.

13. Giles, *Exploring the Curriculum*, pp. 315 ff.

14. *Ibid.*, especially pages 4 and 44. See also Chamberlain, *Thirty Schools*, pp. 6 ff.

15. The Curriculum Commission which produced *An Experience Curriculum* (1935), for example, included at least nine members who were involved in the Eight-Year Study, though the PEA was not among the organizations asked to name an official representative.

16. At the time of the release of the first of these reports, the commission included, among others, the presidents of Harvard and Cornell; the U.S. Commissioner of Education served as an advisory member. Cremin, *Transformation of the School*, p. 329; Bowers, *Progressive Educator and the Depression*, p. 220.

17. Cited by Cremin, *Transformation of the School*, p. 334. See also *Life Adjustment Education for Every Youth*, U.S. Office of Education Bulletin 1951, no. 22 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1951; first ed., 1948).

18. *English Journal* carried many articles arguing the pros and cons of integration from the mid-thirties till the mid-forties. The largest concentration of conflicting points of view was gathered together in two 1945 series: "Our Readers Think: About Integration," *English Journal* 34 (November 1945): 496-502; "Our Readers Think: More About Integration," *English Journal* 34:10 (December 1945): 555-59. The tide of opinion was clearly against the concept.

19. Mark Neville, "Sharing Experiences with Farmville," *English Journal* 34:7 (September 1945): 368-72.

20. Marion C. Sheridan, "Life Without Literature," *English Journal* 37:6 (June 1948): 291-97; Grace S. Wright, *Core Curriculum in Public High Schools: An Inquiry Into Practices, 1949*, U.S. Office of Education, Bulletin 1950, no. 5 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1950). See also Grace S. Wright, *Core Curriculum Development: Problems and Practices*, U.S. Office of Education Bulletin 1952, no. 5 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1952).

21. Sarah I. Roody, "Developing Personality through Literature," *English Journal* 36:6 (June 1947): 299-304. She referred her readers to Schaffer's *Psychology of Adjustment*, Howard and Patry's *Mental Health*, and *Mental Hygiene News*. One of the most frequently cited early articles in this tradition was Mitchell E. Rappaport's posthumously published "Literature as an Approach to Maturity," *English Journal* 26:9 (November 1937): 705-14.

22. Margaret Edwards, "How Do I Love Thee?" *English Journal* 41:7 (September 1952): 335-40.

23. Hilda Taba, *The Dynamics of Education: A Methodology of Progressive Educational Thought* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co., 1932). See especially pages xvi and 257.

24. Hilda Taba, Elizabeth Hall Brady, and John T. Robinson, *Inter-group Education in Public Schools* (Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education, 1952).

25. The strategies which Taba developed continue to be an important model of the process of discussion. See Robert L. Trezise, "The Hilda Taba Teaching Strategies in English and Reading Classes," *English Journal* 61:4 (April 1972): 577-80.

26. Publications up to 1952 are summarized in a lengthy bibliography in the final report. The only one to be widely cited by English teachers was *Reading Ladders for Human Relations* (1947), which will be discussed on pages 153-54. An NCTE Committee on Intercultural Relations was active from 1943 till late in the decade. Its major accomplishment was a special issue of *English Journal* (June 1946) on racial and religious tolerance, with Louise Rosenblatt as guest editor. The most impressive part of the volume was the names of the contributors; they included Thomas Mann, Edna Ferber, Horace Kallen, Ruth Benedict, and Ernst Kris.

27. George H. Henry, "Our Best English Unit," *English Journal* 36:7 (September 1947): 356-62.

28. Holland D. Roberts, Walter V. Kaulfers, and Grayson N. Kefauver, eds., *English for Social Living* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1943), pp. 11-12.

29. Dwight L. Burton, "Books to Meet Students' Personal Needs," *English Journal* 36:9 (November 1947): 469-73.

30. Ralph D. Rabinovitch, "Our Adolescents and Their World," *English Journal* 44:5 (May 1955): 261-67. The director of the Child Guidance Clinic of the Catholic University of America had talked of "bibliotherapy" as early as the 1944 convention ("The Columbus Meeting," *English Journal* 34:2 [February 1945]: 102-06). See also George Robert Carlsen, "Literature and Emotional Maturity," *English Journal* 38:3 (March 1949): 130-38; G. R. Carlsen, "Deep Down Beneath, Where I Live," *English Journal* 43:5 (May 1954): 235-39; Don M. Wain, "Students' Problems: A New Survey Made Especially for Teachers of English," *English Journal* 44:4 (April 1955): 218-25.

