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# The Influence of Newspaper Prose Organization on Core Proposition Recall and Reader Proposition Production

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THE INFLUENCE OF NEWSPAPER PROSE ORGANIZATION ON CORE  
PROPOSITION RECALL AND READER PROPOSITION PRODUCTION

THESIS

Submitted to the Graduate Committee of the  
Department of Curriculum and Instruction  
Faculty of Education  
State University College at Brockport  
in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Science in Education

by

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## Abstract

This research study asked whether journalistic writing, as found in daily newswriting, facilitated or hindered the recall of main ideas and the recall of ideas developed by the reader. Comparisons were made to the recall of main ideas and the recall of reader developed ideas after reading condensed versions of the same materials.

The questions asked by the study are based on a review of literature that identified overall prose passage organization as a readability factor important to reader retention of main ideas. A review of current research based on theories of story and prose passage structures and on memory structures was made. The development of techniques for observing the results of reader interaction with material read was noted.

Study subjects read two short daily news articles, similar in length, prose organization, numbers of core propositions, and numbers of overall propositions in their original form or in a condensed form that utilized only core propositions (i.e., main ideas). Twenty-five high school seniors read and responded to two tasks by recalling passage ideas and their own ideas. A practice day preceded two days of testing.

Results identified no significant differences in the recall of main ideas after reading an original news story or after reading a condensed news story. However, using a ratio of ideas generated by the reader to ideas read, idea production was significantly greater after reading the condensed material.

Incidental findings identified order of response as making a significant difference in the number of main ideas recalled. A greater number of passage ideas was retained when recall of main ideas was the first task.

Avenues for continued research include: exploration of the limits of this study's findings; identification of the relationship of recall error to prose organization; the refinement of observation techniques; understanding of atypical organization in reader recall; the relationship of prose structure to quality of reader-developed ideas; and understanding idea development as a process.

Skilled readers should be able to utilize daily news articles for retention of factual ideas. However, within the organization of this study, the condensed material produced the same recall in fewer words.

If the reader's goal is to remember what is read, recall of text ideas should precede the reader's production of ideas that are his own.

Observation of retellings enable the teacher to closely observe the reader's retention resulting from interaction with the text. Observation will be less channeled by external influences such as questions, workbook tasks or teacher assignments.

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## Chapter I

### Statement of the Problem

#### Purpose

The purpose of this study was to compare the influence of two prose organizations, daily news writing and a condensed version of the same material, on reader recall of topically important material and reader production of assimilated and developed ideas resulting from the reading process.

#### Need for the Study

The strengths of newspaper prose--varied subject matter, current information, easily read journalistic style, readily available, expendable, inexpensive and generally viewed with positive attitudes--can best be used for reading and knowledge acquisition when the limitations of this prose style are well understood.

A survey of the literature shows current interest in the newspaper as a teaching medium. Many references describe ways to use the newspaper in the classroom. Few studies research the strengths and weaknesses of news writing as it affects reader comprehension or as it enhances the interactive processes resulting in ideational development.

Readability influences, beyond formula factors of sentence length and vocabulary load appear to need more study. These readability influences include content, writing, motivation, background of the reader and additional syntactic and semantic factors.

Research has demonstrated the influence of prose organization on the recall of information (Bower, 1976; Frase, 1973; Johnson, 1970; Kintsch, Kozminsky, Streby, McKoon, & Keenan, 1975; Kulhavy et al., 1977; Mandler & Johnson, 1977; Meyer, 1977; Myers et al., 1973; Perlmutter & Royer, 1973; Thorndyke, 1975; 1977). If the reader interacts with what is read in the development of his own unique body of information, then it should follow that it is also important to know if the prose organization stimulates the reader assimilation, interaction, and production of unique ideas as well as facilitating exact recall.

#### Design of the Study

Daily news writing was compared to concise, textlike prose to determine their relative influence on reader retention of essential ideas. These two prose organizations were also compared as stimuli to reader interaction with written material resulting in adoption and production of the reader's own ideas.

Two news articles appearing in the daily paper were subdivided into propositions, the idea units used in the study. The most important ideas were identified by their close relationship to the topic as established in the first sentences of the news articles. The condensed articles were developed using the important ideas and minimally rearranging them for better language flow. Statistical comparisons were made using t tests after high school seniors read and responded in two ways to one example of each prose organization.

Responses were written and included recalling the article and recalling the reader's ideas about the article.

#### Definition of Terms

Propositions. A proposition was defined as any chunk of meaning which was syntactically an independent clause including any attached subordinate clauses or modifying phrases. Direct quotations were not separated from their identifying clause.

Core Proposition. A core proposition was a proposition contained within a news article that was considered integral to the central topic of the article.

Reader-developed Proposition. A reader-developed proposition was a proposition resulting from reader adoption and application of text propositions.

Original News Story. A news story conforming to a general description of journalistic style and selected from recent local, national, or international news in a daily newspaper was used as it appeared in the paper.

Condensed News Story. Redundant material, peripherally related material, and extraneous material was deleted from the original news article. The article was then adjusted to develop a more readable style. The core propositions remained the same as for the original news story.

Text Recall Task. The purpose of this task was to measure subjects' ability to retell core propositions under two prose organization conditions. The task was written.

Productive Recall Task. The purpose of this task was to measure subjects' ability to produce reader-developed propositions after having read one of two prose styles. The task was written.

#### Limitations of the Study

The subjects of this study represent the most skilled reading population in the high school. As members of a senior advanced placement English literature course, they exhibit strong thinking, reading, and writing skills of students with generally high scholastic achievement. Generalizations to other groups cannot be made. However, subsequent studies describing the influence of news prose organization on recall will have a standard for comparison that reflects the results of the reading process by high school students when reading and writing skills provide minimum interference.

The general category of journalistic writing is broad, and individual examples vary widely in content, syntax, and organization. This study uses examples of daily newswriting.

Results of retellings necessarily reflect only visible response to the reading process as influenced by prose organization.

