THE SPACEBAR

Writing Workshop Newsletter

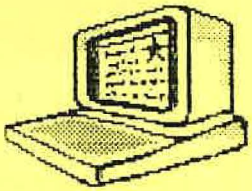
WHAT? The Writing Workshop

WHERE? 306 Buttrick

WHO? Director: Dr. Christine Cozzens; Tutors: Sue King, Eulalie Mellen, Anna Rawls, Michelle Roberts, Debbie Strickland, Chris Tibbetts.

WHEN? Monday-Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.

WHY? seven Computers, MicroSoft Word; HELP WITH YOUR WRITING! Come by, or call extension 6242 for an appointment.



FOR YOUR INFORMATION
-by Michelle Roberts

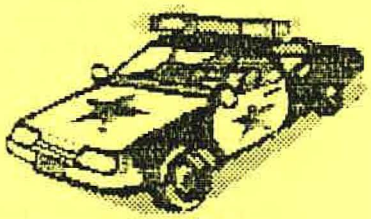
The Writing Workshop tutors will help you:
--experience collaboration
--find your own mistakes
--overcome your fear of writing papers
--strengthen the power of your prose
--realize your potential.

The Writing Workshop tutors will <u>not</u>:
--dictate your paper to you
--thoroughly edit your paper
--tease you with tales of Freshman English Terror
--guarantee A's on all papers (only your professor knows for sure!)
--intimidate you with our expertise.

We are your peers, we love to write, and we want to help you improve your writing.

WRITING ABOUT POETRY IS A VIOLENT BUSINESS
-by Debbie Strickland

We've all heard it and we've all said it: "I just can't seem to get started." (Those of you who are perfect and write your papers three weeks in advance can just skip this article and get back to your writing.) As it does a lot of students, a deadline inspires me. It inspires me to sprawl out on the sofa to eat Doritos and watch "Cheers" reruns, because I know that once I turn off the TV, throw away the empty bag, get out the floppies, and find a vacant computer terminal, a long night of violence awaits.



Violence? Why does that adjective assert itself upon me? Is that an appropriate description for a genteel, intellectual endeavor like writing? Isn't violence just a little too, well, physical? But, in preparing to write, do I not dismember literature, as I search for and isolate images, dialogue, or metrical style relevant to a thesis.

Who hasn't heard the refrain: "I like poetry, but it seems like I have to dissect it and destroy its beauty in order to write about it?" The sad news for beauty lovers is that in order to write about an image (or metaphor, or line of dialogue, etc.), we have to wrest it away from its snug home within the poem, toy with it, pick it apart, and if it doesn't suit our needs, cast it aside, abused and broken.

(cont'd, page 2)

VIOLENT BUSINESS (cont.)

Once I've gathered up all the relevant pieces of the poem, it's time to do battle against the many obstacles that lie between my cozy room and chilling machinery of the computer center--obstacles on the quad like carefree, chit-chatting friends (whose papers aren't due 'til next week), obstacles in the library like carefree, chit-chatting reference desk clerks, obstacles in the library basement like carefree, chit-chatting newspaper readers, and of course, in the computer room itself, all the carefree, chit-chatting persons who are "taking a break" from writing their papers.

Now that I'm settled at a station, the real challenge begins: reassembling all those shards of poetry into something whole and coherent, my paper. I've mobilized my paper writing arsenal: a grammar handbook, thesaurus, criticism, diskettes. Now I'm ready to attack that blank screen, to pelt it with words until it succumbs and cries out "Enough already! You're five pages over the limit as it is!" I pounce on the keyboard with ferocious fingers and after about the first thirty seconds gaze wide eyed with wonder at my accomplishment, a title page!

Hmm, I think it's about time for a break. I turn around and chit-chat with anyone handy. Thirty minutes later, rejuvenated, I return, fire off an introduction, and notice how thirsty I am. I take a break.

This cycle of advance and retreat continues late into the night, until weary and scarred, I moan to the screen "To hell with this. You win. I'm tired."

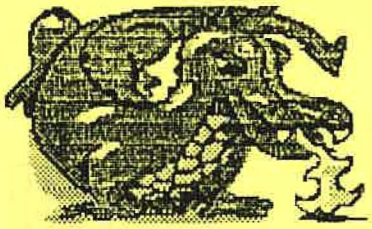
"Enough already! You're five pages over the limit as it is!" it replies.

WRITING AND RTCs
-by Sue King

Everybody knows the blank page can throw even experienced writers off balance. For a woman returning to college after umpteen years of various balancing acts, the first writing project can set her mind reeling. She swings back and forth from enthusiasm to anxiety with sometimes alarming jerks. Ideas spin by before they can be captured. The question seems to be: "I think I know what I want to say, but how can I say it?

Were I to have a one word answer, it would be "WRITE!" Think of yourself as a dancer. What you need to do is to step out onto the dance floor and begin to move, wherever you are. Try not to be intimidated by blank spaces or whirling thoughts. Ideas reach a state of equilibrium or sort themselves out as one keeps on writing. Coherence, even clarity, come with practice, just as the ballerina by practicing focusing on a point can retain her balance through many spins.

Thesis statements frequently do not (at least for me) leap gracefully onto the page, poised and in perfect form. Often I don't know what I want to say until I've started saying it. Then all I need to do is figure out a strategy for including the main points that have spun out of the first draft, as if choreographing the movements for the dance.



BANISHED!!!
-by Eulalie Mellen

It LURKS in the newsroom, BEFOULS the nation's teleprompters! It INVADES dark corners of the campus! It CREEPS insidiously into our speech, our writing!! Oh, NO! GET BACK!! AAAAA-A-A!! It's JARGON, DOUBLESPEAK, GOBBLEDEGOOK!