31. Bertha Handlin, "Group Discussion of Individual Reading," *English Journal* 32:2 (February 1943): 67-73; Dwight Burton, "There's Always a Book for You," *English Journal* 38:7 (September 1949): 371-75; Robert C. McKean, "Students Like Thematic Units," *English Journal* 45:2 (February 1956): 82-83; William G. Fidone, "The Theme's the Thing," *English Journal* 48:9 (December 1959): 518-23. On the status of themes by the 1950s, see the discussion of Jewett's survey later in this chapter.

32. Verona F. Rothenbush, "Developing Active, Thinking Citizens," *English Journal* 32:4 (April 1943): 188-95; Nellie Mae Lombard, "American Literature for Life and Living," *English Journal* 33:7 (September 1944): 383-84; "Report and Summary," *English Journal* 35:5 (May 1950): 280-83. Lombard's course was inspired by H. D. Roberts and *English for Social Living*.

33. Lenrow, *Reader's Guide to Prose Fiction*, p. 15. His school was one of the thirty in the Eight-Year Study.

34. *Ibid.*, pp. 10-24.

35. This section included, among others, Huxley's *Point Counter Point*, Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio*, Lawrence's *The Rainbow*, and Dreiser's *Sister Carrie*--books of merit but a far cry from the standard high school canon.

36. Hilda Taba et al., *Reading Ladders for Human Relations* (Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education, 1947). This was prepared during the summer of 1946. A revised and enlarged edition followed almost immediately, published by ACE in 1949. Recent editions have been cosponsored by NCTE. A companion volume explained the rationale and teaching procedures in more detail: Hilda Taba, *Literature for Human Understanding* (Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education, 1947).

37. Taba, *Dynamics of Education*, p. 223. She summarized the goal of her method as "a continuous reconstruction of the total social and individual experience through self-directed activities."

38. George W. Norvell, *The Reading Interests of Young People* (New York: D. C. Heath and Co., 1950). See also his *What Boys and Girls Like to Read* (Norristown, N.J.: Silver Burdett Co., 1958), and an earlier summary report, "Some Results of a Twelve-Year Study of Children's Reading Interests," *English Journal* 35:10 (December 1946): 331-36.

39. James Warren Olson, *The Nature of Literature Anthologies Used in the Teaching of High School English 1917-1957* (Dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1969; University Microfilms No. 69-22,454), p. 259.

40. Smith explains the origins of her program in "Extensive Reading in Junior High School: A Survey of Teacher Preparation," *English Journal* 19:6 (June 1930): 449-62. Surveys of teachers in two summer sessions indicated they were unfamiliar with such materials; the course on "juvenile literature" followed. Courses on children's literature date back much further.

41. See Richard S. Alm, "The Development of Literature for Adolescents," *School Review* 64 (April 1956): 172-77; Jean DeSales Bertram, "Books to Promote Insights into Family-Life Problems," *English Journal* 45:8 (November 1956): 477-82; Learned T. Bulman, "Biographies for Teen-Agers," *English Journal* 47:8 (November 1958); Emma L. Patterson, "The Junior Novels and How They Grew," *English Journal* 45:7 (October 1956): 381-87. Earlier, see Isabel V. Eno, "Books for Children from Broken Homes," *English Journal* 38:8 (October 1949): 457-58.

42. Richard S. Alm, "The Glitter and the Gold," *English Journal* 44:6 (September 1955): 315-22.

43. Barbara Martinec, "Popular—But Not Just a Part of the Crowd: Implications of Formula Fiction for Teenagers," *English Journal* 60:3 (March 1971): 339-44.

44. See W. H. N. Hotopf, *Language, Thought and Comprehension: A Case Study of the Writings of I. A. Richards* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965); Douglas Waples, Bernard Berelson, and Franklyn R. Bradshaw, *What Reading Does to People* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1940).