Recall of reader developed propositions may well reflect post reading idea development. Counting reader developed propositions requires looking at the prose material as a stimulus and does not reflect proposition quality or comprehension level.

#### Summary

How journalistic prose, as found in daily newswriting, influences reader comprehension needs study if newspapers are to

be used for reading development and as resource material. The thesis of this research study, based on a survey of current research literature related to the topic, was that the organization of prose material influences the recall of the ideas read and that the reader interacts with the ideas of the writer to produce his own unique ideational structures.

This study asked whether one or the other of two prose organizations, one an example of daily newswriting, and the other a condensed form, better aids comprehension as it is represented in an exact recall task and in recall of reader-developed ideas.

## Chapter II

### Review of Literature

The purpose of this study is to determine whether journalistic writing, as found in daily newswriting, facilitates or hinders the recall of information central to the prose topic and information assimilated and developed by the reader when compared to a condensed and reorganized version of the same material.

In this chapter, literature pertaining to discourse readability factors peculiar to journalistic writing and readability as influenced by prose structures is reviewed. In addition, current concepts generally accepted in prose organization research are introduced. The use of retelling as a means for observing the products of reading is substantiated.

This review is topically divided as follows:

Readability and Newswriting

Reading Comprehension--Prose Organization

Propositions

Memory Structures

Schema Theory

Story Structure

Prose Passage Structures

Propositions as Meaning Units

Retelling

### Readability and Writing

News stories most often appear in journalistic style, a familiar organization that places important and topic-setting information in the initial paragraphs with closely related, somewhat related, and extraneous information included in a descending order of importance. Events are often presented out of order and frequent repetition of previously given information is used to maintain a clear understanding of event and fact relationships. This general organization is designed to "capture" the reader early in the news article and permit shortening of the article to fit available space with a minimum loss of hard information. This design accommodates the needs of the medium, states Thorndyke (1977), in his discussion of the need for study of news prose material and its influence on reading retention.

News narrative organization is designed as an inverted pyramid with the most important material presented first. Often events are presented for impact rather than in a more natural time sequence or topic development (Green, 1979).

In suggesting ways to teach reading skills using the newspaper, Wilson and Barnes (1975) caution that pupils can easily find themselves working at their frustration levels.

Readability levels of newspapers vary from paper, from one edition to another, from article to article of the same paper, and among the different sections of the same paper. This diversity makes it important for the teacher to evaluate each selection in terms of the student. Based on a survey of studies, Sargent (1975) states that newspaper readability ranges from grade level five to grade level eight.

Johns and Wheat (1978), using the Fry Nomograph and the Dale-Chall Readability formula, established a grade level range within and among newspapers that was about level five to adult. Political news stories showed significantly higher grade levels (six to adult) than sports stories, and while not statistically significant, wire stories averaged a grade level higher than non-wire stories.

Limitations to readability formulae have been observed. Most formulae provide a measure of sentence length and vocabulary load as the syntactic and semantic variables. A rough measure of readability is derived (Kaiser, Neils, & Floriani, 1975). Kane (1978), in a discussion of text level influences in reading comprehension, noted that studies using logically formed sentence combinations, in comparison to "paragraphs" using random combinations of the same sentences, will have the same formulae readability but vary widely in comprehensibility.

Readability is the function of many variables such as: content, writing style, motivation of the reader, background of the reader, and, vocabulary load and syntax considerations beyond those of the readability formulae. Kaiser, Neils, and Floriani (1975) go on to state that length of a sentence cannot be considered a reliable measure of complexity. Additional syntactic variables should be considered. A study using the Botel, Dawkins, Granowsky Syntactic Complexity Formula to determine the complexity of selected basal readers demonstrated that when sentence length was held constant, there remained variation in syntactic complexity (Kaiser et al., 1975).

As a result of a text analysis, Green (1979) describes standard newswriting as giving a disorganized effect. A high number of paragraphs for the number of sentences, the incorporation of irrelevant material, fewer than usual connectives (then, because, but, as a result, in particular, et cetera) all contribute to that effect. An inspection of newswriting suggests that the reader is required to infer more relations among facts when news stories were compared with several rewrites solicited for comparison purposes. The newspaper, a volume of prose seldom read from front to back, may be more suited to skimming and, when subjected to careful reading, requires longer processing time than rewritten articles. The reader may compensate for the limitations of the writing style in the reading process or the material may be habitually skimmed in which case efficient retention is not a goal of the reader.

Block paragraphing explains the absence of connectives, the lack of repetition of sentence patterns, and the absence of pronoun referents. It is an editorial requirement that a paragraph must be deletable without affecting the text as a whole (Green, 1979).

Green notes that newswriting is designed as a public record and lacks the cohesive forces of writing for a purpose and with a conclusion.

#### Reading Comprehension--Prose Organization

Reading is viewed as psycholinguistic processing of written language. Smith, Goodman, and Meredith (1970) state:

While reading, the reader's thought processes interact with written language. He utilizes his store of experience, developed concepts, and learned responses to reconstruct a message that the writer has encoded in language. His responses are cued by systems of signals in language, which he has already basically mastered if he speaks the language he is learning to read. Reading comprehension is message reconstruction. (p. 266)

Comprehension requires that the reader use all of the cues available. Reading instruction, to be complete, must incorporate the understanding that there are cue systems within words, in the flow of language, within the reader, and external to the reader and the language.

Kane (1978), in a review of research into passage level comprehension, states that reading programs give students opportunities to practice orthographic and phonological skills but often fail to provide adequate opportunities to develop skills in text level comprehension so necessary to the successful reader.

Aquino, Mosberg, and Sharron (1969) state that reading comprehension depends on the reader's language competence, the subject matter of the message, and the syntactic and morphological complexity of the language message. Eighth grade students read and responded to the content passages selected from the daily paper. These researchers note that the reader's background information, the author's writing style, the topically related vocabulary, the interest and attitude of the reader and the language and word complexity may reduce/improve reader comprehension. An analysis of variance identified significant differences by subject matter. Science produced significantly better performance on cloze passages.

