

Evaluating
Student
Themes

by

Ednah Shepard Thomas

THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN PRESS

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Foreword to the Teacher

This pamphlet is not designed to cut your working week to thirty-six effortless hours. All worth-while work requires time and energy, and our work is worth-while. Yet time and energy may be expended in ways more or less fruitful, and it is hoped that this pamphlet may help in establishing a sense of direction for teachers to whom teaching itself, or some of the procedures here illustrated, may be new.

The themes which follow are the work of college freshmen, and the tone of the comments on the themes is therefore relatively mature. Yet it is hoped that teachers in both senior and junior high schools may find here something interesting and provocative, for surely the same principles underlie the teaching of composition at any age level. The older the student, the more sustained will be his efforts. The younger the student, the more quickly he will tire, and his interest should not be killed by too heavy assignments or an incomprehensible terminology. Every teacher knows his own students and how to reach them. None of us would confuse a seventh grader with a discussion of the Aristotelian abstraction of unity; but if we point out that his trip to see the kangaroos at the zoo does not belong in the theme which is intended to give his reader a clear picture of his dog, we are establishing in his mind a concept that will serve him well when, later, he writes a research paper.

Ideally, let us conceive of the writing process as consisting of three parts: preparation, realization, and follow-through. In all three, both teacher and student are actively concerned, united in a common interest in and respect for the student's work. The assignment should be related both to the student's own experience and to class material, so that he is always conscious that writing helps him to synthesize and control new factors which daily and hourly demand control. The assignment should be given well in

Foreword to the Teacher

advance, and the purpose clearly stated—to increase his factual knowledge about the UN, for example, or to increase his proficiency in writing conversation. He should have a chance to ask questions, and he should understand thoroughly what he is about to do. He should realize he is expected to think before he writes, to write a first draft, to revise, and to make a final fair copy. His paper will represent his best efforts. The teacher will return the paper promptly, not only with the usual marginal notations of “sp” and “pn,” but also with a terminal comment, which represents his best efforts. The teacher does not edit. His primary concern is not this particular paper as an end in itself but the development of writing skill for the student’s use all his life. Accordingly, the teacher makes marginal notes, underlining the trouble spots, and writes a terminal comment. His aim is not to do the work himself but to stimulate and guide the student to assume responsibility for doing it. The follow-through provides evidence that the student has done so: corrections are made according to the teacher’s directions. These should be made on a separate sheet, for ease of comparison, never on the original version. The directions should not be over-exacting. “Rewrite,” at any age, has a disheartening effect. Human nature being what it is, corrections had best be required for specific errors like spelling or sentence structure and general comments be applied to the next theme. The teacher checks these corrections, completing the cycle which he began.

This ideal process is time-consuming. After habits are established, indeed, some parts are very much speeded up. In the writer’s experience, the first time or two of checking corrections means a word, perhaps before or after class, with half or two-thirds of the students. Thereafter, however, the students themselves assume so much responsibility that the check-up becomes a matter of a few moments when the themes are handed back revised. Still, the process is inevitably time-consuming. Most time-consuming of all is the writing of the terminal comment.

Yet the terminal comment is the teacher’s most important contribution. It is the opportunity to give the student the sense of his work as a whole. In our complex craft, where the whole is more than equal to the sum of the parts, perhaps our most difficult problem is to reconcile care

Foreword to the Teacher

for detail with the concept of the whole. We walk a tightrope. On one hand we must not slight accuracy, precision, mastery of detail; on the other we must not allow our students to believe that these matters are ends in themselves instead of means to a larger end. The marginal notations familiar to us all deal with the first problem. The terminal comment, which emphasizes, subordinates, and interprets the marginal notations, deals with the second.

The tone of the terminal comment is as important as its content. It is the part of the teacher to recognize strength as well as weakness. (The term "evaluating" is used in the title of this pamphlet since too often "criticizing" means what it did to the practice teacher who handed back her first theme to her supervisor with the statement, "I can't find anything wrong.") Success and failure are always partial. We may be equally thankful that our least gifted student has not totally failed, since he got some words down on paper, and that our most gifted student, unlike Alexander, will never get to the end of the worlds he has to conquer. In our comment, we may seriously, courteously, and tactfully indicate the degree of progress. Browning's duke admitted that he had not the skill in speech to say, "Just this / Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss, / Or there exceed the mark." But in addition to his other deficiencies, he was no teacher. We are all semanticists enough to write, "You can strengthen that sentence" instead of, "That sentence is flabby and weak." No student should be left without hope and no student should be left without challenge; and each should receive a specific comment which will put him in the frame of mind to write a better theme—next time.

The terminal comments on the student themes in this pamphlet will at once strike you as impossibly long. They are. First, this description is admittedly that of the ideal process, and everyone knows the distance between the ideal and the real. Second, a published pamphlet of course represents a great deal of time and discussion. Nevertheless, although few or none of us would have time or opportunity often to carry out as fully as is done here the principles just discussed, the fundamental approach, it is believed, is sound. If we show the student that we respect his work, are interested in it as a whole, and expect him to take the main responsibility for improving it, he is most likely to take the same attitude.

Foreword to the Teacher

Virginia Woolf points out the responsibility and importance of the reader who judges books "with great sympathy and yet with great severity." Does not this apply also to us? Our severity, sympathetically expressed, takes the form of assuming that the student will do the best work of which he is capable. Our sympathy, severely accompanied by recognition of the truth that any discipline requires care and pains, takes the form of realizing that the student is an individual, different from his teacher, with problems, weaknesses, and strengths of his own. We express both severity and sympathy by our interest in and respect for his work.

To illustrate the principles discussed here, this pamphlet presents and evaluates fourteen themes by University of Wisconsin freshmen. The themes (impromptus) were written in approximately fifty minutes on this assignment: "Suppose that your high school paper has asked you to write an article, giving, on the basis of your semester's experience at the University, the best advice you can to prospective students. (Since this is to be a published article, the tone should be suitable for teachers and parents as well as for students.) Write such an article." Impromptu themes are used because of practical considerations in collecting material. The ideal writing process has already been described; a student writing an impromptu uses under pressure the writing habits already developed.

It is our policy in Freshman English at the University of Wisconsin to give a grade report at stated intervals but no grade on individual themes. Experience has shown that a student looks at the grade only, and not at the comment. For purposes of discussion, however, the themes have been divided into three groups: Themes of Unsatisfactory Quality, Middle Quality, and Superior Quality. Brief headnotes to each group give the reasons for placement.

