Preface

The teacher's manual for *The Research Paper: A Contemporary Approach* supports current research in teaching writing, namely that the best instruction is student-centered rather than teacher-centered, that cooperative and collaborative activities enhance the learning process, that writing to learn (as opposed to learning to write) improves critical thinking, and that peer editing groups complement individual activities in the recursive writing process. Thus, each chapter includes four supplementary segments:

1. full-class activity (with alternative suggestions for computer enhancement as appropriate)
2. cooperative/collaborative activity
3. writing-to-learn assignment
4. peer editing activity

Certain assumptions are made here about each of the four activities:

CLASS ACTIVITIES operate on the assumption that students need introductory discussion and/or modeling to lay the groundwork for successful cooperative and collaborative activities or peer editing activities.

COOPERATIVE/COLLABORATIVE ACTIVITIES are based on the assumption that the two terms imply different group functions. Cooperative activities are those in which students work together to create a single product or to generate a single response. Collaborative activities, on the other hand, are those in which every student is responsible for every other student's knowledge and understanding of the task at hand. Thus, while a collaborative activity may also yield a single product or generate a single response, any single student may be quizzed, his or her grade going to the entire group. (See bibliographical references on pages 2–3 for further reading.)

Both cooperative and collaborative activities require that teachers understand basic group processes: how to assign effective groups, how to model for and train students in group dynamics, how to assign a group role to each individual, and how to implement the activities in the otherwise traditional classroom.

Membership in cooperative and collaborative groups may, and probably should, vary from activity to activity. Grouping here should be different from that for peer editing groups (see below).

WRITING-TO-LEARN ASSIGNMENTS follow the assumptions of researchers who say that in order to learn and retain, one must verbalize thoughts and that thoughts cannot exist without words. Writing-to-learn assignments allow

students to use a personal voice in which to verbalize thoughts about the work at hand, whether that work is narrowing a topic, planning research, or analyzing the parallel structure of a final outcome. While you may choose to check students' completion of assignments and to respond to their individual needs as expressed in their responses, at no time should writing-to-learn assignments be evaluated. The assignments will never ask students to take a writing-to-learn assignment through the entire writing process; thus, to evaluate the writing is to violate the understanding of the recursive process of writing, the pendulum-like manner by which writers work through the development of a final paper until it is ready for sharing.

PEER EDITING ACTIVITIES are based on the idea that everyone together knows more than anyone alone. If students are not already familiar with peer editing or editorial groups, they may need guidance and/or modeling activities. Since audience is a significant part of writing purpose, however, peer editors perform a valuable role. Most peer editing activities included here suggest the use of specific guidelines (usually the Checklist for that chapter), but sophisticated peer editors may function well without the detailed suggestions. Membership in peer editing groups should remain constant for the entire process of writing the research paper. As part of a permanent support group, members can seek one another's assistance outside the formal peer editing activity periods; thus, each becomes a readily available resource for others in the group as they follow each other's progress throughout the research process. Choose from among the activities to suit your students' learning styles as well as your own teaching style. Answers to the exercises in the student text are also included. For the most part, answers given are only guidelines; in many cases, student answers can vary significantly from those suggested and still be acceptable.

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Peer Editing

(See also Cooperative/Collaborative Learning above)

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Chapter 1

Students often want to use the same old tired subjects and, of course, they regularly choose topics suitable for multivolume works. These two problems are the bane of English teachers responsible for taking students through the research process. The following activities, based on current classroom research, may help solve both problems.

The following two books stimulate students' thinking in terms of topics: *What Can I Write About? 7,000 Topics for High School Students* by David Powell (NCTE) and *10,000 Ideas for Term Papers, Projects, Reports and Speeches* by Kathryn Lamm (Arco). Both are tried and proven.

CLASS ACTIVITY

Use the "Suggestions for General Topics" on pages 13–14 in the text to practice narrowing topics. Select a single broad topic, like "media influence on elections," and list on the board or overhead all the possibilities students can generate. Tell them that a list shorter than 20 topics (probably we should say 50!) shows little creativity. Here are ten to get started.

- Comparison of two newsmagazines' treatment of a candidate
- Newspaper editorial policy as apparent in campaign reporting
- Use of makeup on televised political debates
- Local editorials—their historical effect on local voters
- Paid television ads—their cost and development
- Behind paid television ads: advertising firms who do them
- Evaluation of local political letters to the editor
- Radio news policy on campaigns (news vs. advertisement)
- Candidate photographs and their impact on voters
- The politics of candidates calling news conferences

If possible, enter students' suggestions on the computer, print copies of the list, and provide one for each student. The list can serve as a model for students as they strive to select and narrow topics of their own.

COOPERATIVE ACTIVITY

To continue the previous activity, put students into groups of three or four. Compose the groups yourself to guarantee a heterogeneous mix, and assign specific tasks to each student:

recorder (who takes notes for the group)
timekeeper (who keeps the group on schedule)
facilitator (who encourages everyone to participate)
leader (who has the book/handout/lesson and leads the group through the task)

Assign to each group or permit students to choose or draw from a hat one of the broad topics listed in "Suggestions for General Topics" on pages 13–14 in the text. In a designated time period, groups must produce as many narrowed topics as possible. To make time more meaningful, set a number of odd-numbered minutes, for example, 17, 24, or 37 minutes, as the designated time period. When time is up, ask recorders to share their lists with the class. Students not only have the experience of narrowing a broad topic, but they may hear mentioned a topic that sparks their own curiosity. Reward the group with the longest list of acceptably narrowed topics.