Morphological and syntactic factors (Latin suffix density, dependent clauses and nominal modifiers) were controlled and observed for influence. A high number of Latin suffixes reduced comprehension.

Inferencing may or may not reduce readability depending on the inferential level. Over explicitness in prose actually reduces readability. Bridging inferences do not increase reading difficulty as long as the reader has appropriate supporting information in his/her background (Kintsch, 1979).

Proposition density influences readability. The number of arguments related to a proposition influences readability (Kintsch, 1979).

The limitations of short term memory in part governs comprehensibility. Kintsch, based on observations resulting from research, states that more important to comprehensibility than limitations of short term memory is the number of reinstatement searches. Reinstatement searches are the processes by which input that does not relate well to what has been previously stored in memory is reviewed in preparation for accommodation of the new material.

A predictive model of comprehension that takes into account what people remember and what makes a text easy or hard is needed. In the broadest sense the text and the reader's goals and purposes should be incorporated into a comprehension model (Kintsch, 1979).

### Propositions

Text analysis techniques that enable systematic observation of some results of listening/reading comprehension of prose material include basic units of meaning called "propositions." Propositions

are an unknown number of word concepts--a predicator and remaining arguments. Arguments are concepts rather than words (Kintsch, 1979; Kintsch, Kozminsky, Streby, McKoon, & Keenan, 1975).

Frederiksen (1972) developed a system for representing text structure--semantic networks--for use in research on prose as it affects learning. These semantic networks were composed of semantic concepts connected by relational links.

Kintsch (1979) notes that prose propositions can be organized into a network called a coherence graph. Coherence rules state that connections are formed whenever the propositions share an argument, meaning that propositions are grouped together when they belong to the same fact. Relationships among propositions do not determine importance to the central topic. Several levels accounting for varying degrees of propositional importance are required.

While systems developed by various researchers differ somewhat in the definitions of concepts connected into networks and in the kinds of elemental meaning relations which connect tokens of meaning with more important semantic elements, all seem to take the same general approach to text structure.

### Memory Structures

Schemata may be viewed as the reader's memory structures on which judgments of incoming material for relevancy, for reader expectations and for implicit/explicit information depend (Kintsch, 1979).

Mandler and Johnson (1977) state that schemata used to encode a story are similar but not identical to schemata used to retrieve a story from memory.

### Schema Theory

Sheridan (1978), in a review of research based on schema theory, developed an overview of several converging models of reading. Of special interest for this study are certain aspects of the written message. Reader analysis of text requires comprehension between and among sentences and paragraphs. For this reason, story structure or prose organization may aid or detract from comprehension of prose. Discourse comprehension is more difficult than comprehension of phrases, clauses, or sentences because it requires inferential awareness across sentences that may be textually far apart (Pearson & Johnson, 1978; Rumelhart & Ortony, 1977; Sheridan, 1978).

Sheridan states of schema theory that:

The underlying assumption of schema theory is that the written text does not in itself convey the meaning, but interacts with the previously acquired knowledge of the reader in retrieving or reconstructing meaning. The goal of schema theory is to map this interaction between textual information and the reader's schema, specifying how knowledge is shaped and stored. (p. 6)

While exploration of schema is not within the province of this paper, it should be noted that substantial research in the area of prose analysis accepts the premises on which the theory is based.

### Story Structure

Many researchers theorize that simple stories, such as fables, have a "structure" or story organization that provides a framework

which aids in reading prediction, comprehension, memory storage and future recall (Bower, 1976; Mandler & Johnson, 1977; Rumelhart & Ortony, 1977; Thorndyke, 1975).

Fables and fairy tales, as an outgrowth of oral story telling tradition, are particularly useful in exploring prose structure as it aids memory. These stories appear to present frequently used regular patterns--probably based on the need to commit them to memory and recall them at some future time (Bower, 1976; Mandler & Johnson, 1977).

Irregular story structures reduce text comprehensibility. Story structure is built of hierarchically placed components with the most important material placed at the top of the hierarchy regardless of component position in the course of the prose. Components high in the hierarchical structure will be best remembered in free recall and in summarizations. Over time, as details are forgotten, retellings look increasingly like summarizations (Bower, 1976; Mandler & Johnson, 1977).

Other research establishes both proposition importance to the topic and hierarchical level as powerful influences on recall (Johnson, 1970; Rumelhart, 1975).

Bower (1976) suggests that story coherence facilitates recall by: fitting a known story frame in which the reader's predictions are often reinforced, by giving a framework for a limited set of retrieval cues for recall, and by establishing redundancy and text interconnectedness. A coherent story is best remembered.

Thorndyke (1975), in developing a hierarchically structured story grammar, theorized that story organizations familiar to the recipient would be utilized to remember new material when that material was a familiar pattern to the reader. The highest level in the hierarchy was represented by setting, theme, plot, and resolution. Less important material was sorted and subordinated within these structures. In a study based upon story grammar theory, Thorndyke used stories presented auditorially or by controlled projection presenting one sentence at a time. Undergraduate college students wrote summaries of the stories. There were no time constraints on response. Scoring was accomplished through the use of propositions (clause or sentence which contained an active or stative verb). Story components remained constant but the structures were presented four ways. The overriding story goal was removed and events were reordered producing the "narrative-no-theme" structure. Another story remained the same as the original except that the overall goal statement was placed at the end of the passage. One group read a randomized arrangement of the story passage. The original story remained unchanged.

Subjects, on a rating scale, identified stories with recognizable organizations as more comprehensible. Recall propositions suggested that both structure and content influence memory for prose. The original story was best remembered, the "narrative-after-theme" was remembered second best, the "narrative-no-theme" third, and the random organization was remembered least well. Recall decreased

as identifiable story structure decreased. Probability of recall of individual propositions was significantly a function of structural importance and hierarchical level. Subjects tended to "regularize" prose structures that were irregular (Thorndyke, 1975).