Since marginal notation is generally familiar, none is included here. The omission has the disadvantage of rendering the terminal comments longer than they would otherwise have been, but the advantage, it is hoped, of leaving a freer hand to the teacher who may care to make use of the themes for exercises with classroom students or practice teachers.

Madison, Wisconsin
March, 1955

E. S. T.

Contents

<i>Foreword to the Teacher</i>	iii
1 Themes of Unsatisfactory Quality	1
2 Themes of Middle Quality	9
3 Themes of Superior Quality	30

Group 1

Themes of Unsatisfactory Quality

The reasons for placing these themes in the unsatisfactory category are almost too obvious to need comment: lack of logic and connection; lack of elementary sentence sense; careless and illiterate spelling of common words; lack of knowledge of elementary points of mechanics, such as the formation of plurals of words ending in y and the position of the apostrophe in contractions. Mistakes of the latter sort, as we all know, will appear in the best writing, especially if it is impromptu. But an occasional error missed in hasty proofreading is quite a different thing from an accumulation such as we see here, in combination, moreover, with lack of control of the material as a whole. Theme 3 is clearly superior to the other two; and in all three there are signs that the students are capable of better work. In university courses, as in real life, promise is an encouraging factor; but when it comes to a grade, what counts is performance.

Theme 1

SO YOUR GOING TO THE UNIV.

High School was really fun wasn't it? As you look back on the years mostly the good things are remembered. Your college days can also be enjoyable if you work for them. 1

Wisconsin is known to be a difficult school. One of the main reasons for this is the constant

2 run of interferences. The activities of the campus are equally important to you.

3 School begins with a "bang" and every thing is thrown at you at once. Take your time & think things out. Make sure to visit your advisor as much as you think is needed. That's what advisors are for. After your program has been completed go home and make a time sheet. This is very important because you want to put your time to best advantage. The first thing you will learn is to have a time and place for everything. Don't try to mix studying with recreation.

4 Some of your friends might have told you to take such and such a course because it is a "snap", believe me their aren't such courses offered. You are going to get the grade that is coming to you.

5 The University is large and competition is very keen. Many students from other countries and states are here on scholarship. You will be competing with some very intelligent people. If an assignment is due Monday at 7:45 have it there on time. As far as cutting a class, your only cheating yourself. Your instructors aren't going to run after you to see you are always there. In the end you are the one that loses out.

6 Remember to put forth your greatest effort, and four years from now you can look back on a happy college career.

COMMENT

There is a good attempt to make this a whole, in the connection between paragraphs 1 and 6. Unfortunately, there are many gaps in connection within the theme.

Paragraph 2 makes no sense; there is actual contradiction between sentences 2 and 3. You say the activities are equally important, but you don't say with what, and at the end of sentence 2 your reader has the impression you are warning him against letting anything interfere with his work. (Run of interferences does not say clearly what you want to say.) Paragraph 3 in general deals with one topic, the importance of a time schedule. This idea would be emphasized for the reader if you ended with the next to the last sentence; the last apparently belongs back in paragraph 2 anyway. Paragraph 4 lacks connection between its two sentences, and is a scrappy little undeveloped idea. It is hard to see what your central idea is in paragraph 5.

In addition to this jumbling of ideas in most of your paragraphs, the paper has some very bad mechanical mistakes. In paragraph 4 you have run two independent clauses together, a very elementary mistake. (This subject has been repeatedly stressed in the course. See pp. — in your text.) Moreover, any reader seeing your for you're (twice), their for there, instructor, thats', carrer, scholarhip, progam (pronounce the last three) would be forced to conclude you were badly trained, unobservant, and careless. You certainly do not want to produce that impression.

In your next paper, plan your main points carefully, and be sure that each is fully developed in a paragraph of its own. When you revise, read your paper carefully aloud, twice: once for connection from sentence to sentence, and once for mechanical errors.

Theme 2

AT THE U.

The University is a tough place, on the feet as well as the mind, so my first bit of advise

1 is, get two pair of solid shoes and run around the block twenty times every day. When you are physically set learn how to stand in line for everything you do. Learn how to live with out getting a good night's slept, and you will be ready for the first and least important part of University life.

2 Many students come get good grades without studying as much as the average student, don't place your self into that group until you have tried at least a semester. Don't let your daily work slip, always keep up to date on the assignments.

3 Try to have a goal that you want to achieve, by this I mean have a idea what kind of life you want after your University training is over, and start for this goal as soon as you enter. Pick your subjects wisely, if there is any doubt in your mind see your advisor or someone who knows how to handle your problem, never take a stab in the dark at subjects, you might hit one that isn't in your line and end up with a F.

4 Don't devolp and silly pastimes like playing cards, after a while it gets to be more than a pastime, your playing cards while you schould be studying and the first thing you know your grades are low. Laying in bed is all right but not for studying don't devolpe that habit. Also don't go out drinking during the week nights when you have a class the next morning, you might not feel to well, skiping classes are also a bad habit to get

into, your just hurting yourself.

Most important, know yourself, the abilities you have what you can do and what you can't. If it takes you 2 hours to learn something don't spend half the time and talk yourself in thinking you know it.

5

COMMENT

This theme is lively and interesting, and it covers a good deal of ground. Unfortunately it hasn't any sense of form. It doesn't end at all; you just stop writing as if your time had run out. Many of your sentences don't end either; you keep piling one independent clause on top of another. For example, see paragraph 2. (The subject has been repeatedly stressed in the course; see pp. — in your text.) This error is fatal. The recognition of an independent clause is essential for you to convey your information to your reader effectively and emphatically. Here your good, lively, interesting information is wasted, for when it is all run together the reader can't pick it out.

You have a great many errors in spelling, every one a barrier between your reader and you. None of them present real difficulty in themselves. How do you pronounce advise and advice? Which is the noun and which the verb? What suffix is added to what adjective in your physically? How many words is your with out? What is the difference between sleep and slept? I could go through the theme line by line, and you would give me the right answer every time. There is no excuse, then, for your making so unfavorable an impression on your reader.

One great difficulty is that you have no sense of the sound of your writing. This shows up especially at the beginning of paragraph 2, where you have omitted a word which would make the sentence make sense. In your next paper, read your theme aloud, carefully and slowly: first to make sure you have the right sentence units; a second time to catch spelling mistakes.

To for too and your for you're (paragraph 4) you will not catch by this method, but they are very elementary mistakes. Also, see your dictionary for the distinction between

lay and lie, and let me know if you need further explanation or a practice exercise.

