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## Round Robin

Dorothy E. Smith

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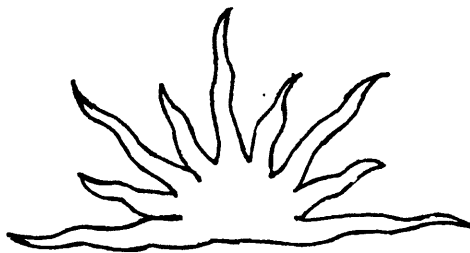
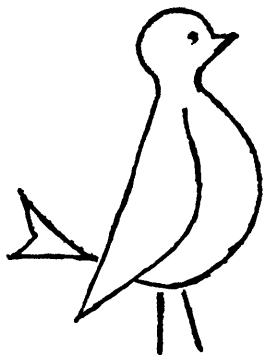
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## ROUND ROBIN

*Dorothy E. Smith, Editor*

Dear Readers,

As you may already have noticed, part of this issue of *Reading Horizons* is devoted to teaching reading at the secondary level. Beginning below and continuing in subsequent issues, "Round Robin" will present some specific suggestions which have been offered by our readers.

Teaching reading in the different content areas presents different problems; and therefore, over the next several issues we will be taking up the problems of teaching reading in a history class, chemistry class, psychology, and so on. The most obvious connection is between English classes and reading, so the selections below are addressed to that field of interest.

Dear Editor:

Much of the reading and vocabulary taught in the English classroom is done in conjunction with a lesson in literature. Taking into consideration the variety of reading levels I would encounter in a class of 10th graders, the individualized reading approach would be the most beneficial.

I think the clue to effective teaching comes with variety and inventiveness in the classroom. With a common starting point and everyone learning the basics, let each student take off in his own direction.

Since English is a required subject, the difference in reading levels isn't the only problem you'll encounter in the classroom. Many students fight English from the beginning and it's up to the teacher to try and show them the importance of the course. I feel that English

is a course in communication—and through literature we find a sampling of the ways men before us have communicated. In order to study this, or learn anything at all, we must know how to read. This doesn't mean just the physical act of reading, but the understanding and evaluation processes involved.

*Using reference materials . . .*

**Approach**—Have the students construct a timeline for themselves. For every year of their lives they must list one thing that has happened to them or their family, and another thing of national or state significance. This could take a little work in the library with encyclopedias, history books, almanacs or other reference materials.

Set up a treasure hunt where the clues are in the reference books. It could be a fun way to learn to use the library for more than checking out book report books.

**Value**—The students are encouraged to find things for themselves and be more independent. When they find out the vast resources available, they might expand in areas that interest them.

Linda Dunn  
Jonesville, Michigan

Dear Editor:

As a teacher of English at the secondary level, reading will be my most important objective, for literature can mean nothing to someone who does not enjoy or does not know how to read. Therefore, I would want to find out the various stages of development of my students as well as their interests, and then gear my class towards individualized, self-selection in reading. The first thing I would do, then, is have each of my students make out a personal card giving me the following information:

Name

Address

Phone

Do you like to read?

What is your favorite school subject?

What is your most hated school subject?

What is your favorite activity or pastime?

What do you hate doing more than anything else?

What is the biggest problem you have in getting along with others?

What would you be most interested in studying in this English class?

These cards would not only give me an idea of the likes and dislikes of my students and what would be most interesting to each; but they

would also help me to pick a theme, a problem, or an idea as the basis for a unit plan which they would find relevant to their own lives. They could then have the freedom to pick their own readings within the unit plan. I would, of course, make up annotated book lists to help them with their selections. However, I would not be concerned with whether they chose to read a classic in literature or a ten-cent comic book, but in whether they enjoyed the reading and got something of value out of it to help them live in this world. So, also, with poetry. I have ignored this medium so far. Because students are usually turned off by even the mention of the word poetry when they are in high school, I think that if they only realized that the records they listen to everyday are filled with some of the most beautiful poetry around, they would “turn on” again. Just as literature can be made relevant to their daily lives, so also can poetry. If Keats and Shelley mean nothing to students today, why study them? I would much rather introduce my students to the modern rock poets, of whom they are already familiar, than bog them down with the Romantics, who say nothing to them about living today. Through study of such people as Simon and Garfunkel, Dylan Thomas, the Beatles, and Bob Dylan, I would hope to stimulate my students’ own interests in writing poetry. This would also help them with the study of words—their usage and meanings. However, most important to me would be my students’ realization that poetry and literature can lead them to understand their world, to understand others, and to arrive at a better understanding of themselves.

Judy McKay  
Dearborn, Michigan

Dear Editor:

The study of characters in the short story and their roles would be advanced by having the students take two main characters from two different short stories and put them in a new situation. The only requirement is that the characters do not change. They can not do anything they would not have done in the original story. By way of an example, the teacher would have a story printed on a transparency to be shown to the entire class. The transparency will give the students an idea of what the teacher wants. Creativity will blossom, and at the same time the students will see how much the original story line has influenced the character.

Beth-Anne Klumpp  
Cadillac, Michigan