Kintsch, Mandel, and Kozminsky (1977) theorized that college freshmen, when reading simple stories that followed story structures familiar to them, would be able to summarize the stories equally well when the story paragraphs were presented in order or scrambled. Subsequent experiments strongly supported that position. In addition, the time spent on summarizations was not significantly greater for scrambled stories. However, subjects required a significantly longer reading time for the scrambled stories suggesting that reorganization took place during reading rather than during summary writing. Summaries became identifiable by reading task only when the story followed an organization (schema) less familiar to the reader or when reading time was reduced (Kintsch et al., 1977).

#### Prose Passage Structures

Recall of information is facilitated by well-formed paragraphs and hampered by random sentence grouping when the same sentences are used (Perlmutter & Royer, 1973). The good reader when compared to the poor reader will make better, rather than different, use of those structures in recall (Bridge, 1977; Mandler & Johnson, 1977; Meyer, 1977; Thorndyke, 1977).

Meyer (1977), in a review of her research relating prose structure to recall, states that structure of prose is a powerful

variable in determining which ideas from a passage will be recalled. The development of prose analysis techniques enables identification and study of prose characteristics that affect comprehension and recall. Prose analysis techniques view a passage as a complex proposition that can be segmented into subpropositions preserving levels of importance and individual proposition relationships.

A series of studies using both oral and read text input were controlled for proposition position in the text and numbers of presentations. In addition, age groups, intelligence levels and reading levels were varied and controlled. Results repeatedly and significantly demonstrated that the most important propositions were best recalled. This was true for immediate response, after time had elapsed, for free recall and when using text controlled questions (Meyer, 1977). However, all important propositions were not equally well recalled. Vertical propositional relationships had some influence on recall of a proposition. Recall of a proposition meant that the next higher related proposition had a 70% probability of also being recalled. Overall recall was about 23%. These results demonstrate that recall was influenced by hierarchical level and relatedness to more important content. Oral and written input exhibited similar patterns of recall. Similar results, manipulating a number of variables, were observed in other research (Johnson, 1970; Kintsch et al., 1975).

When varying the content but keeping structures identical, Meyer (1977) observed that prose structure had greater influence on recall than did specific content.

Meyer suggests that the learner needs to have an organization of ideas presented to him. The reader most often uses the ready-made structure of the passage for retention and recall.

In a series of easy reading paragraphs varied by the number of arguments (word concepts) and length of text bases, but with propositions held constant, subjects read, and subsequently wrote their recalls using whatever time they needed. Reading times per proposition were significantly greater for both short and long passages when many-different-arguments texts were read. Non-significant lower scores were also recorded on recall. Propositions of greatest importance to the passage structure were best recalled. Since propositions were interspersed throughout the passage, this result could not be attributed to primacy effect (Kintsch et al., 1975).

Subject matter (history and science) produced large differences in per proposition reading time. Science material took longer to read, and since processing time per proposition is one measure of text difficulty, that material was deemed more difficult to read. The explanation for this result was that processing material unfamiliar to the reader may be a different process from storage of familiar material (Kintsch et al., 1975).

Prose organization and reading instructions were varied for six experimental groups composed of sixty eleventh and twelfth grade high school students who were asked to read prose passages organized semantically, temporally and randomly. Free recall analysis showed

that students could use semantically and temporally organized prose equally well in free recall of textual material, and both organizations were significantly superior to random organization. These results were observed for both recall of target words and total recall. Cued recall results showed that best results were produced by semantic organization of cues particularly when the text organization was also semantic (Kulhavy, Schmid, & Walker, 1977).

In research using two prose organizations often used in textbooks (conceptual and chronological) it was found that these prose organizations facilitate text recall equally well. Both are far superior to a random arrangement of sentences within paragraphs. These results were true for target words as well as total words. Study subjects (high school students) read differentially organized paragraphs four sentences in length (Kulhavy, Schmid, & Walker, 1977). Other research exploring the effects of passage and/or sentence organization on retention under highly controlled circumstances were noted (Frase, 1973; Sasson, 1971).

Myers, Pezdek, and Coulson (1973) presented college undergraduates with prose material describing fictitious countries in three ways: by name, by attribute, and randomly. Paragraphs and responses were timed. The sentences remained the same but presentation arrangement was varied. The attribute organization produced the best recall with the least organization of the material for recall. Another study explored memory for related sentences using prose material ordered temporally and conceptually. Prose passages were

presented in a highly controlled manner. No significant differences between these two organizations were observed (Sasson, 1971).

Some studies have demonstrated a maturational factor in the ability to identify and recall ideas that fall below central ideas in passage structure (Christie & Schumacher, 1975; Brown and Smiley, 1977; McConaughy, 1980). Regardless of subjects' ages, the most important ideas were recalled best. McConaughy (1980) noted differences in recall reflecting cognitive differences of specific individuals.

Pichert and Anderson (1977) presented college undergraduates with one of two perspectives, or no perspective for reading passages. The questions asked were whether more important idea units, rated in terms of assigned perspectives or no perspective, were best remembered and whether the recall of an idea unit depended on the reading perspective. The significance of an idea in terms of a given perspective meaningfully influenced recall. Not all ideas were equally influenced by perspective.

Goal set or frame of reference also influences reading comprehension. When subjects are presented with a purpose for reading, that purpose is reflected in what is remembered as important. (Gagne & Rothkopf, 1975; Kozminsky, 1977; Pichert & Anderson, 1977).

Using news stories as information bases organized in a familiar, naturalistic format, Thorndyke (1977) compared the post-reading free recall of topically important information after reading an original news article and after reading reorganized articles that included a condensed version and two re-organizations (narrative and topical) of

the condensed version. An outline form of reorganization was introduced in a second test of post reading free recall. The original article and the reorganized articles contained the same number of centrally important propositions. Results showed that recall by college undergraduates, of topically well-related propositions was significantly greater for all reorganizations than for the original news story. No significant differences were observed among reorganized text recalls although it was noted that a narrative style resulted in best overall recall.