Theme 3

LETTER TO A PROSPECTIVE STUDENT

Sir;

1 I am told that you intend to come to the University of Wisconsin for the coming semester. A fine idea. May I, who also came as a Freshman, give you some advice I wish someone had given me at this time?

2 The mistake that I made as a new student, a mistake I feel many new students will make, came during my first six weeks here. Now six weeks might seem to be a long time but when you are in a new place with work to do it is not. During this time I spent altogether too much time fixing up my room, moving in to my fraternity, again fixing up my room, going to bars, seeing old friends, making new friends, and in general not studying. When six weeks come I almost lift. If you will study at this time of the year you will be off to a good start, and a good start will mean more to you than how your room looks. Friends come and go from the University, will you?

3 Another mistake that I made was to leave work to be done to the weekful. A decided pit fall. Do all your work, night by night, for Foot ball games, frat partys, beer, and girls leave little time to study on a weekend.

[Theme 3] Themes of Unsatisfactory Quality

With these two rules in mind life here at the University should be fun. If these two rules are over looked life here will be one long strugal to get your back work done. I hope that this letter will help you to make your life up here a long one.

Thank you.

COMMENT

There is a good deal of evidence here that you could develop a really effective style. The letter form makes your theme a good unit, though the colon is the mark after the salutation (p. —), and "Thank you" would be more appropriate in a speech. It isn't necessary, either; the last paragraph has a good sense of conclusion. Paragraph 2 is your best: it is fully developed, with good specific detail (more than paragraph 3), and sentences 3, 4, and 5 are really effective. They have interesting variation in length (37, 7, and 32 words respectively), good balance and contrast, good connection between the first of 3 and the last of 5, and emphatic endings.

The last sentence in this paragraph, however, overdoes things a little, and, in addition to its doubtful structure, weakens rather than strengthens paragraph unity. The same tendency to overdo is apparent in the fragment in paragraph 3. The device might be acceptable once, as you used it in paragraph 1, but hardly in a second appearance. (See p. — in your text.)

Also, you continually spoil your effect by misspellings. Come and lift are startling. A college student should certainly know how to spell too and how to form the plural of nouns ending in -y. Apparently you are not conscious enough of syllables, and of how they combine to make words (see pp. —). You make one nonexistent word (week/ful), you put the wrong ending on strugal, and you often break a word into two pieces (in to, pit fall, Foot ball, over looked—the last two contain other errors). Douring and fraturnity you should look up for derivation; associate them with related words.

It is important for you to put in some solid and steady work on these details. With control over them, your writing would do you justice. At present, unfortunately, it does not.

Group 2

Themes of Middle Quality

The bulk of the themes in Freshman English fall in the middle category. There are many reasons and combinations of reasons for placing them there. Most of these themes represent in one way or another a compromise judgment.

They all show a certain level of mechanical competence, as is necessary if they are to be above the unsatisfactory level. They represent roughly the range from C- to C+ (work "satisfactory" by University standards). Some errors appear, but they are comparatively few and are compensated for in one way or another.

In this middle category are themes mechanically competent but colorless and dull (Theme 8); themes where the form is open to question but interesting detail is present (Theme 10); themes where the form is clear and the writing interesting but the presentation mechanical and limited (Theme 7); themes where the absence of idea is disguised from the writer himself by flowery words—perhaps one of the hardest problems an instructor has to face (Theme 5); themes too limited (Theme 4); themes too general (Theme 9). The possible combinations are limitless.

All these students are making progress—sometimes rather lopsided—toward good writing. As we try to present it to the student, good writing is not merely the absence of error; it is the presence of merit.

Theme 4

BE SMART: STAY IN A PRIVATE APARTMENT

My advice to prospective students who plan on attending the University of Wisconsin is basically

1 this: stay in a private apartment. Studying at the dorms is almost impossible because of the noise that "party-party" students make. Night after night have I tried to study while "water-fights" go on outside my room; countless nights have I felt exasperated as I have tried to sleep while "bull-sessions" go on and on in the room next to mine. Thus, green frosh, heed my advice and stay in a private apartment!

2 Studying in a private apartment is as close to being a pleasure as one can expect. In your own room, off the campus proper, long, quiet, hours reign supreme throughout the long nights. One can actually go to bed at eleven o'clock and expect to be sleeping before midnight. If a student has no early class and wants to sleep late, he can do so. He need not be troubled by the "organized confusion" and "chaotic conditions" which seem to prevail at the dormitories in the early morning hours.

3 In a private apartment one has a room that he can call his own, not simply a corner of a room which he can call his own until his two or three roommates come in, as in the case of staying at the dorms.

4 In conclusion, prospective students, if you want to study, sleep and lead a fairly normal and happy life, stay in a private apartment!

COMMENT

This theme is certainly unified. You have one central

idea, and you keep on impressing it on your reader. But I am not at all sure that you have convinced him.

Paragraph 1 gives concrete evidence of the difficulties you have experienced; and so far, you carry your reader with you. But paragraph 2 does not have the same authentic ring at all; apparently it does not give your first-hand experience. At this point all sorts of questions occur to your reader, and you provide answers for none of them. Are there no advantages at the dorm to compensate for the noise? Isn't there any reading room? Isn't there a University library? Are there no disadvantages at the apartment to compensate for the quiet? How much would one cost anyway, compared to the dorm? Is it easy to find an apartment? Would one be located conveniently near the campus? How about eating arrangements? Mightn't it be necessary to have roommates in the apartment too? In other words, your reader is interested in your first paragraph, but he feels you do not follow it up. The whole theme leaves him with the feeling that you have mentioned only one very small aspect of the question and that you have by no means given him a rounded view.

The very look of your paragraphs on the page suggests the scantiness of your treatment and the falling off at the end of the theme. Paragraphs 3 and 4 consist of single sentences each. Paragraph 4 is mere repetition; the reader cannot help feeling that repetition is a confession of a weak case.

You have little difficulty with mechanics (though you use quotation marks unnecessarily; see p. —). You are free, accordingly, to devote thought and time in your next theme to building up a full, sustained piece of writing, where each paragraph will present stronger and stronger arguments, leading up to a strong and convincing conclusion.

Theme 5

ADVICE TO POTENTIAL COLLEGE STUDENTS

The possession of mental fortitude is the first and foremost prerequisite for those who intend to board the "college steamer." You won't be thrown 7

overboard to disappear, struggling in the thrashing wake of the promised life that discarded you unless your ability to cling tightly during the stormy seasons is greater than temptations that beguile your senses of pleasure to revel in disgusting delights. Constant employment of your resistance, to those pleasures that lead you to destruction, is indispensable.