45. The Educational Director of the Institute for Propaganda Analysis addressed the 1939 NCTE convention (Violet Edwards, "Developing Critical Thinking through Motion Pictures and Newspapers," *English Journal* 29:4 [April 1940]: 301-07). Paul Diederich reviewed *Language in General Education* for the Harvard Committee ("The Meaning of *The Meaning of Meaning*," *English Journal* 30:1 [January 1941]: 31-36. S. I. Hayakawa spoke on propaganda analysis at the 1938 convention ("The St. Louis Convention," *English Journal* 28:2 [February 1939]: 143-50). See *Language in Action* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Co., 1941).

46. Commission on Secondary School Curriculum, *Language in General Education*. A Report of the Committee on the Function of English in General Education (New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1940). The committee stated that its primary debt was to I. A. Richards, who had advised it and read drafts of the report. Rosenblatt's book was endorsed as the proper approach to literature (p. vi, fn. 2); she was not on this committee but also acted as an advisor. Lou LaBrant, who was a member of the committee, has emphasized to me that the committee's language studies were seen as separate from literary work, though completely compatible; they were not meant to supplant it. Cf., however, Edward Gordon's comments ten years later: "Interpretation of poetry is a further extension of the general language work; it is another, complex and concentrated, example of emotional communication" ("Teaching Students to Read Verse." *English Journal* 39:3 [March 1950]: 149-54).

47. I. A. Richards, *How to Read a Page*, p. 19.

48. Charles B. Huelsman, Jr., "A High-School Program," *English Journal* 33:1 (January 1944): 35-40; Edward J. Rutan, "Meaning in Literature Study," *English Journal* 33:9 (November 1944): 505-07; and Basic Aims Committee, "Basic Aims for English Instruction in American Schools," *English Journal* 31:1 (January 1942): 40-55.

49. Lennox Grey, "Communication and War: An Urgent Letter to English Teachers," *English Journal* 22:1 (January 1943): 12-19; "The Council Meets in Wartime," *English Journal* 32:2 (February 1943): 104-05; and "English in the Victory Corps," *English Journal* 32:6 (June 1943): 303-09. See also Planning Commission, "English Instruction and the War," *English Journal* 31:2 (February 1942): 87-91.

50. Paul Witty was especially frank about the influence of these on his own thinking: *Reading in Modern Education* (Boston: D. C. Heath, 1949); pp. 10-11, 194-201. Another important presentation of the developmental approach was Constance M. McCullough, Ruth M. Strang, and Arthur E. Traxler's *Problems in the Improvement of Reading* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1946). This discussed reading skills all the way from "Prereading Experiences in Preschool Years" through "Higher Levels of Graduate Study."

51. Robert J. Havighurst, "Characteristics, Interests, and Needs of Pupils That Aid in Defining the Nature and Scope of the Reading Program," in *Adjusting Reading Programs to Individuals*, Supplementary Educational Monographs no. 52, ed. W. S. Gray (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1941), pp. 53-59. These tasks were cited by Witty, *Reading in Modern Education*, p. 13. William S. Gray and Bernice E. Leary, *What Makes a Book Readable?* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1935).

52. See Samuel Beckoff, "The Rainbow," *English Journal* 32:6 (June 1943): 325-30; Herbert A. Landry, "Teaching Reading with the Reader's Digest," *English Journal* 32:6 (June 1943): 320-24.

53. Olive Eckerson, "Give Them What They Want," *English Journal* 36:9 (December 1947): 523-27; Daniel J. Assuma, "A List of Simplified Classics," *English Journal* 42:2 (February 1953): 94 ff.; John R. Kinzer and Natalie R. Cohan, "How Hard Are the Simplified Classics?" *English Journal* 40:4 (April 1951): 210-11.

54. M. Agnella Gunn et al., *What We Know about High School Reading* (Urbana, Ill.: NCTE, 1958). See especially Helen Hanlon's article,

"What Does Research Reveal--About Materials for Teaching Reading?"