Frederiksen (1975), in a study that focused on recall of semantic content beyond specific text content, asked whether the presence of material such as overgeneralization, inferred concepts, and semantic relations was there as a result of information overload during acquisition; whether it developed during the process of recall; and whether repeated exposure to the text would reduce presence of this material in recall. Frederiksen used a structure similar to a conventional outline as a base for scoring. Story presentation to college undergraduates was oral (taped). Overgeneralized responses and inferred responses were found to be a part of the acquisition process. These types of responses were a means of reducing the information processed and a way to handle incompletely processed information. Elaborative responses were found to be generated during recall. Of note was the observation that the derived material was retained after repeated exposure to the text.

Christie and Schumacher (1975) orally presented to kindergarten, second and fifth grade children prose passages composed of equal

numbers of relevant and irrelevant idea units. The study design enabled observation of age related recall differences in recall of relevant and irrelevant material and age related trends in recall order. Second graders recalled significantly more relevant idea units than kindergartners. Second grade students displayed no significant differences in recall of relevant ideas when compared to fifth grade students. Irrelevant material was recalled significantly more often by second graders in comparison to kindergartners, and by fifth graders in comparison to second graders. Children preserved the order of presentation in the recall of relevant material to a greater extent than in the recall of irrelevant material. All children displayed more total recall with age. Relevant information was recalled more often than irrelevant material across all ages (Christie & Schumacher, 1975).

Bridge (1977) analyzed the quantity and type of inferred information recalled by third grade students after reading prose material. Both reading and recall tasks were oral. Responses were taped and scored according to Frederiksen's (1972) system of text analysis. Significant findings ( $p < .01$ ) determined that good readers recalled: more explicit information, more inferred information, and gave longer total recalls. Proportions of type of recall did not vary significantly for good and poor readers. However, poor readers recalled significantly more general inferential concepts than good readers while good readers made significantly more inferences based on dependent (causal) relationships.

### Propositions as Meaning Units

Propositions, as the meaning units of prose analysis, have evolved in several ways.

Hunt's T-unit is described as the least possible grammatical unit that is a sentence. The T-unit represents discourse form (syntax). Meaning from this unit is derived from the words and their interrelationships within the unit. The T-unit was originally designed to assess syntactic maturity and has most often been used for analysis of student writing (Marino, 1980).

Marino in a review of discourse analysis techniques states that Hunt's T-unit, which represents the form of discourse, has been used for the proposition unit in discourse analysis by using the meaning (content words) as well as word meaning interrelationships of the T-unit. The simplest form of the proposition consists of a predicate and one or more arguments (nouns, or words used as nouns which are qualifiable).

Bridge (1977), as well as Brown and Smiley (1977), adapted propositions to the needs of their studies. Bridge classified propositions as either explicit or implicit. Brown and Smiley classified propositions as topically relevant or irrelevant. Brown and Smiley used "pausal units" originally developed by Johnson (1970), defined as a unit containing an idea and segmented by points at which the reader would naturally pause in reading.

### Retelling

Presentation of the products of the reading act is considered an essential phase of knowing and should be integral to the school

program. Writing, seen as presentation rather than as an adjunct skill, becomes essential to the learning process (Smith et al., 1970).

Rigg and Taylor (1979) state that retelling requires organizing information from reading into a coherent form. Instructional technique needs to focus on getting meaning from the text and processing that meaning through recollection and reflection. Retelling encourages this process.

Smith (1979) believes that learning emphasis has been on external control by the instructor and by materials which may inhibit the learner in assuming responsibility for learning and developing his thinking processes. She views reading as interactive (reader and writer) and inseparable from cognitive events. Schema theory, and other similar theories, link reading comprehension to previous and subsequent comprehension suggesting that meaningful learning depends on the integration of new information to existing knowledge structures. Knowledge systems require updating and formation of new structures. In light of schema theory, Smith suggests that oral or written retelling gives the best indication of what happens in the reading process when the responder is comfortable with this response mode. The emphasis should be on the thinking process and the reader's interaction with the text. Smith places emphasis on the reader as author of his own version of content. Retelling is the best way to, in some manner, observe the reader's structuring. Retellings may be an imperfect response mode but are the least contaminated by outside influences and should be an essential component of the classroom program (Smith, 1979).

Retelling, either oral or written, has been the response mode used in nearly every study reviewed in the field of prose structure as it influences reading comprehension. This observation suggests that the retelling is not only accepted but is the technique of choice in this field of study.

#### Summary

Newswriting, one form of journalistic writing, has distinctive characteristics and is tailored to the needs of daily newspapers.

Formula readability is reported and a wide range of readability factors are noted. Studies of prose organization as an influence on reading comprehension have been reviewed.

Research has revealed some information about prose level organization as it affects reader comprehension. Only one study was found to have used news prose to observe the effects of passage organization. Journalistic style prose as found in newswriting was less well recalled by college undergraduates than were reorganized passages.

Recent research into the influence of story structure and prose organization has yielded some information. The reader will remember the most important ideas best and most often use input passage structures for later retelling. When details are remembered, the more important ideas relationally tied to these details are more apt to be remembered. The reader better comprehends prose structures that are known and conventionally presented. Where prose is atypically organized or poorly organized, the reader is likely to take longer

reading the passage and tends to "regularize" the structures during reading for later recall. Patterns of recall for good readers and poor readers are similar but good readers will retain quantitatively more from the reading process. Good readers make inferences based on text material. Poor readers are more apt to make general inferences. Not all important ideas are remembered equally well. There is evidence of maturational factors related to thinking processes in recall of passages.

Most studies of prose material structures are presented in a high controlled manner. Studies of how the reader comprehends from more natural prose material are desirable.

Little study has been made of reader interaction with material read beyond retelling or summarization of the text. Recall after listening and after reading exhibits similar patterns providing the grounds for admitting reviews of two studies where some observation of reader produced material was made.