2 Secondly, you must apply your most concentrated efforts diligently and discreetly. Study regularly, cheerfully and comprehensively. Attend as many classes as possible, applying all the wits at your command to understand the varied and detailed imports of your instructed learning. An ounce of attention, and the knowledge gained thereby, may tend to develop other bits of knowledge already present in your mind. Diligent concentration plus fertile understanding equals germination of new thoughts and ideas.

3 Think of yourself with respect to your own future and the future of your community. I imagine you plan to be an integral part of human society sometime in the coming years. Imagine yourself as a part of a 1960 community and you will realize that you will have to gain greater mental strength more thorough application of your abilities and realize that you as a lone individual are pretty important after all.

COMMENT

Since you wrote this theme last week, perhaps you will

be able to look at it with detachment, as if some one else had written it. Read it over, trying very hard to do that. What, precisely, does it say?

Nothing, I am afraid, which is really clear or precise. "I imagine you plan to be an integral part of human society sometime in the coming years," for example, is a statement without point, for the only person to whom it could not apply would be someone like Robinson Crusoe, living alone on a desert island, and it is safe to assume none of us plan for that. We all know we will have to do some work which will bring us in contact with others; it is unavoidable. Look also at the second sentence in paragraph 1, which is a mixture of conflicting figures. A "promised life" can't have a "thrashing wake" nor can it discard you. What are you supposed to cling to? What "disgusting delights" could a man possibly be exposed to who had been (metaphorically) thrown overboard from a steamer? Figurative language, of course, is not supposed to be taken literally; but to be successful, it must have an essential truth, and it must have consistency; and yours has neither here.

Jacques Barzun of Columbia has done some brilliant writing attacking the "big words" which have betrayed you here. They embody, he says, "the disinclination to think." That is the real trouble here. You didn't really think precisely of anything to say. What must a student resist? The temptation to sleep late when he has a 7:45, to go out for a beer when he needs to study? What new thoughts and ideas will germinate? Information about New York, Korea, California, Norway, as he meets students from foreign countries and other states? A different view of his home town as he studies sociology or political science? A new literature as he gains proficiency in a foreign language? More understanding of physics, chemistry, geography? What are his plans for the future? To be a doctor, engineer, agronomist? How will his college education help him? (Notice the actual contradiction in your last sentence, which first speaks of him as a part of a community and then as a lone individual; can you reconcile the two?)

This theme will need to be entirely rewritten, in clear and simple language. Develop it with any concrete details you choose, but be sure that you say something specific. Make a conference appointment with me if you have any

difficulty in understanding my comment. I'd be glad to lend you the article by Barzun I referred to if you would be interested in reading it.

Theme 6

IN THE MIRE?

1 The difference between high school and college can be compared to that between night and day. High school teachers are hired to make you learn a certain subject, but college teachers are there to just present the material. There is no force applied to make you study, you are on your own. If help in a certain subject is needed, it can easily be obtained by making an appointment with your instructor. Although this help is always there, it isn't forced on you. The idea here is that if you need extra help, it's your job to come and get it.

2 Most students coming to the University of Wisconsin are not used to this freedom. For 12 years they have been under what might be termed regimented learning. Suddenly they find themselves completely on their own, with no parents or teachers nagging them to do their homework. Most students adjust to this situation readily, but many are not so fortunate. The good times at the Kollege Klub, and the numerous dances and Frat parties tend to let them let their studies slide. Soon the unfortunate student finds himself in a situation which is similar to a man being drawn down in a mire of quicksand. He doesn't realize how deep he

is in until he tries to fight his way out. Some discover their plight before they have gone to deep, and they are able to pull themselves out. Others aren't so lucky, these men and women struggle and fight but soon drop below the surface.

If you are planning to go to college, take my advice and really dig in for the first six weeks. With this kind of start you can easily walk a path ³ that takes you around the mire that claim so many.

COMMENT

You have a good fundamental idea here, but you do not present it as effectively as you could.

Look at your beginning and ending. This technique is useful in revision for making sure you have a really rounded and completed piece of work. You will see at once that here you have not. Let's go through the theme and see the difficulties.

You begin with a figure: night and day. You go on to tell what the difference is, not figuratively; but since you used a figure, your reader expects you to connect the difference with it in some way, and he is disappointed. That leaves a loose thread. The rest of the paragraph deals consistently with one idea, and paragraph 2 is very neatly connected (this freedom). Then again, a figure carries you away, and the connection between paragraphs 2 and 3 is not smooth, nor is paragraph 3 a good ending. On two counts—first because paragraph 3 does not give a satisfying ending for the whole, and second because the colloquial dig in clashes with the literary mire—you need to rewrite paragraph 3 to give a real sense of conclusion. To make a good connection with the beginning you may find it best to omit night and day. You understand I am not trying to discourage you from using figures; I am merely saying that a figure should not detract from the most important thing about any piece of writing: the concept of the whole.

You have a number of mechanical mistakes: two run-together sentences, to for too, and a mistake in agreement (last line). Also, compare sentence 1 in paragraph 1 with

sentence 6 in paragraph 2, and see what is wrong with the latter. The repetition of let is awkward in sentence 5 of paragraph 2. If you have any difficulty understanding any of these points, let me know.

Theme 7

THE ENGINEERING STUDENT

1 Everybody tells the perspective engineering student that he better reconsider his choice of his course of study because he might flunk out. I say that if a person wants to study engineering he should go right ahead and do so. This may seem to many a bold statement, but I have reasons to back it up.

2 First of all, any person who has brains enough to pass the entrance exams to this school has brains enough to learn. If these people have brains enough to learn, why do they flunk? The reason is laziness. They're just too lazy to study, or they say that they don't have time to get all of their work done. I've watched people like this; they're time wasters.

3 I take for an example my best friend, Jimmy. When he comes home from classes at 3:30, he immediately lies down and sleeps for an hour or so. Then he goes down to the den and reads the paper till 5:30. When the dinner line is the longest, Jimmy will trot over to the dinning hall to stand in line to eat and also waste more time. After dinner, he will go back to his room and horse around with his room mate till 7:00. At

this time, he breaks out the books and by 7:30 he is ready to study. Jimmy wasted a good three hours of time that he could have been studying, and then wonders why he doesn't get his work done.

