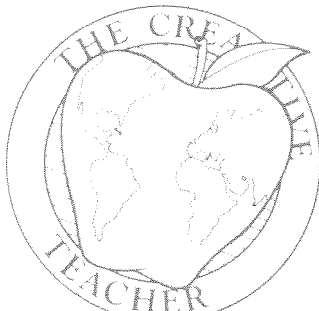


THE CREATIVE TEACHER



Editors Note: This is the beginning of a new feature of Reaching Through Teaching, one we hope will create a useful and pleasant way for colleagues to share their successful class-room techniques with one another. Periodically, requests for brief articles will be sent to the faculty, along with format descriptions. You'll be asked to describe, in 300 words or less, your most innovative and successful teaching device. Inspiration for the idea came from a booklet entitled The Bright Idea Network, which is briefly reviewed on the back cover of this publication.

Every professor has some special technique which he or she has developed and honed to a fine cutting edge—a teaching device which time and experience have proven to produce the “Aha!” experience. Many are constantly experimenting with new approaches. Come now, with the task facing all of us, let's not guard our secrets jealously. Share your wisdom. It may amaze you what we can learn from one another.



SOMETHING TO WRITE ABOUT

Christopher Golden
Instructor of English

My 101 and 099 sections have enjoyed the following writing task. It provides practice in pre-writing techniques (“brainstorming,” “cubing”). In addition, students learn developmental strategies such as classification and description. Finally, students acquire experience in inferential reasoning.

I divide the class into teams of three or four, dole out quarters, dimes, nickels, and pennies to each, and distribute the task description sheet. Typically, a short discussion ensues, and I try to clear up any misunderstandings before the teams begin writing their reports. Then I drift from team to team, offering suggestions.

I hope other teachers can use this assignment. Please call me if you have any questions.

TASK DESCRIPTION

TO: Vulcan Archaeology Teams
FROM: Spock, Processor of Writ
RE: Objects from 20th Century Earth
STARDATE: 4,009

As a result of recent excavations, several Earth artifacts from the 20-21st centuries of the late second millennium period have been salvaged.

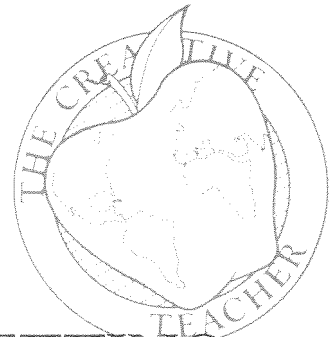
Unfortunately, during the transportation back to Vulcan, important notes made at the time of discovery have been lost. Only one fact can be stated with certainty: These objects were used in religious practices. (Our colleague, Golden, speculates that, because of their size and shape, they were carried on the person of devotees—very possibly as amulets.)

It is imperative, in completing our studies of the Earth people of that period, that we are successful in ascertaining the following information.

1. Names and attributes of gods and sacred images.
2. Descriptions of temple architecture.
3. Basic tenets of faith.
4. Hierarchy: Priesthood and organization.
5. Prayers and worship rituals.

Each team must submit a report describing the Earth people's religious institutions. Each report should contain a logically-derived hypothesis, describing the religion in general. The reports should also contain specific supporting evidence extracted from the visible data. Since the civilization itself has long-since vanished, a tentative conclusion as to the cause of the downfall

may be drawn. Finally, a procedural recommendation: teams should engage in brainstorming first, and after generating a list of possible inferences, select those which appear internally consistent with the physical evidence.



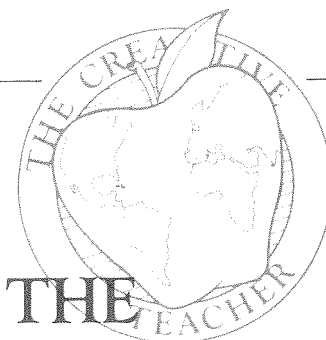
GETTING STUDENTS' ATTENTION

Christine Ziegler
Assistant Professor of Psychology

I have found that the Introductory Psychology course requires a good deal of instructor imagination. I also have discovered that the initial meeting with the class sets the stage for the entire quarter. To take advantage of this first-day effect I used to dress rather casually on the first day of class, go to class five minutes early and take a seat with the other students. About five minutes