Recall/retelling/summarization is a frequently used and accepted response mode in text analysis research. The procedure possesses potential for the classroom.

## Chapter III

### Design of the Study

The intent of this study was to determine whether the prose style typified by daily newswriting facilitates or hinders reader retention of ideas central to a topic under the conditions described. A companion question raises the issue of whether that same prose style may facilitate reader involvement resulting in the greater production of ideas related to a topic.

#### Questions

1. Will mean performances differ significantly in the written recall of core propositions after reading an original news story and after reading a condensed form of a news story?

2. Will the mean ratios of reader developed propositions to total passage propositions differ significantly on a written recall of ideas after reading an original news article and after reading a condensed article?

#### Method

##### Subjects

Thirty-five Upstate New York public high school seniors from a suburban, middle class community enrolled in an advanced placement English course participated in research conducted in June, 1980.

Twenty-five out of 35 students conformed to the test schedule of one

practice session and two test sessions. Statistical evaluation of test results was confined to the twenty-five students who participated in three sessions.

### Instruments

Two daily news articles were chosen as comparable in number of core propositions (8) and similarity in lengths (327 words and 341 words). These two articles were selected from midwestern papers, The Kansas City Star and The Milwaukee Journal and were written by local reporters. Topics of the news articles were considered distant from subjects' daily lives and deemed unlikely to have been previously read in local newspapers, heard on local television news or considered in conversation with other people.

The original news articles were used as they appeared in the newspaper.

The condensed articles were constructed by minimally reorganizing the core propositions identified in the original articles. The reorganization maintained the language patterns of the core propositions but improved the language flow. The condensed articles appear similar to writing frequently found in textbooks.

Core propositions used in the development of the condensed articles and for scoring purposes were identified by determining an essential relationship to the topic as developed in the initial topic setting sentences of the news articles.

Using the Dale Chall Readability Formula, one original article was identified as grade levels 7-8 and the other as grade levels 5-6.

The lengths of the condensed articles were 160 words and 134 words. Formula readability for the condensed articles was grade levels 7-8 but the two rewrites represented the extremes of the grade 7-8 range. These levels were considered well within the reading capabilities of the test subjects.

A practice article, similar in length, formula readability, and topic remoteness to the original news articles, was used on the first of the three days of testing to familiarize subjects with testing procedures. A pilot study was used in the final development of research instruments and procedures.

### Procedures

Research participants read one original article and responded by retelling the article and by recalling his/her own ideas about the article. One read/respond procedure was completed each day of testing.

Directions for retelling were: "Please retell this news article. Use the words of the author or paraphrase (in your own words) what you have just read."

Directions for recalling ideas stimulated by reading an article were: "Recall as many of your own ideas resulting from reading this news article as possible. React to the writer's thoughts. Extend beyond the writer's ideas. Judge the writer's ideas."

Directions were given both orally and in writing. The direction that subjects read through the articles only once was emphasized.

On the first day of testing, subjects rehearsed the reading/response procedures. On the second test day, subjects responded to an original article or a condensed article and on the third day subjects responded to the alternate article and style. The study design was counterbalanced for topic, passage organization, order of response, and day of response.

The counterbalanced design was maintained by a numbering system and by color coding which provided a quick visual identification system. Responses were not identified by name. On the second day of testing (the first non-practice day), tests were distributed so that four tests, varied by topic, style, and response order, were distributed for every four test subjects. Distribution order for the second class was a continuation of the order used for the first class. The two groups were treated as one even though the classes met separately.

Scoring of responses from the text recall task was accomplished by subdividing the core propositions and then identifying essential elements within those propositions. If the essential elements of the proposition were satisfied by the rewritten article, then those elements coupled with any other elements of the proposition contained in the response, became the numerator of a fraction. The denominator of the fraction consisted of the total number of subdivisions (elements) within the proposition and varied with each proposition. The total score of a response became the sum of the fractions (see Appendix B).

Both a flexible system and a strict system were utilized for judging the adequacy of a paraphrase. Care was taken to maintain

consistency throughout the scoring. Scoring of the task requiring reader-recalled ideas consisted of identifying the propositions developed by the reader. A ratio of ideas developed to ideas read was formed and then totaled. No attempt was made to gauge proposition quality.

### Statistical Analysis

Statistical comparison of scores resulting from retelling the article or recalling ideas about the article after reading either of the two prose organizations were made using two-tailed t tests for independent means. The same procedure was employed in the development of incidental findings.

### Summary

Twenty-five high school seniors in an elected advance placement English class read two prose organizations, one a daily news article and the other a condensed version of a daily news article. Subjects then responded by retelling the articles and by recalling their ideas about the articles.

The design was counter-balanced for topic, style, response order and day of response.

The research required part of three class periods for the two participating classes. Three consecutive days were used, one as a rehearsal and two for research.

The scores resulting from the written recalls of the prose materials and the written recalls of reader developed ideas were analyzed statistically using t tests.

## Chapter IV

### Statistical Analysis

The purpose of this research study was to determine whether the recall of topically important information and the expression of reader-developed ideas about the topic was better facilitated by news writing as it appears in the daily paper or by a condensed version of the same prose material.

#### Scoring

Data for statistical analysis for question one were collected by scoring for adequacy of the recall of the eight core propositions. Individual core propositions were subdivided into meaning components (see Appendix B). Essential components were underlined and required in the recall before any credit could be given for a single proposition. If the essential components of a proposition were present in the recall, then those components plus any additional components in the recall of a proposition were totaled and became the numerator of a fraction whose denominator was the total possible components of a given proposition. The denominator, the number of possible components, varied with the individual proposition. A score was derived by adding the fractions.

Care was taken to maintain a uniform interpretation across all written recalls and responses were not identified by prose organization during scoring although that information was cued by some responses.

Any question of interpretation was noted and at the completion of scoring, a decision was made and each written recall was reviewed in light of that decision.