The second reason for flunking out is the immature attitude of the student. Sometimes a student has planned things in advance, but suddenly an unsuspected assignment comes up. The immature student says, "What business does that professor have giving me that assignment and interfering with my social life. I just won't do it." The mature student in the same predicament looks at it this way. He says, "I didn't expect this assignment to come up and interfere with my plans. I hate to change my plans, but if the work has to be done, I'll have to do it."

These are my ideas and reasons why a student studying engineering shouldn't flunk out even though he has a lot of work to do.

COMMENT

You present a very convincing case. Any reader respects a writer who can give specific evidence for the stand he is taking. The theme is clearly organized and has a good sense of movement from beginning to end. There is no doubt that you know what you are doing all the way.

You could be just as clear and convincing, however, and perhaps a little less dogmatic and less mechanical. Paragraph 3 is very good because it is specific; but if the first sentence read "My best friend, Jimmy, is an example," there would be less stress on the I, and the reader would feel as if he were judging for himself on your evidence, rather than just being told. There is a noticeable differ-

ence in tone between paragraph 3 (horse around, breaks out the books) and paragraph 4 (immature attitude). A consistently informal tone throughout the theme would be best. Most important of all, you limit yourself in paragraphs 1 and 5 to the engineering student, but there is nothing in the theme between which wouldn't apply to any student. Your scope is larger than you realize, and there is no reason to limit it. You are giving excellent advice which would be of value to any prospective student.

You have four spelling mistakes, all of which could have been avoided if you had been conscious of the sound of the word. For each, write a sentence explaining how the difficulty arose.

Theme 8

BALANCE YOUR BUDGET

1 If I were asked to sum up in three words what I consider the proper approach to college, I would say, "Have a plan." It seems to me that far too many of our young men and women, on the threshold of life, are drifting. They not only don't know where they are going, they don't know where they want to go; they have no plan. Four years of ones life is too much time to squander, particularly with the opportunities afforded by college, and at this precious time in your life.

2 I have called this article "Balance Your Budget." By this I do not mean to indicate that you should only handle your money wisely. Balance the budget of your time and talent as well. Most of you will be making your own decisions for the first time in your lives. College affords you an excel-

lent chance to train yourself to evaluate a situation. So I would say to enter college with no preconceived ideas of what your main activities will be. If possible, leave home early enough to arrive in Madison a week before registration. This will give you time to get acquainted with the campus, which is helpful in making your schedule. The physical location of buildings will influence your budget of your time.

Enter college to learn. Not only to learn from the faculty and your books, but from experience, from life. Take part in a reasonable number of outside activities. Your Freshman term will not allow you to budget too much time away from your studies, but remember to keep that budget in balance. 3

Possibly you feel that you have no particular talent, but more than likely you have undiscovered ability. Enter college determined to develop some special ability which will distinguish you from the mass of the student body. Don't be satisfied to follow the path of the thousands of nonentities who have wasted their college years. 4

And last, keep your financial budget in balance. Have enough pride in you as a person to live within a reasonable amount. College offers a challenge, and this is a place to form the financial habits which will be yours always. Make your college years mean something to you. Balance your budget, and keep it in balance. 5

COMMENT

At first glance this seems to have a very definite organization. The repetition of "Balance Your Budget" ties it together, and at different points you discuss budgeting money, talent, and time. But the connection is more apparent than real, as a second reading shows.

First, paragraph 1 does not seem to belong. You don't get to the main point of your theme (or your unifying phrase) at all, and sentence 6 in paragraph 2 even seems to contradict this idea of having a plan. Paragraph 2 is confused. What is your one central idea? You end on the budgeting of time (also discussed in paragraph 3), but many other points are brought up. Go through paragraph 2 carefully, sentence by sentence, checking your thought connections, and then see if you don't think paragraphs 2 and 3 should be rewritten, with quite a different combination of ideas. Paragraph 4 is unified, though it would be stronger if it had specific detail. Should the student go out for band or Hoofers' or should he run for campus office? Give something concrete to interest him and let him see what the University is really like. Paragraph 5 also is unified, but does its topic deserve the place of honor, the place of greatest emphasis—that is, the end position in the theme? Of course learning to handle money is a valuable part of university experience, but the University is not the only place where that can be done. For your three points, what would be the most effective order? Decide that, and then indicate the order of arrangement of your material so that you will leave the reader with the most important point in his mind.

Paragraph 3 has an incomplete sentence. (See p. —.) The most important thing for you to work for, however, is the consistent and logical arrangement of material to show real thought connection within one convincing whole.

Theme 9**THE THREE ESSENTIALS**

I have found after spending a semester at the U. of W. that in order for a student to be success-

ful in his studies he needs three basic things: a good background, good study habits, and the ability to read rapidly and comprehensively. 1

A good background in your studies must be achieved while you are yet in high school. When you arrive at a university or college you will find that it is taken for granted that you do have a good background and the professors will begin from there. If you lack this knowledge at the beginning, you will soon find yourself lost and bewildered. As the course continues, you will become even more confused and unless you recover quickly by working exceptionally hard, you will soon find yourself at the bottom of the class. 2

A second requirement, although not quite as essential, is to have good study habits. If you know how to study rapidly and efficiently when you begin college you will find the studies much easier than someone who does not. Although you can acquire good study habits in college, it is far easier and less painful to acquire them while still in high school. 3

The third essential is actually what might be called a luxury. This is the ability to read rapidly and comprehensively. A student who can do this will find that his studying is less tedious and that he has more time for other activities. These free moments spent in relaxing are very important to a college student. Without these breaks a student would soon become exhausted and worn down until finally he could no longer concentrate. 4

If he tried to continue, he would eventually have a nervous breakdown and all his efforts would have been for nothing.

5 These essentials can be achieved with a minimum of effort while you are still in high school, but only by a maximum effort when you once begin college. So, head yourself toward a happy college life by getting these three essentials now. Remember, a good background, good study habits, and a good reading ability are the keys to success in college life.

COMMENT

This is very clearly (though rather mechanically) organized. The paragraphs all contribute their share to a good whole. (Paragraph 4 goes off the track a little, perhaps; the end needs to be more closely tied with the beginning.) But it is colorless. Your reader must make an effort to be interested in, or to remember, anything you say. The trouble is that you never give him anything concrete.