after the class was scheduled to start I began muttering complaints about teachers who were always late, students having to be on time but teachers showing up when they pleased, etc. It always happened that several other students around me would join in and before long nearly everyone was agreeing on how inconsiderate and rude this Ziegler person must be. It was also interesting to note that there were always those who defended this unknown Ziegler person. At this point I would stand up, welcome everyone to Psychology 201, and introduce myself. Reactions ran the gamut from belly laughs to outrage, but I definitely had their attention. This then became the opportunity to introduce psychology as the logical way to study the phenomena that had just occurred. I asked students

to consider the following: the ethical issues of this little demonstration, their feelings during and after the demonstration, the wide range of responses in the class, and possible explanations for the fact that so many people in the class reacted differently. I have found this to be one of the most effective teaching tools I have ever used in that I could demonstrate important psychological concepts in such a way as to make them personally relevant to the student. For anyone who might consider using this technique, I have to mention that it will only work for a short time since students put the word out quickly. By the third quarter most of the students had heard about what to expect and I then had to come up with something else to capture their attention and imagination.



THE TEACHER AS ROLE MODEL

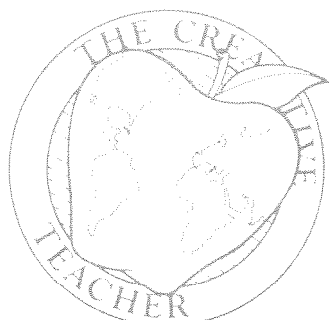
Paula P. Yow

Associate Professor of English

I think that often the most poignant and meaningful teaching occurs when we “teach by example,” or as modern jargon would have it, “model behavior” for our students.

Last Spring Quarter and again this Fall Quarter I have returned from conferences and “presented” papers to my students that I presented at the conference. Returning in the spring from an Anne Tyler seminar, I read a paper on archetypes in Anne Tyler’s fiction to an English 102 class that had analyzed and written about a Tyler story. They seemed delighted to know that their teacher did exactly what she asked them to do: read and write about literature. One young woman even borrowed the paper to study my style. Several took issue with points I made in the paper, and they all wanted to know more about the conference, about the fact that another writer, Doris Betts, whose work we had read, was there in person talking about one of her favorite writers, Anne Tyler. I think the resentment that comes sometimes with “my professor is away at another conference” dissipated because I told them what the experience was like and made them part of it.

In another English 101 class, I read a paper about how I reconciled my roles as teacher, critic, and politician, and since I based a portion of the essay on the thematic content of their course, the students were both pleased and intrigued by the planning that went into careful selection and arrangement of course material for them. They realized, too, that I took them and the class seriously enough to talk about their class and their work to other professors from other colleges and universities.



KNOWING ONE ANOTHER

Frank Pintozzi

Associate Professor of
Developmental Studies

One of the dilemmas I face at the start of each quarter is learning my students’ names. As a teacher, I believe a name affirms a student’s unique identity, builds a sense of community, and, in turn, facilitates learning. In addition, students should become better acquainted since they will also learn from each other.

Over the years, I have devised a simple, enjoyable activity for students to become acquainted. Where I found it I can’t now remember, and I have modi-

fied this technique periodically. Basically, I ask all of my students to take out paper and a pen or pencil for recording what they hear. Beginning at either side of the room, I ask the first student to tell the class his/her name and a unique fact about himself/herself. Students choose such things as a job, favorite food, clothes, hobby, music, school subject, etc. The choices are endless, and the more varied the facts are, the easier for all to remember them.

The second student repeats what the first student said and then mentions his/her name and a unique fact. The third student repeats the information about the first and second students and then adds his/her own name and fact. This procedure continues until the last student who now must recall each of the previous students’ names and facts. On occasion, students have even asked me to recall this information. I found out I could do it too!

At first, students may doubt they can complete such a herculean task, but they soon realize it is much easier than it appears. This activity is also fun and instructive, for it not only fosters fellowship in the classroom, but it also supplies the ingredients for successful learning—written repetition of information, recitation, visualizing relationships, and review. I use this activity in many of my classes, and students respond favorably.