For question one, two separate sets of scores were computed. One set of scores resulted from a flexible interpretation of scoring that accepted general recall of text material including class references and several inferences. A second scoring was based on a strict interpretation of material deemed the same or very close to what was read. For example, the article describing the investigation of a tractor theft ring at one point names the states "Illinois, Iowa and Missouri." The liberal scoring system accepted "midwestern states" or the names of three midwestern states, where only two states were correctly named. The strict scoring system required the accurate naming of the three states. The flexible interpretation accepted general recall and the strict interpretation did not.

For the second question, data for statistical analysis were collected by identifying and counting the number of propositions present in the reader-developed written recalls. Ratios of number of propositions developed by the reader to number of propositions read became the scoring units. These ratios were totaled for individual scores. It was felt that the tendency of some writers to employ more subordinate clauses, and thereby develop uncounted ideas, would not distort the results of the study because of the counter-balanced design. Analysis was limited to quantity of ideas produced by readers.

Findings

Null Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference in mean student performance in the written recall of core propositions after reading an original news story and after reading a condensed form of the news story.

Table 1

Flexible Scoring - Recall of Core Propositions

	Original	Condensed	Findings
Number	25	25	
Mean of Scores	3.2593	3.7014	
Standard Deviation	1.4135	1.8881	
Calculated $t$			0.9372
Critical $t$ (independent, two-tailed)			2.021

( $\alpha$  .05, df = 48)

The  $t$  test for independent means failed to reject the null hypothesis. There was no significant difference in the mean recall of core propositions after reading an original news story and after reading a condensed form of the same news story based upon scores derived from a flexible scoring interpretation.

Table 2  
 Strict Scoring - Recall of Core Propositions

	Original	Condensed	Findings
Number	25	25	
Mean Scores	1.3832	2.1688	
Standard Deviation	1.0863	1.6885	
Calculated $t$			1.9567
Critical $t$			2.021

( $\alpha$  .05, df = 48)

The calculated  $t$  test for independent means failed to reject the null hypothesis. There was no significant difference in the mean recall of core proposition after reading an original news story and after reading a condensed form of the same news story based upon scores derived from a strict scoring interpretation.

Null Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference in the mean ratios of reader-developed ideas after reading an original news article and after reading a condensed article.

Table 3

## Recall of Reader-developed Ideas

	Original	Condensed	Findings
Number	25	25	
Mean of Scores	.3378	.7900	
Standard Deviation	.1221	.2000	
Calculated $t$			9.6418
Critical $t$ (independent, two-tailed)			3.551

( $\alpha$  .001,  $df = 48$ )

The  $t$  test for independent means rejected the null hypothesis. There was significant difference in the recall of reader-developed propositions after reading an original news story and after reading a condensed form of the same news story. The condensed news stories, based upon ratios of propositions developed to propositions read, stimulated greater idea development.

Analysis and Interpretation of Hypotheses

Whether scoring was accomplished using a flexible interpretation of scoring or a strict interpretation of scoring, the recall of core

propositions was not significantly different after reading an original news story or a condensed version of a news story.

A trend towards better exact recall of propositions after reading a condensed news story may be present. A strict interpretation of scoring, in contrast to a flexible interpretation, produces results that would have been significant at lower standards.

In relation to propositions read, readers recalled more reader-produced propositions after reading condensed news articles. These results were highly significant.

#### Incidental Findings

By regrouping the scores based upon day of administration, topic of the article and the response order, additional observations were made. Table 4 shows the potential influence of day, topic, and order using a flexible scoring system while Table 5 shows these potential influences using a strict scoring system.

Table 4  
Flexible Scoring - Question 1

	Calculated $\underline{t}$	Critical $\underline{t}$
Day of Response	.5937	2.704
Topic of Article	.5825	2.704
Order of Response	3.2469	2.704

( $\alpha$  .01, df = 48)

Table 5  
 Strict Scoring - Question 1

	Calculated $t$	Critical $t$
Day of Response	.3197	2.704
Topic of Article	1.6041	2.704
Order of Response	2.8762	2.704

( $\alpha$  .01, df = 48)

Neither the day of response nor the topic of the article produced significantly different recall of core propositions under a flexible or a strict scoring interpretation.

In contrast, the order of response was highly significant in the recall of core propositions whether the scoring was flexible or strict. Recall of core propositions was better when it preceded the recall of reader-developed ideas.

The same patterns of regrouping were examined relative to research question two. The results are shown in Table 6.

Table 6  
 Regrouped Scores - Question 2

	Calculated $t$	Critical $t$
Day of Response	.1172	2.704
Topic of Article	.3500	2.704
Order of Response	.7538	2.704

( $\alpha$  .01, df = 48)

Day of response, topic of the article or order of response were not significant influences in the recall of reader-developed ideas.

#### Summary

Journalistic style writing in the form of daily newswriting did not enhance reader retention and retelling of important specific information. Neither did daily news writing inhibit retention and retelling of the passages' core propositions. Condensed versions of the same news article facilitated recall of core propositions equally well. The condensed organization required less reading to convey the essential factual material and more efficiently conveyed factual material to the reader.

In terms of material read, the condensed news stories stimulated greater recall of the readers' own ideas.

Among the incidental findings, it was noted that the day of response and the topic of the article had no bearing on the recall of core propositions or the development of ideas. In addition, the order of response had no bearing on the readers' production of ideas. However, the recall of core propositions was significantly reduced when their recall was the second task.

## Chapter V

### Conclusions and Implications

The purpose of this research study was to compare the effects of reading an original news article and a condensed article on reader retention and reader development of ideas.

#### Conclusions

In reference to question 1, written responses displayed no meaningful differences in recall of core propositions after reading original news articles or condensed versions of the same articles. Overall student recall of core propositions, the most important ideas in a news story, was neither helped nor hindered by the journalistic style writing in comparison to a condensed version of the same writing.