In paragraph 3, for example, you do not develop your statement about good study habits. What are they? You could make a picture for us that we could see of the right kind of light, chair, posture, desk, arrangement of materials, such as dictionary, scratch pad, lab manual. You could tell us the best times of day, the best length of time to stick at studying, which subject should be studied the last thing at night, whether it is better to study math between English and Spanish or after both of them. You could show one student getting all his work done while another smokes, bothers the student next door, gets a coke, and goes to bed with nothing done. There are countless ways you can be concrete here, as of course is also true of other activities in paragraph 4, of which we have no picture at all. In fact I think the weakness in paragraph 4 arose because you had no picture in your mind and therefore naturally could not give us one. Use concrete illustration as freely and as fully as you possibly can. It will make your writing more than

merely acceptable. It will make your writing vivid, interesting, and a real pleasure to read.

Your punctuation is not as consistent as it should be. Most of the time you set off by a comma an introductory dependent clause, a good practice because it shows the relationship of sentence parts and prevents confusion. But you do not always do so. Consistency is essential in punctuation, for the reader becomes accustomed to a certain set of signals and is misled if he does not receive them. In your revision, check this point carefully. Also, in the last sentence of paragraph 2, you have omitted an essential mark. What is it?

Theme 10

COLLEGE LIFE

So you are a new student at our University of Wisconsin! Are you mystified at all the activities taking place around here, the thousands of students running around and registering for the new semester? All of us students felt the same way at one time. 1

Registering is rather hectic, isn't it? Everyone goes through this process and everyone hates it. A Freshman has the worst luck with his wonderfully planned schedule for he has to wait until the very last day of registering to get his classes arranged. There is no such thing as pulling some strings somewhere to get ahead of the rest of the people in your class. On the day specified for registration don't be discouraged by the long lines that circulate on every floor in every building. It is an easy way to make new friends by standing in lines. You will want 2

as many friends as possible because they help you over the rough spots, especially the first few weeks, and provide companionship always.

3 Freshman Week has many social functions taking place. There are fraternity and sorority open houses, parties at all the campus churches, and dancing and get togethers at the Union. I urge every Freshman to partake in at least one of these activities. They will help you to know more about the organizations on the campus plus getting to know many people. Perhaps you came to the University with the idea that no one had any fun if they didn't join a sorority or fraternity. That is where you're wrong. Everyone has a wonderful time at our campus. A fraternal organization is valuable indeed, but remember that becoming a college student is much different from a high school student. Your studies will have to come first of all. They're harder, they take more time and concentration, and because you're here to get an education, make the most of it.

4 After the first week is over, you know how walking up Bascom Hill several times a day affects you. Classes have started and some of them begin too early in the morning. But, I'm warning you, skipping 7:45's isn't going to help you in the least because it's habit forming. Of course everyone can't be perfect attendance students but after three absences your teacher may get angry enough to report you to the dean, or give you a lower mark on your final grade.

Late in September the football games begin. No one misses these if possible. We students are lucky to get tickets for the games so cheaply because many adults pay \$50 and more for a ticket to one of the big games. It's such a thrill to see our famous University band march down the center of the field and put on a great performance. Of course Bucky Badger is always seen at this time darting here and there on the field. The climax of the half-time and the band performance is our song "Varsity." Everything is very quiet while the students sing their song, and end it with a big U-Rah-Rah. 5

Six weeks exams seem to begin a couple weeks after school has started. Then the library is packed with students catching up on their outside readings in one night. It is much more advisable to keep up to date on things like that; you will learn more, and most likely get a better grade on your exam. 6

Thanksgiving and Christmas vacations come very quick. Then everyone is in their happiest moods, wishing everyone a wonderful vacation and saying farewell for a while. Coming back from vacation is almost more fun than the real thing because everyone is very anxious to hear and tell what they did while away. 7

And then the climax of the semester ends with exams. Oh, what a horrible thought! Here I am, trying to finish everything that I didn't do while in school and cramming everything in. I had better give myself some good advice. 8

COMMENT

This has a nice encouraging informal tone and plenty of concrete detail. It would give the high school reader a good survey of a semester of college life. But haven't you forgotten your purpose, to give him helpful advice? I think you were conscious of this yourself at the end, and you manage a rather neat conclusion. But of course you never should have gotten into the difficulty. A good writer always keeps his central idea in mind so that he controls his material instead of letting it run away with him. You organize here entirely by time, a method which requires the least work for the writer, who merely takes one thing after another in the order in which they happen. But it is not a good method for this theme, where time is not particularly significant. You should organize by topics so that your reader will know what points are most important. Paragraphs 4 and 6, for example, both deal with study habits; but your good advice is blurred because other things are happening, the advice appears in two separate places, and the reader has no help from your organization. Similarly, you touch on recreation in at least three paragraphs, but nowhere do you really develop the topic in the light of what the student should do about it. The interesting specific quality of this theme is a merit; but that interest should support your purpose, not make the reader overlook it, and it is only by giving thought to your organization that you can make that happen.

There are a number of careless mistakes in the paper. See sentence 4 (paragraph 4), sentences 4 and 8 (paragraph 3), sentence 5 (paragraph 3), and sentences 2 and 3 (paragraph 7); see pp. — in your text. If you have any questions, let me know.

Theme 11**THE FIRST SEMESTER**

When you enter the University, you go through portals leading you into a completely different phase of life. The change from high school is

great no matter what high school you came from. The big problem which confronts a new student is adjustment to this change. The period of adjustment may be short, long, or never-ending depending upon the individual, but every new student must go through it.

The first thing which comes to your attention in the University is that there are so many different types of people on the campus. Many are of the kind from which you have been shielded from all your life. You find that there are many ways of thinking which differ greatly from yours, but you have to recognize them even though you don't accept them. There is one danger in associating suddenly with all these different types of people and that is that you shouldn't think you've suddenly outgrown all of your previous upbringing and that you must do what you previously had never done before because other people at the University are doing it. The two chief subjects in this category are smoking and drinking. If you didn't smoke or drink before you came to college, you don't have to do it at the University if you don't want to. Your big job in this phase of adjustment is to understand and evaluate the ways of social University life and then make your decisions as to how you will act.

The second and most important phase of adjustment to university life is that of academic nature. You come to the University to get an education and the University has the facilities to

give it to you if you use them right. To get an education in college you have to want to get it because nobody makes you do anything. Either you study or you flunk out. You can't afford to make the mistake of waiting until the last six weeks of the semester to do all your studying because by then it will be too late. The first six weeks are not the hardest if you put all your effort into getting your work done. If you have the chance try to get ahead in your homework, take advantage of it, because you'd be surprised how fast you can get behind. For most new students there is the difficulty in picking up the right study habits. If you get good ones right away you'll come through with flying colors, but if you don't the going will be quite rough.