WRITING-TO-LEARN ASSIGNMENT

To stimulate students' critical thinking about their topic choices, either assigned or chosen, make the following assignment when you first begin Chapter 1. the writing period should cover at least three days.

Write for at least ten minutes every day between now and ____ about your broad topic and the possibilities for narrowing it. Here are some ideas you may want to include:

Day 1: What you do and do not like about the various narrowed topics you are considering

Day 2: What questions you have about the narrowed topics you are considering

Day 3: How you finally decided which to choose and how you feel about your decision

This assignment can be used successfully for three consecutive days as the beginning activity each day of class. Emphasize that form is not important, that students may write lists, paragraphs, personal letters, or journals. They should merely express their ideas, concerns, thoughts, and decisions. If you circulate during the ten-minute writing period each day, reading over shoulders, you will gain significant insight into individual needs. As with all writing-to-learn assignments, it is most effective neither to evaluate nor to comment on students' writing. Of course you will want to respond to their ideas, concerns, and questions.

PEER EDITING ACTIVITY

Appoint peer editing groups, allowing students some choice in the selection but making sure the groups are heterogeneous. Since students should work with the same peer editing group during the entire research process, plan the group composition carefully. If possible, limit peer editing groups to three members.

After students have had some time to think about their own choice of topics, explain that they will have the opportunity to use their peer editing group as a sounding board. Notify students in advance of the appointed day. Remind students that they will work with the same peer editing group during the entire research process. In their groups, students should share their topics (and perhaps excerpts from their writing-to-learn responses about the topics) with their peers. They should use the Checklist for Choosing a Topic on pages 17–18 in the text as a basis for discussion.

Peer editors' responsibilities are to reach an agreement with the author on a suitable topic. All editors should sign their approval of the chosen topic. Thus, excellent topic choices reflect well on the entire group—and vice versa.

ANSWERS TO THE EXERCISES

Exercise A

1. suitable
2. unsuitable; too broad; possible alternative: Results of Population Increase on the West Coast since 1980.
3. unsuitable; too broad and too technical; possible alternative: Democratic Candidates' Attitudes Toward Defense Spending
4. suitable
5. unsuitable; too broad and (in some cases) too familiar; possible alternative: Advantages of High-School Athletics for Girls
6. suitable
7. unsuitable; too broad; possible alternative: Voters' Responsibilities Between Elections
8. unsuitable; too broad; possible alternative: Effects of Limiting Political Terms in Federal Offices
9. unsuitable; too broad; possible alternative: Effects of Subliminal Television Advertising
10. unsuitable; too broad (and if in another state, too regional); possible alternative: Punishment for Violent Crimes Committed in Montana
11. unsuitable; too broad; possible alternative: Amish Influence on Furniture Design
12. suitable
13. unsuitable; too broad; possible alternative: Characteristics of "Prairie School" Architecture
14. unsuitable; too narrow; possible alternative: Comparison of Playing a Carillon and a Piano
15. unsuitable; too broad; possible alternative: Early Development of the Interstate Highway System
16. suitable (depending on technical expertise)
17. unsuitable; too broad; possible alternative: One Major Pollutant to the World's Atmosphere and the Effect It Has

18. suitable
19. unsuitable; too broad; possible alternative: Training to Be a Super Gymnast
20. unsuitable; too subjective; possible alternative: Common Techniques for Fighting Peer Pressure

Exercise B

Answers will vary but examples are included.

1. Subliminal Advertising as Used in Popular Magazines
2. Ancient Egypt's Beauty Secrets
3. Man River and Old Towne: A comparison of Two Canoe Structures
4. How to Audition for the School Musical
5. Preparation and Practice: Beverly Sills and Maria Callas
6. A Comparison of Two Anesthetics Most Widely Used for Major Surgery
7. The Effect of the John Birch Society on National Politics in 1961
8. How Pythagoras Influenced Modern Mathematics
9. The Environment vs. the Economy of Chesapeake Bay
10. An Argument for a World Language

Chapter 2

Students generally are not familiar with the kind of preliminary work necessary for a research paper. The following prewriting activities should improve their success.

CLASS ACTIVITY

Select a short encyclopedia article (or part of a longer article) that you can read to the class. Consider topics like Benjamin Franklin, San Andreas Fault, Chinook winds, Alaska pipeline, martial arts, Hammurabi Code, Watergate, the Amana community, Quakers, glaciers, Lioni, "Ring of Fire."

After reading the article to the class, ask students to name suitably narrowed topics for a 1,000-word (or other specific length) research paper. List the ideas on the board or overhead. As a class, generate a working outline.

If you have the facilities, use a computer for the class-generated working outline. One of two approaches will suffice:

1. Attach the computer to a large-screen monitor for whole-class viewing.
2. Use an LCD (liquid crystal display) overhead projection system to show the computer monitor's image on a wall screen.

When the working outline is satisfactory, you can print copies for students to use as models.