

The Problem

Early in 2001, The Concord Review approached the Albert Shanker Institute for funds for a study of the state of the history research paper in United States high schools.

The Concord Review study found that while 95% of those teachers surveyed believe that writing a research term paper is important or very important, some 62% of the teachers never assign a paper of 3,000-5,000 words in length, and 81% never assign a paper of over 5,000 words.

The principal obstacles cited by those surveyed for this study were the amount of time required for reading and grading long research papers, and the fact that this time almost always had to be taken from personal time in the evenings, on weekends, early in the morning, and so on.

The Objectives

Quality in Writing:
Knowing, Caring, and Thinking

Knowing

Similarly, the difficulty often felt in "teaching literature" arises from the fact that it cannot be done: the criticism of literature is all that can be directly taught.

Northrop Frye, *The Anatomy of Criticism*

(the point of Frye's statement is that you cannot "know" literature; you can only know how to critique it.)

Caring

From Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance

The mechanics in their attitude toward the machine were really taking no different attitude from the manual's toward the machine, or from the attitude I had when I brought it in there. We were all spectators. And it occurred to me there is no manual that deals with the real business of motorcycle maintenance, the most important aspect of all. Caring about what you are doing is considered either unimportant or taken for granted.

(the meaning of this passage is simply to introduce the concept of “caring”)

From Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance

When one isn't dominated by feelings of separateness from what he's working on, then one can be said to "care" about what he's doing. That is what caring really is, a feeling of identification with what one's doing. When one has this feeling then he also sees the inverse side of caring, Quality itself.

(and the purpose of this quotation is to introduce the concept of "quality" or, in our academic context, "excellence.")

Thinking

(The purpose of the following slide is to get students to analyze the poem incorporating the title. They are apt to overlook the most obvious data and do not have a systemic, empirical mindset. In other words, their very thinking is flawed in that they have been trained improperly or not at all.)

In a Station of the Metro

THE apparition of these faces in the
crowd;
Petals on a wet, black bough.

(the key to the meaning of the poem lies in the title which reveals that it is a portrait of a train station. The “black bough” is the track and the petals arrayed along the bough are the white faces of the waiting passengers. It is a captured moment in time, like a still.)

Accountability

(the following slides are not interesting except to prove the point that *everything* in the paper and, by extension, in life counts. The only authentic response to a rubric for a paper, or for life, is to *care*. By caring, you will succeed.)

The title does not contain the author
or character or title of the work?
(FIVE point deduction).

The thesis statement is not in the 1st paragraph? (TEN point deduction).

The first paragraph does not contain either the title or author? (FIVE point deduction).

The sources are not listed on the Works Cited page? (FIVE point deduction for each missing citation).

The paper does not *have* a Works Cited page? (FORTY point deduction).

The paper is not at least 5 pages + one line in length? (FORTY point deduction for being a full page short; TWENTY for half page; TEN for quarter page).

Does the paper have the minimum sources required? Primary + four secondary (FIVE point deduction for each missing source).

The font is not in Times Roman
12 point? (TEN point deduction).

The page number is not in the upper right corner? (TEN point deduction).

The paper is not written in 3rd person? (FIVE–TEN point deduction).

The paper is not left justified?
(TEN point deduction).

The paper is not legible? (TEN
point deduction).

The margins are not 1" all around? (FIVE point deduction).

There are mysterious blank lines between paragraphs? (FIVE point deduction for each occurrence).

The paper contains blots, folds,
organic matter? (FIVE–TEN point
deduction).

The paper contains factual errors?
(TWO–FIVE point deduction for each occurrence).

The paper contains tricky formatting to extend its length? (FIVE–TEN point deduction).

The source of the quotation is not cited? (FIVE point deduction for each occurrence).

The quotation was not introduced with a signal phrase? (FIVE point deduction for each occurrence): “In his article on *Hamlet*, John Smith writes...”

The quotation was not analyzed?
(FIVE point deduction for each
occurrence): “As the above
quotation shows, the meaning of
this scene...”

The quotation is paraphrased?

Never paraphrase. I consider that plagiarism which may be cause for a “0” grade on the paper. (FIVE point deduction for each occurrence).

Are there unnecessarily long block quotations (6 lines or more)? (FIVE point deduction each for each occurrence).

Punctuation, spelling, grammatical errors? (1/2 point each occurrence).

The paper begins: “Since the beginning of time...” (100 point deduction).