Prepare NOW to fight this "despeakable" beast! BANISH those cloudy, foggy phrases that have been dragged from the swamps of speciousness.

- Why say "That is not a viable alternative which we can implement" when what you mean is "We don't want to do it and think you have a crazy idea here?"
- "Vertical Access Device" is Pentagon for "Elevator."
- In Business Conference, "conceptualize" means "think up."

Think about what you really mean and have the courage to express it originally, appropriately, and effectively.

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BANISHED (cont'd)

Start TODAY! Drop a mindless phrase from your lexicon; we'll take it in nomination for BANISHMENT in one of four categories:

QUARANTINE
SIX MONTH EMBARGO
ONE YEAR PROBATION BANISHMENT
THE WORD SCOURGE OF THE 80'S.

TEACHING CHILDREN TO WRITE
BY ANNA RAWLS

As a writing tutor and prospective teacher, I am very interested in discovering new ways to teach writing to elementary school children. One of my favorite ways is to have children write about their own experiences. One child may choose to write about caring for pets, another about eating favorite foods, and another about playing with best friends. While this approach is effective because it allows children to write about things that have meaning for them, it is not as exciting as a newer approach that I have recently discovered. This approach incorporates art with writing and encourages children to be very imaginative. Using clay, rice, pine cones, and seeds, the children construct a village for some imaginary creatures.

This village, throughout the entire process, provides terrific writing topics. Children can have a wonderful time writing stories about the creatures that live in their village. One child may write about how the villagers solve a problem, another may write about the history of the village, and another may write about the life of an individual resident. This approach provides an exciting way for children to write about things that seem relevant to them.

I'VE CHANGED
by Chris Tibbetts

I used to be scared of all machines--especially computers. The glowing print, beeps, hums, and jargon commands terrified me! But, under the gentle prodding and guidance of the esteemed Dr. Cozzens, I have been converted. You too, can overcome your phobia and join the ranks of the computer literate. Just note the advantages word processing has over typing:

- it's quieter
- it helps you avoid last-minute work (no more hacking away at 4 a.m. Buttrick and the library close before midnight)
- papers look nicer--no more eraser and white-out marks.
- seeing your work displayed in print helps you to notice mistakes earlier.
- saves time--you type and compose simultaneously

So, if you have been wanting to make the jump from ribbon to disk, but have been too afraid to try, take heart! If I could do it, so can you. Come and see us in the Writing Workshop (before midterm papers are due!).

A WHALE OF A SUGGESTION

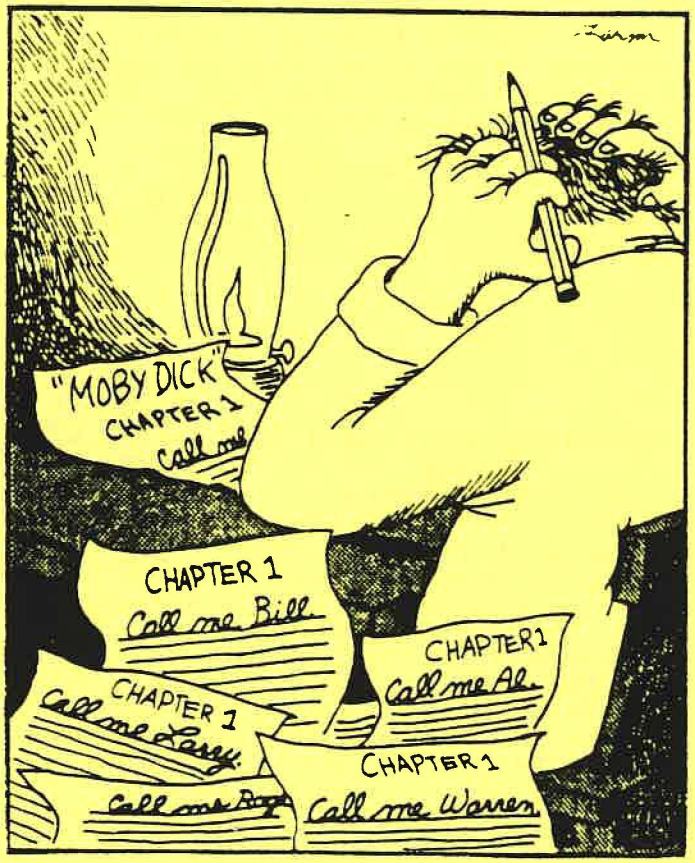
by Christine Cozzens

The verb is often the most powerful word in the sentence because it can contain the meaning of the whole idea in one word. That's why English teachers and other prehistoric animals get so worked up over a paper that uses "is" or "are" as the main verb in every sentence. "Is" simply connects one thing with another but doesn't tell much about that connection.

For example, consider the first sentence of Herman Melville's novel Moby Dick, "Call me Ishmael." What if Melville had written "My name is Ishmael" instead? "Call me" establishes a certain familiarity between reader and narrator. It also suggests that "Ishmael" might really be named "Kenneth" or "Dwayne," but that the narrator wants you to call him Ishmael for certain obscure reasons of his own.

But, you may say, "Call me Ishmael" means something quite different from "My name is Ishmael." True, and that is my point. By choosing a more interesting verb (and in this case, changing it to the imperative), the author has created a more specific, more loaded meaning. He has introduced mystery and personality into the simple act of naming.

Good writing, strong writing, makes choices like these that create rather than dilute meaning. Word choice--particularly verb choice--takes you further into thought and forces you to choose among any number of possible meanings. The right choices will make your sentences as memorable as Melville's.



Guess Who?
ask at the Writing Worksh