4 These two phases of adjustment are also the two components making up all university life. The one problem which lies before you is to get a proper balance between social and academic life. Too much of either is bad. You should try to get a good education and also have a good time getting it. The big thing to remember during your first semester at the University is not to let any one thing shake or frighten you. The adjustment is not easy, but if you try hard enough, before long you'll be part of the University as everyone else is.

COMMENT

Your theme has a good organization. Each paragraph is

a good unit in itself, developing one topic well, and each makes its proper contribution to a good whole.

With this solid foundation to build on, you can make your writing more effective and interesting by attention to sentence emphasis. Be sure that every word counts. Here, for example, sentence 4 in paragraph 1 is weakened by depending upon the individual, four entirely superfluous words which detract from the good short, long, or never-ending sequence. Sentence 1 in paragraph 3 ends with four words, of which three are not only useless but really harmful, since they weaken the emphasis of the one which does say something. You will be able to find other examples for yourself. Sentence 4 in paragraph 2 also needs improvement. Your writing went a little ahead of your thinking, so to speak, and you were in such a hurry to get things down that you crowded too much into a sentence which actually says the opposite of what you meant. Rewrite it (incidentally eliminating the mistake in tense). In your next theme, when you are working for effectiveness by putting the precise work in an emphatic position, check also for clichés. Go through portals and flying colors are both trite. Did you really visualize portals? What picture did you have? (See p. — in your text.)

You have two serious misspellings: one in paragraph 2, the other in both paragraphs 3 and 4. For the latter, there is a related word in which the stress falls on the syllable you have misspelled. What is it?

Group 3

Themes of Superior Quality

These themes are given as examples of superior work because they show superior mastery in two main aspects of writing: connection between parts and whole; and skillful selection of detail for interest, vividness, and good balance between general and specific. In these two respects, every writer, no matter how good, can continually increase his skill. There is no limit.

Theme 12

POINTERS FOR A NEW STUDENT

1 First and foremost--give the most careful consideration you possess to choosing your general course at the University. Read the University's catalogs, and find information on subjects in which you are interested. When you believe you've found the right one, talk to authorities on the subject, read further information concerning it, and, if possible, get actual work experience if you have chosen some vocation.

2 Next, decide where you'd like to live while at the University. If you have friends or relatives in Madison, they'd probably be glad to have you stay with them. If you prefer dormitory residence make your application in March--the dorms fill

quickly after that. If you wish to get a room in a private house, you may be successful even in July, as I was, but it is better to try to get one before the second semester is over, say in March or April. When looking for a room in a private house you will be greatly helped by inquiring at the Housing Bureau, 434 Sterling Court, at the east end of the campus.

After you have your room and have arranged finances for the year, you can relax until New Student Week. The university will send you a NSW handbook, listing events and places to acquaint you with your university. 3

Bring your NSW handbook and all other material you have received with you to the University. As soon as you arrive, weather permitting, take a walk around the campus--don't forget your map. Get acquainted, if you can, with the location of a few major buildings such as Agriculture Hall, Babcock, Bascom, and the Union. If you know their location it will be easy to find smaller ones such as the temporaries, North Hall, and Birge. 4

After several events have passed, you will find that it is time to register. At this time, or before if possible, get a "Time Table" from the Information Office, first floor, Bascom Hall. This little book lists all courses, their time, and location. You will be given instructions for making out your schedule at this time. 5

Here is a word of warning concerning registra-

6 tion day. First of all--get a good night's sleep before it and get up early the next morning. Wear the most comfortable shoes you have and eat a good, big breakfast. You are preparing for an ordeal.

7 Some of the information you have will tell you where to register for each course. You will have to stand in many lines, shuffle innumerable IBM cards, and even have your picture taken with a number under it just as if you were a criminal. But don't be discouraged. You'll soon forget your sore feet and aching back.

8 When your classes begin, prepare for them well at home. As soon as possible, develop good study habits. Reserve a period in which you will be alone at the same time each night. When you think you have your work pretty well underhand, go out and have a coke. You'll feel better and remember more.

9 The last point I want to bring out is this--don't think that you are expected to make your college life all work and no play. That in fact, is unwise, because you're only getting half your education if your nose is glued to a book during all your waking hours. The union, the fraternities, and the various clubs all offer relaxation and entertainment. With those you will not only be happier but you will also be better educated.

COMMENT

This is an interesting, practical, and helpful theme. A prospective student should find it really useful.

It would be even more useful, perhaps, and a better piece of writing, if you used your paragraphs throughout to indicate relative importance of topics. Nine times you have started a new paragraph, thereby suggesting to your reader that you are discussing a new topic. But not every paragraph is a separate topic. Paragraph 3 is obviously transitional, but a theme of this scope hardly needs a whole paragraph for transition. It would be better if the present first sentence of paragraph 3 were the last sentence of paragraph 2, finishing that unit; and the present second sentence of paragraph 3 were the first sentence of paragraph 4, starting the next. Paragraphs 5, 6, and 7, are not separate topics; they all deal with registration day, and should be combined. If they were, don't you see that the next point, study habits, would have a good deal more emphasis than it does now? It would then strike your reader as a real step forward. You need to do a little rearranging with paragraphs 5, 6, and 7; the first sentence of paragraph 7 breaks a good connection and really belongs after the last sentence of paragraph 5.

As it stands, your theme is in danger of being top-heavy. Paragraphs 8 and 9 (especially 8) are much less fully developed than 1 and 2. But of course they are very important. The advice to prepare before the student goes to college is good, but you want your theme to have a strong ending too. If you build your paragraphs into full units throughout, so that your main topics are emphasized in the reader's mind, your paper will be consistently good all the way through.

Theme 13

"BRUDDER 'OB SAYS"

There are three main phases which all prospective high school students go through when they begin attending any college. I would like to point **1** these out to you and, if I can, I will try to pass on a few tips which may help you. These three phases which each of you will discover are 1) preparing for the big event, 2) adjusting to college

life and 3) settling yourself into an efficient groove (not rut!!).

2 I will assume that most of you already have either set yourself on a certain college or given up looking and decided in favor of the University. (If you are in the latter category, we have something in common.) Your main job at present is keeping the high school grade up (since you may never see grades like those again), enjoying yourself with the old gang, many of whom you will never see again, and collecting things for college. This last point needs some emphasis. It is much easier to have a list of your needs in advance than it is to madly ransack the house at the last moment, finding yourself with a closet full of left-footed shoes and frayed white shirts. One warning: get a room application in early!! Its much better than living many miles away and commuting by shoe leather. Also, break up with the girl back home--you will anyway.

