



A NEWSLETTER for educators in Canada interested in writing and reading / theory and practice. Issue #1. October 1982.

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This newsletter is offered to all educators in Canada interested in the processes and pedagogies of writing and reading. As a forum whose primary objective is to intensify the relationship between theory and practice, it will serve both informative and polemical functions.

The editor assumes, first, that the readers of this newsletter seek to understand better the ways language (especially written language) is acquired, processed, and used; second, that a primary motive for acquiring that understanding is to bring it to bear to improve the teaching of writing and reading; and third, that those who read (and contribute to) this newsletter are interested, more specifically, in such matters as these:

research into language-use processes, especially writing and reading;

theories of reading and theories of composing;

the history, nature, and uses of rhetoric;

discourse theory, discourse structure, discourse analysis, discourse processes;

cross disciplinary approaches to studying the nature, acquisition, and uses of language and language processes--as, e.g., contributions from linguistics, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, text linguistics, anthropology, philosophy (as, e.g., Speech Act Theory, Ordinary Language philosophy, semiotics), artificial intelligence, cognitive psychology, applied psychology, developmental psychology, and so on and on;

theories of, and research into, the processes of reading literature (as, e.g., reader-response [affective] criticism and its theoretical underpinnings);

the roles of language in learning and knowing.

In other words--those this time of Chris Bullock of the University of Alberta--the subscribers to this newsletter will be "interested in approaching writing and reading and literacy as serious subjects of interest in their own right, not just as 'problems' or fodder for testing or objects of administrative technique". They will not "only want to hear pep talks or find out classroom techniques" (Mike Moore of Sir Wilfrid Laurier University). They will not give credence to pedagogical practices not soundly and explicitly grounded in the best of research and theory.

This newsletter has been a long time coming. Russ Hunt (whose primary interest is in reading) and I (whose primary interest is in writing) started talking about its possibility some three or four years ago, after having attended and participated in several conferences in the States. What happened was that the more we got caught up in the energy of the "revolution" going on there in the fields of writing and reading / theory and pedagogy, the more we became aware--and frustrated--that the heat of that revolution was doing little to raise theoretical and pedagogical temperatures here in our Great White Academy. As members of an English Department in a Canadian university, interested in writing and reading and the teaching of both, we felt cut off from the advances being made in theory and practice in the States, England, and Australia--primarily because our two major professional journals, A.C.U.T.E.'s English Studies in Canada and C.C.T.E.'s English Quarterly, were (for whatever reasons) not actively engaged in seeking the changes that seemed to us to be needed. Because the only way we could find out what our colleagues in other Canadian colleges and universities were thinking and doing was to talk with them at American conferences, we saw the need for a Canadian print forum that would allow us to exchange information and ideas more efficiently and less expensively.

Ironically and symptomatically, matters began coming to a head last March in San Francisco, when a group of us again wished aloud that we could communicate with one another by some means that did not involve crossing international borders. The actual decision to launch the project was reached in July when seven conferees making up a "Canadian Caucus" at the Wyoming Conference on Freshman and Sophomore English gathered around a picnic table to talk about what might be done. Their names: Chris Bullock (Alberta), Anne Greenwood (U.B.C.), Russ Hunt (S.T.U.), David Reiter (Cariboo College), Jim Reither (S.T.U.), Susan Stevenson (U.B.C.), and Kay Stewart (Grant MacEwan Community College). Following that meeting, Russ and I sent out a letter, asking people for suggestions and for names of people who might be interested in joining such an enterprise. The response was, I think, extraordinarily gratifying--and, again, symptomatic: This newsletter is being sent to more than eighty educators in Canada.

The next step, as I see it, is to continue efforts to reach all those in Canada who might share our interests. I therefore ask you to contact others you think might wish to participate, make copies of this newsletter and pass them on, and send me names and addresses of people you can't directly reach. You may well be one whose name was suggested by someone else. If you were, and you are in fact interested, I'd like to know that. (Also, please check to see that I have your correct name and address, and send along any address corrections that need making.)

