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Institution: Univ. of Texas--Austin

1.  Yes  No Is imaginative literature (fiction, poetry, drama) used in your Freshman Composition Program? Not in the regular freshman course.
2.  Yes  No Has your program always used imaginative literature?
3.  Yes  No Has imaginative literature been dropped from your program? (If so, explain why) "Lit. & Comp." replaced by Writing in the Disciplines.
4.  Yes  No Has imaginative literature been added to your program? (If so, explain why) We offer a small number of "Humanities" versions of Freshman English.
5.  Yes  No Is imaginative literature used in the first semester (quarter)?
6.  Yes  No Is imaginative literature used in the second semester (quarter)?  
We currently have no second semester freshman English courses.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ What is the approximate percentage of imaginative literature used in your program? 10%
8.  Yes  No Is fiction used in your program? Not in the "regular" course.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ Approximately how many stories are used?
10.  Yes  No Is a novella or novel used? (If so, which have been used or will be used? \_\_\_\_\_)
11.  Yes  No Is poetry used in your program?
12.  Yes  No Is drama used in your program?
13. Please indicate the approximate percentage of emphasis of the following uses of imaginative literature in your program: Answers apply to regular freshman writing course.

<u>0</u> %	Used for discussion of content to stimulate ideas for writing
<u>0</u> %	Used for writing about literature (a la Edgar Roberts)
<u>0</u> %	Used for teaching rhetorical principles (such as organization, paragraphing, sentence construction, coherence, language, etc.)
<u>0</u> %	Other (Specify)

What do you consider to be the major benefits of using imaginative literature in the teaching of composition?

I see very few benefits for the student. Freshman writing courses serve a general population interested primarily in expository and persuasive writing. The historical concerns of rhetoric are social, legalistic, and political--dealing with the realm of the probable, not the mimetic. To impose literary studies upon writing courses is to distort the nature of an introductory writing class. Imaginative literature can be of some benefit in stimulating discussion about topics, but it cannot appropriately furnish subject matter or paradigms for general writing courses.

Most English teachers, however, like to teach literature and would rather be teaching a literature course than a writing course. Combining literature and composition keeps literature faculties happy--at the expense of students.

15. What do you consider to be the major problems of using imaginative literature in the teaching of composition?

Many faculty members use imaginative literature in writing classes to avoid teaching writing. The literature gives them something to talk about, a subject matter more comfortable than issues raised by rhetorical studies--which tend to cross disciplines and expose gaps in an instructor's knowledge.

The assumptions of imaginative literature, both the creative and the critical, differ significantly from the assumptions and principles of writers dealing with scientific and persuasive discourse. The gap cannot be ignored or easily bridged. Trying to usually produces hybrid courses that split apart as soon as students start to write.

16. Further comments:

That writing courses are typically housed in English Departments (which usually prefer to think of themselves as literature departments only) is a matter of historical accident--or rather distortion. English Departments began as Departments of Rhetoric. When English exiled Speech to Departments of Communication, writing courses should have logically followed since their history and theory is tied inextricably to the rhetorical tradition. But English Departments held on to the lucrative writing classes, and in the process, buried rhetoric under lists of schemes and tropes. The great tradition of rhetorical studies (which certainly included literature) was viewed from a literary perspective only. The term "literature" itself was redefined to connote imaginative literature alone. As a result, writing courses became courses in writing about literature--not a bad thing in themselves if so represented. But writing about literature is no more privileged than writing about law, or theology, or philosophy, or government. A freshman wtnng course should reflect rhetorical breadth, not literary speciality. Would you be willing to share a copy of your syllabus and other materials describing your Freshman Composition Program? If so, please enclose them with your response.

ARIZONA STATE  
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TEMPE, ARIZONA 85287

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

October 21, 1985

Director of Freshman Composition  
Department of English  
University of Texas  
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Dear Colleague:

Yours is one of fifty composition programs selected to participate in a survey on the use of imaginative literature (fiction, poetry, drama) in teaching Freshman Composition.

Would you please take a few minutes to respond to the following questions and then return the enclosed pages in the self-addressed, stamped envelope? The data will be analyzed by the First Year Composition Committee at Arizona State University as we re-examine and re-evaluate our own program. (If the information proves especially significant, we may share the results in publication. If you are interested in receiving a copy of the results, so indicate.)

Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,



D. G. Kehl  
Professor of English

DGK:jh

Enclosures