3 At colleges, new freshmen are given a week to "orient" themselves to their surroundings and get their classes straightened out. The word "orient" is a rather misleading one, since its literal meaning here is to completely exhaust, befuddle and bewilder all students. It is in this first, hair-raising week that all bad habits are started; the two-thirty to eleven sleeping hours, patronization of the local theater, and learning to stand in lines. Although the last are deemed necessary by the "brass-hats," they gradually give the student a "living in the army" complex.

When your schedule of classes arrives, try to figure out when you can study--then stick to it. There are more headaches caused by cramming and all-night working than any other cause. Putting off till tomorrow might be a good idea today, but you'll be kicking yourself blue for doing it, and sooner than you think. A good tip is Meet each assignment as it comes at you!

While on the subject of putting off important work, I would like to stress that it is all too easy! I have heard it said that it would be a wonderful thing to pay tuition, get a room and do nothing but have fun for a year. I would like nothing better myself and you would too--if there were no classes to attend. Since there are, be selective. There are only a certain number of hours every week for fun. Pick the best of the activities and enjoy them at the right time.

After finally getting settled, you should still keep at least an eye on these tips. Even though you are in a good, solid groove, it is very easy to slip. Even when that is happening, you won't realize it until it's too late. Half way through a semester, finals seem a long way away; at the beginning they aren't even in sight. What you don't realize is that they're looking over your shoulder every second. You have to watch for them or they'll suddenly appear. When they do, your ulcers will take a definite turn for the worse.

Before I retreat from your onslaught of rocks, stones and bottles, I'd like to say that if you at

7 least remember vaguely some of these hints, and if you occasionally make a choice based on what will be the best thing a month from the present, I can at least guarantee an enjoyable, if not long, college career.

COMMENT

This is concrete, interesting, lively, and readable. In fact, perhaps you overdo the liveliness a little—particularly at the end of paragraph 6 and in paragraph 7. The assignment pointed out, as you remember, that this was to be written in a tone suitable for parents and teachers as well as for students. You certainly overdo exclamation marks and underlinings. This sort of punctuation looks either immature or old-fashioned. (I have seen it used very effectively in novels as a device to characterize an elderly maiden lady portrayed as a survival from Victorian days.) The best way to get emphasis is by effective sentence structure, and you handle your sentences with competence throughout.

There are a few proofreading errors, and at least one bad “big word”—patronization in paragraph 3. Going to the local theater would be enough; if you must say patronizing, you surely don't need to add the superfluous -ation. Groove is of course entirely justified; but to keep an eye on tips (paragraph 6) seems to be getting close to a mixed metaphor and makes it difficult for the reader to shift to the metaphor in the next sentence. The personification of the examinations in the same paragraph is effectively done. I have already spoken of the last sentence and of paragraph 7. Do you realize that in paragraph 7 you really defeat your own point? You make a distinction between enjoyable and long; but your whole theme has been devoted to advice which will make the college career not only enjoyable but also long.

Theme 14

THE LARGER LEARNING

My advice to prospective students is one word:

learn. Learn all you can before you come. But, you say, that's why we're coming to college: to learn. I answer this by saying: no matter how much you think you've learned, it is nothing to what you're going to. A change from high school to college is more than a transfer of suitcases, tennis racquets and ukes. It is a complete change of ideas and worlds. In high school you were a big frog, but in a little pond; ~~but~~ suddenly in college you become a tadpole in Lake Superior. Therefore enlarge your viewpoint and enrich your education before you come. 1

The first thing I would advise learning is self-discipline. In college you suddenly find yourself fluttering your little wings with no comforting mother to say aye or nay; and it's a wonderful feeling: til you flunk French. There are no compulsory study halls at college, where you can get the days' assignment done, as in high school. All that free time you enjoy at night now will be taken up in memorizing irregular German verbs or reading for Soc. 2. Now is the time to get used to working so hard. If you aren't assigned enough to keep you busy, give your self tasks. Do extra reading for the courses you're now taking, and write that extra-credit paper. Not only will you enrich your understanding but you will accustom yourself to the continual pressure exerted on you by your ever-demanding college assignments. Develop the ability to say "no" to eager friends trying to lure you away from 2

some task. You'll have plenty of opportunity to use this at the U. Learn how to manage your time; don't let it manage you. Learn how long to study physics and how long to read English.

3 Another thing I would advise is to enlarge your view and develop your poise. In enlarging your view, read good books, both fiction and non fiction. Learn about world affairs and develop some opinions and what is more important some understanding. If you have already picked out a field to major in, read books written about it. If you haven't picked out a field, read books on every subject you think you're interested. To everyone I would say read not only books surveying the field but actual textbooks from it; and take notes. Learn how to take notes from the books you're now reading; this ability and the notes you've taken will undoubtedly help you.

4 The adjustment between high school and college is harder than you think. Begin now to prepare yourself for it. The high school will give you help. You will have to learn to discipline yourself. But do it now while you will have the free time.

COMMENT

This is a thoughtful, interesting, and successful paper. The organization is clear without being mechanical, the connection is good throughout, and you give enough concrete details to make your points vivid and convincing.

There are a few proofreading mistakes, especially at the beginning of paragraph 2. Also, there the reader has a little difficulty keeping your time element straight. In sentence

4 you use now, meaning it to refer to high school; but the word is a squinting modifier, for it could refer back (as you meant) to enjoy at night or forward to will be taken up (in college). A then after the now would make the reference clear; as it is, the reader may be a little confused and carry the confusion on to the next sentence. It would help to add in high school to the repeated now in sentence 5. At the end of this paragraph, if the order of the last two sentences were reversed, you would have a more emphatic ending. You would end not on the example but on the generalization, and that is what you want to impress on your reader.

The weakness of this theme, I am afraid, is that the best part is the beginning. Your most memorable sentences (5 and 7), your most telling concrete illustrations, are all in paragraph 1. Paragraph 3 has no concrete illustrations, though paragraph 2 has a good many; and paragraph 4 is only recapitulation. It makes a logical ending, but not a striking one. When the beginning has been so good, the reader cannot help but have some feeling of being let down by a colorless ending. You might perhaps pick up again the big-frog-little-pond figure or perhaps another will occur to you. But somehow try to make the last word you speak to your reader as effective as the first.

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