

**AN INTRODUCTORY
COURSE IN
EXPOSITION**

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An introductory course in exposition by Frances M. Perry

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BY

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UNIV OF
CALIFORNIA

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EXPOSITION,
W. P. 1

TO THE
ASSOCIATION

Co

SOPHIE CHANTAL HART

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PREFACE

EXPOSITION is admitted to be the most generally used form of discourse, and further, to be that form of discourse whose successful practice requires no special aptitude, as do description and narration. Moreover, the writing of exposition has been found to be largely conducive to the development of keen observation, deliberation, sound critical judgment, and clear and concise expression. For these reasons it has an assured place in every high school or college composition course.

In practice, expository courses often fail to justify the prevailing estimate of the value of exposition, not because exposition has been too highly estimated, but because the subject has been presented in an unsystematized manner without variety or movement. A class begins a course in exposition, writing three-page themes on *My Favorite Sport* and *Friendship*, and five months later its members are writing eight-page themes on *My Favorite Sport* and *Friendship*. The advancement of individual members of the class is even less appreciable than that of the class as a whole. They have only an empirical knowledge of what exposition is. One remembers that when the

instructor was presenting the subject he read as an example of exposition, a paper on *How to Play Basket Ball*; accordingly he ventures to write a theme on *How to Play Tennis*. That is successful, and the subject of his next theme becomes *How to Catch Black Bass*; this is followed by *How to Sail a Boat*, *How to Break a Colt*, etc. Another student remembers a model bit of exposition about *Gray Squirrels*; he tries in turn, *Butterflies*, *Dogs*, *Horses*, *Trees*, *Orchids*, etc. Another remembers that the instructor suggested the *Fourth of July* as a subject for an exposition, and writes a series of holiday themes: *Thanksgiving Day*, *Christmas*, *New Year's Day*, *St. Valentine's Day*, etc., are the subjects of his successive themes. Still another has grasped the idea that literary criticism is exposition and all of his "expository themes" are summaries of novels. Something like this is pretty sure to happen in a large class where the work is not carefully organized.

My purpose in preparing this text-book is to provide a systematized course in the theory and practice of expository writing. In the first place, the student who follows this course should have a clear understanding of exposition — its nature, its two processes, definition and analysis; its three functions, impersonal presentation or transcript, interpretation, and interpretative presentation; and the special application of exposition in literary criticism. In the second place, he should have gained through the practice in composition required by the course, facility in

writing in a clear and interesting way the various types of exposition.

The section on literary criticism may seem unnecessary to the completeness of the course, but it is demanded by the widespread interest in that phase of the subject and by the general need of progressive work in literary criticism in place of the fatuous repetition of summaries of stories that a course in literary criticism is apt to degenerate into unless the students are carefully directed.

The method used is direct exposition amply reënforced by examples and exercises. The illustrative matter is taken from many and varied sources, but much of it is necessarily modern, since our standard essayists, when examined carefully with a view to their availability as models of expository style, are surprisingly often found to be quaint or mannered.

The book is intended to serve as a thorough introduction to the subject of exposition. It calls for thoughtful, earnest work, but, it is hoped, will reward effort with pleasure as well as with substantial gain. It is suited to the need of students in the final years of secondary schools or the first years of college.

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F. M. P.