55. See René Wellek, "Literary Scholarship," in *American Scholarship in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Merle Curti (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953); Clarence D. Thorpe and Norman E. Nelson, "Criticism in the Twentieth Century," *English Journal* 36:4 (April 1947): 165-73; William Van O'Connor, "A Short View of the New Criticism," *English Journal* 38:9 (November 1949): 489-97; David Daiches, "The New Criticism," *English Journal* 39:2 (February 1950): 64-72. Wellek's discussion is the fullest; the others are interesting as examples of contemporary reactions to the growing importance of the New Critics. Daiches is particularly perceptive about the weaknesses as well as the strengths of the approach, and foreshadows later disillusionment.

56. These books had the curious fate of being virtually ignored by high school teachers for some twenty-five years, and then becoming basic points of reference at a time when their approach was already somewhat dated. Richards's *Practical Criticism* in particular became a common reference during the period of academic reform discussed in the next chapter. *Principles of Literary Criticism* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co., 1945; first published 1924); *Practical Criticism: A Study of Literary Judgment* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co., 1946; first published 1929).

57. Wellek, "Literary Scholarship," p. 123. Wellek refers to Brooks's comment in the course of his own observations.

58. Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren, *Understanding Poetry: An Anthology for College Students*, rev. ed. (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1950; first published 1938), pp. xi-xv.

59. Allen Tate, "Understanding Modern Poetry," *English Journal* 29:4 (April 1940): 263-74. Brooks dedicated *Modern Poetry and the Tradition* to Tate.

60. "Report and Summary," *English Journal* 38:7 (September 1949): 405-07 (jury quotation, p. 406); 39:3 (March 1950): 170-71; and 39:5 (May 1950): 282.

61. "Report and Summary," *English Journal* 39:3 (March 1950): 170-71.

62. For a good example of the assimilation of the "skills" defined by the New Critics (in fact citing the 1950 edition of *Understanding Poetry*), see Rosemary S. Donahue, "A Problem in Developmental Reading," *English Journal* 42:3 (March 1953): 142-47. For an early example accepting their principles more fully, see Herman O. Makey, "Why?" *English Journal* 38:10 (December 1949): 554 ff.; and "In the Literature Class," *English Journal* 39:7 (September 1950): 360-66. As examples of programs during the period of transition, see Elizabeth Williams, "Teaching Judgment of Prose Fiction," *English Journal* 47:8 (November 1958): 495-99; David M. Litsey, "Comparative Study of Novels," *English Journal* 48:3 (March 1959): 149-51.

63. Volumes I to V were titled, respectively, *The English Language Arts* (1952), *Language Arts for Today's Children* (1954), *The English Language Arts in the Secondary School* (1956), *The College Teaching of English* (1965), *The Education of Teachers of English for American Schools and Colleges* (1963). All were published by Appleton-Century-Crofts, New York. The much-delayed Volumes IV and V are of a different period and emphasis.

64. *The English Language Arts*, pp. 62-67.

65. *The English Language Arts in The Secondary School*, pp. 16-20.

66. *Ibid.*, 123-29.

67. *Ibid.*, 180-87.

68. In spite of their shortcomings, the books were in step with educational thought at the time they appeared. Volume I was named one of the "Outstanding Educational Books of the Year" on the Pratt Library List, and Volume III in general provoked favorable comment, e.g., "Report and Summary," *English Journal* 42:7 (October 1953): 400; "The Significance of *The English Language Arts in the Secondary School*," *English Journal* 46:5 (May 1957): 286-93.

The advocacy of a "multiple approach" without clear standards for including or excluding activities was also typical. See J. N. Hook, "The Multiple Approach," *English Journal* 37:4 (April 1948): 188-92; and Walter Loban, "Teaching Literature: A Multiple Approach," *English Journal* 45:2 (February 1956): 75-78+.

69. Arno Jewett, *English Language Arts in American High Schools*. U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Office of Education Bulletin 1958, no. 13 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1959). p. 5.

70. *Ibid.*, pp. 31-39, 50 ff.

71. Olson, *Nature of Literature Anthologies*, pp. 246-47.

72. *Ibid.*, pp. 246-49.

73. *Ibid.*, pp. 258, 273-77.

74. James J. Lynch and Bertrand Evans, *High School English Textbooks: A Critical Examination* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1963).