

# Plan for grade norming workshop

## English 101 New Teacher Orientation, Spring 2003

### Objectives:

- New Teachers will be able to identify the relative quality of writing samples against the Freshman Writing grading standards.
- Teachers will gain exposure to a range of student writing samples for the encomium assignment in order to anticipate common problems as they enter the classroom.
- Teachers will have three samples to comment upon for the forthcoming commenting workshop.

### Materials: 12 sample papers, in the following order:

G	The Simpsons	F	M	Clara Barton	D
H	Rohan Mahdevan	C	N	The Cosby Show (1)	C
I	West Milford	A	O	Newark, DE	B+
J	Joe Smith	F	P	Titanic	F
K	Kevin Spellman	D	Q	Bill Clinton	C+
L	Madeline Albright	B	R	The Cosby Show (2)	A-

### Procedures:

1. Introduce the Grading Standards in the IAW. Have teachers read them over one more time, and instruct them to keep the standards open.
2. Introduce the sample papers, and explain format

### ROUND 1:

- Briefly Introduce Papers G, H, & I as place holders for an F paper, a C paper, and an A paper.
- Give teachers 5-10 minutes to read through them in a cursory fashion, and instruct them to briefly apply them to the grading standards in front of them.
- Quickly summarize the salient features of the three papers:
  - **Paper G: The Simpsons:** While the paper is on assignment, there is certainly some evidence, and the grammar is often better-than-average, this paper is the definition of category 3 of the F Paper, since the organizational structure makes “Haphazard and arbitrary” seem euphemistic. Note that the F designation is an and/or grade, while other categories are more holistically determined.
  - **Paper H:** This encomium of **Rohan Mahadevan** (not the author) is a solid **C**. It has a fairly good sense of audience, with topics of praise chosen appropriately throughout. Each claim is supported with some evidence, although this evidence is typically surface evidence and is rarely developed into fully realized paragraphs, or paragraphs that might combine to make one well-developed point are divided for little apparent reason. Examples throughout are often given only cursory treatment. Sentence structure is adequate, but unsophisticated.
  - **Paper I:** This encomium of West Milford, an example of last semester’s common “encomium of a place,” is about as good an encomium as you are likely to receive, although it is by no means a perfect paper. Nonetheless, the paper is very aware of the values of its audience, it uses a lot of specific evidence, and follows a nice, clear organizational structure. Finally, the prose, while not far beyond the level of a typical 18-year old, features the occasional stylistic flourish that shows an awareness of schema.
- After summaries have been read, have teachers break into groups with coordinators and discuss any questions about how the papers match up to the standards.

## ROUND 2

- Briefly Introduce Papers J, K, & L as place holders for an F paper, a C paper, and an A paper.
- Give teachers 5-10 minutes to read through them in a cursory fashion, and instruct them to briefly apply them to the grading standards in front of them.
- Quickly summarize the salient features of the three papers:
  - **Paper J:** This encomium of Joe Smith, like that of Mr. Mahadevan last round, is the sort of paper that your version of the Encomium will produce. Unlike the earlier example, though, this one is unlikely to earn a passing grade. While we have given it an F, it is a good example of the fine line between F and D. Its sense of audience is quite poor, choosing to rely on almost entirely irrelevant evidence. In this case, these sound like features of a D paper, but here it is a question of degrees: the almost complete absence of evidence likely to convince an admissions officer helps us determine the grade. What puts this paper over the top, though, is that the length is already short, and when coupled with the slightly expanded margins and font size, “Joe Smith” seems an unlikely candidate for college.
  - **Paper K:** This encomium of Kevin Spellman earned a **D**. Its biggest problem is a very confused sense of audience, which, in a feat of rhetorical gymnastics, imagines the author also as the primary audience, and there’s an athletic director in here somewhere. The introduction and thesis statement are scant at best. The paragraphs have some sense of order to them, but they are remarkably monochromatic in their evidence, repeating statistic after statistic, and transitions between ideas are difficult to discern. Evidence about academics, for example, appears a couple of times, but never in a paragraph devoted to academic prowess (which the audience might appreciate). Proofreading problems dot the landscape, with tense shifts plaguing the paper throughout.
  - **Paper L:** This encomium of Madeleine Albright earns a **B**, but would be more successful with a different audience. While the paper establishes the Nobel Peace Prize as its exigence (as was assigned) only a small portion of the paper addresses her efforts for peace, and the grounds for praise relied upon throughout instead suggest an audience more like some organization’s “Woman of the Year” award. Nonetheless, evidence is detailed and persuasive, and while the author may rely on “the resume” approach a bit heavily, this approach seems appropriate for the schema. The introduction and conclusion are clear and well-suited stylistically for the audience, and the expression is proficient.
- After summaries have been read, have teachers break into groups with coordinators and discuss any questions about how the papers match up to the standards.