Since this is a newsletter--and a fledgling at that--please also send your suggestions regarding matters you would like to see addressed, announcements you would like to see made, areas you would like to see covered, features you would like to see included. Here are some possibilities I will work on:

I intend to compile, with your aid, some lists--of people with expertise who can serve as consultants; of journals that address knowledge, theories, ideas, issues vital to us; of conferences worth attending; of foundational books, articles and studies; and so on. (See page 5, below, for a beginning to this project.)

If you will write some of them, I will publish reviews of and guides to key items on those lists: Who are the really valuable consultants? What can we expect to find in which journals? Which conferences should we attend? Which books and articles should we read to help us ground ourselves in the best in current theory and practice? (Russ, on sabbatical leave this year, studying at Indiana University, has promised a "quick review" of several "energizing articles" he has come across in the last couple of months. I urge you to write to me to offer your own reviews of and guides to these things.)

You can expect announcements of all kinds--of books and articles forthcoming, if I'm told of them; of issues of journals that might have special relevance to our interests; of conferences and meetings; and so on. (Send your announcements.)

I solicit and will publish descriptions of writing and reading programmes currently in operation or being proposed or implemented in Canada--or elsewhere, if their relevance is clear. What problems are they trying to solve? How are they solving them? What theoretical contexts govern their design? (Would anyone out there like to put together an appropriate questionnaire?)

In the long run, this newsletter may well self-destruct: What we need is a journal, really, but it might take a

year or two to get one going. (What are your ideas for a journal?)

In the meantime, perhaps this newsletter can help to provoke meetings and conferences that will allow us to address these matters from a Canadian perspective and in a Canadian context.

The list could go on, but I think it's time you had a chance to send your lists. Write. Send information, ideas, items to publish. Let's get this newsletter into its running shoes.

For the time being, I'll send a copy of this newsletter to anyone whose name I receive. Sometime before the end of the year, however, I'll be asking you to send me a few dollars to help defray the costs of producing and mailing it. A month or so later I'll firm up (and publish) a list of subscribers.

PROVINCIAL CORRESPONDENTS: If you would like to be one, drop me a line.

COHORT REPORTS: Nan Johnson (U.B.C.) reports that (1) The English Quarterly, according to Tom MacNeill (one of EQ's new editors), is looking for more submissions relating to college/university issues; and (2) the co-chairs for both COTE 1983 (Montreal) and COTE 1984 (Fredericton) are "interested in receiving suggestions for themes, topics, speakers, etc., relevant to post-secondary interests". Space will allow only three addresses:

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Nan believes that the more suggestions that come from our quarter, the better. I agree, and offer this newsletter as a clearinghouse

for such proposals. Sit down, write them out, and send them.

Aviva Freedman (Acting Chair, Linguistics, Carleton) has arranged and will chair a "Canadian Caucus" session at the 4 C's in Detroit (17-19 March 1983). She intends to make it an open, plenary-sort of session. All readers of this newsletter are invited to attend.

Aviva has also promised information regarding the possibility of a "post-secondary" stream at CCTE 1983, Montreal. I'll publish that information in the next issue.

LET'S-HAVE-AN-END-TO-UNWIELDY-TITLES CONTEST: I'll send a set of six--no, make it eight--coasters (advertising an assortment of genuine German beers and stolen from genuine Gasthausen all over West Germany) and a brand new disposable EIC razor to the person who suggests the best title for this newsletter.

CONSULTANTS: As a first project for this newsletter, I'd like to compile a list of educators in Canada who are sufficiently expert in matters of theory or practice that they can offer their services as consultants. If you have that kind of expertise, please send me your name, address, and a list of topics (the more precisely defined, the better) on which you are sufficiently expert to act as a consultant. Alternatively, recommend someone else, providing me with the same information.

NAME -----

ADDRESS -----

AREAS OF EXPERTISE (e.g., evaluation, course design, the writing or reading process, etc.)

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