## ROUND 3

- Briefly Introduce Papers M, N, & O and note that the group contains D, a C and a B+. Do not identify which paper is which
- Give teachers 5-10 minutes to read through them in a cursory fashion, and instruct them to briefly apply them to the grading standards in front of them.
- In a show of hands, have new teachers identify the grade of each paper.
- Quickly summarize the salient features of the three papers:
  - **Paper M:** While we might note the irony of calling the founder of the Red Cross a “Heroin”, this student doesn’t which indicates one of the reasons why this paper earns a D. The other major problem, one you will see often and one that can keep an encomium from even being an argument, is a reliance of biographical narrative in lieu of claims. The theses,

however, is quite clear, but is not supported by explicit claims, and moreover, features a fair amount of evidence that doesn't necessarily support and argument of praise.

- **Paper N:** We believe this paper on

The Cosby Show to be a fairly prototypical C. It has an adequate, if broad, thesis. It features three solid claims, with evidence that occasionally sounds like summary and is often merely adequate in supporting the broad claims. The audience is addressed, although often in an odd third-person manner. The introduction is sprawling and the insistence on naming actors for every reference to a character suggests some effort to reach a page limit. Organizational structure is fine, although paragraph development seems as much by sheer accumulation as it is by any linear development. The writing (aside from the atrocious opening sentence) is also sufficient, although errors pepper the paper.

- **Paper O:** This Encomium of Newark, Delaware is quite solid. The audience is well-established and its appeals are consistent with that audience. The thesis is solid and so is the arrangement. The paper occasionally loses track of its argument by not always featuring clear topic sentences, and the introduction could be a bit more forceful. Nonetheless, this is a workmanlike encomium that does almost all that it needs to do.

- Break into groups and discuss

#### ROUND 4

- Briefly Introduce Papers P, Q, & R. Do not identify any of the grades.
- Give teachers 5-10 minutes to read through them in a cursory fashion, and instruct them to briefly apply them to the grading standards in front of them.
- In a show of hands, have new teachers identify the grade of each paper.
- Quickly summarize the salient features of the three papers:
  - **Paper P:** This paper fails because it relies entirely too much on straightforward description, and less on contextualizing the evidence for its audience, which is certainly well beyond the level of this paper. The introduction has very little to do with the rest of the paper, and the actual thesis doesn't really appear until the final page. In short, this paper needs work.
  - **Paper Q:** We felt that this encomium of Bill Clinton as a Nobel recipient is a C+. The paper is satisfactorily written, and a thesis, if a bit underwhelming, is evident. This thesis is supported with some fairly solid claims, and is about half of the time sufficiently developed with adequate evidence. Several paragraphs are not developed with enough evidence, and the paragraph breaks often seem random. Some paragraphs read more as historical survey than argument, and finally, the bit about the skeletons in his closet seem inappropriate for this audience, even if they are trying to do some apology work. Writing style is solid but relies on simple sentence construction.
  - **Paper R:** This second entry on The Cosby Show will demonstrate why the first one is less-than successful. Its sense of audience is remarkably specific, and features a very nice sense of exigence. It's thesis, supporting claims, and evidence are laid out in a clear fashion and uses personal experience in a refreshing manner. The only major drawback is that occasional proofing errors and awkward phrase crop up, thus mitigating what is otherwise a lovely encomium.
- Break into groups to discuss.
- Wrap exercise by pointing out the final three papers as material for commenting workshop. Point new teachers to commenting tactics in Teacher's Manual and instruct to add both end comments and margin comments to all three papers. Allot about 3 hours to do so at this phase.