The condensed versions of the news stories, in fewer words, conveyed the most important ideas as well as the original news stories. If the reader's purpose is to learn important factual information, concise text-like writing may better serve the reader as a more efficient use of his/her efforts.

In this study the condensed news stories used fewer words and comparable or more difficult concept density than the original articles. This observation is made based on the presence of the same core propositions in either prose organization and the

observation that additional material in the original article was less important and included opinion and personal observations of an uncomplicated nature. It is possible, under different circumstances, that amplifying statements resulting in longer prose passages would help clarify difficult concepts.

When other considerations for reading daily news stories (current, topically interesting, appeal of the medium) prevail and when literal recall of factual information is the purpose of reading, the skilled reader will utilize the writing of daily news stories or condensed versions of those stories equally well. These results cannot be generalized to more densely constructed news stories or to other forms of journalistic writing.

Neither the lenient scoring interpretations nor the strict scoring interpretation produced significant differences in retention of main ideas (i.e., core propositions). The results of strict scoring suggest a trend in favor of the condensed organization of news material in the recall of factually specific information. Significant differences might have emerged had the passages been longer, denser, or topically more difficult. If a trend is present, the implication is that while a general understanding of the main ideas may be equally well facilitated by either of the two prose organizations, specific restatement of facts was better after reading the condensed material.

Question 2 examined prose passages as stimuli for the development of ideas resulting from the reader's interaction with what he/she has read. The condensed passage was meaningfully superior to the

original passage as a stimulus of ideas when scoring was based on ratios of ideas produced to ideas read.

Order of response influenced reader performance when the task was recalling the main ideas in the prose material. The reader was better able to tell what he had read when passage recall was the first task. Short term memory may have increased the number of propositions retold when the first task was to recall the passage. Or, idea development may hinder the interactive processes by which information retained from the passage became a part of the long term memory.

#### Implications for Research

Replication of this study, varying the scoring system and varying the subjects would be useful in determining whether the findings extend beyond the terms of this study. Systematic study of the influence of other forms of journalistic writing such as in-depth reporting, feature writing, or editorial writing would promote informed use of the newspaper in the classroom. This information may also be useful to the newspaper industry in developing writing for specific purposes.

In the present study, a portion of one proposition was more often incorrectly recalled than correctly recalled. "Authorities have recovered nine tractors and other farm equipment" was more often recalled as "nine tractors and other farm equipment were stolen." Clearly the two statements are not the same. There appears to be no basis for equating "equipment stolen" with "equipment recovered" although all of the recovered equipment had been stolen.

Analysis of errors in apprehension of passage ideas may reveal that certain prose organizations result in a higher incidence of recall error. It would be in the interests of both writer and reader to know the potential effects of prose organization on error production. Identification of error-passage relationships would aid in the selection of prose material for the reader and aid in the development of skilled readers.

Identifying prose factors that influence the interaction of the writer and the reader should be a primary goal of research in this field. A related goal should be the development of analysis techniques efficient enough and flexible enough to be employed in the classroom to gather information regarding the influence of prose material on groups of readers and, diagnostically, on the individual reader.

If, as Meyer (1977) observes, the reader most often utilizes the organization of the material read to retell that material, then it is important to look at the recalled paragraphs as texts themselves and ask what influence the prose material read has on the resulting written material. What overall lasting effects reader exposure to news material will have on the quality of organization of retold material or on overall student writing development is of particular interest. Other prose material should be examined for organization influence. Patterning of written material resulting from prose organizations used in reading could have important consequences for selection of materials to be read and responded to by the learner.

Prose analysis research should also explore the atypical organization of some retellings. Meyer noted that a few readers, rather than using the organization of the material read to govern the material retold, used highly independent organizations. Casual observation of responses developed for this study noted one or two individualized responses. Why these reorganizations occur and their possible relationship to thinking processes and to learning is of value in understanding reading as a language and thinking skill.

In an inspection of the responses to question 2, it was noted that little overall difference existed among responses while stimulus passages were very different. Additional research is needed to better understand the process of idea development. Whether idea development is a post reading phenomenon; whether idea production varies with the length and content of the prose passage; and, what factors are particularly influential in nurturing idea development are all questions that should be asked in the development and utilization of thinking skills in receptive and expressive language.

Analysis of the quality of ideas produced after reading various types of prose organization would be of value to the development of creative and independent thinking. Bridges (1977) noted that good readers made significantly more inferences dependent upon the text. Poor readers, while using the same proportion of inferences in their total recalls, developed qualitatively different inferences. Poor readers used inferences that were more global and overgeneralized.

Research is needed to better understand the role of prose structures in productive recall. This study only established that the condensed material produced proportionately more ideas in relation to ideas read but numerically the number of ideas was much the same regardless of the passage read. Idea development may be in response to main ideas of a passage rather than to the overall passage.

The impact of retelling on the development of the reader's ability to organize the ideas that he has read should be studied. Retelling as it influences retention of ideas should also be studied.

#### Implications for the Classroom

Text-like prose is a more efficient stimulus than daily news articles for specific recall of main ideas. However, the number of ideas recalled is the same for either format.

Where retelling of prose material is used as a post reading activity, it should precede creative and inferential thinking activities.

Educators may feel confident in taking advantage of the variety of interesting and current topics found among daily news articles. Noting the results of Thorndyke's (1977) research using news prose, the teacher is cautioned against generalizing results of this study to other forms of journalistic writing or descriptively dissimilar prose found in the newspaper.

The procedures used to study prose organization have value for the classroom. Systematic observation of summarizations and

retellings encourages identification of reading materials not suited to the reader. This practice also encourages more precise awareness of how the reader is apprehending what is read. These techniques recognize that prose often incorporates several main ideas and permits the flexibility to let the writer-reader interaction govern the output. Often external control is imposed by questioning and a true picture of the results of reading are missing. Rigg and Taylor (1979) note that the teacher often exerts external control and that such control may at times operate at the expense of the reader-writer interaction.

It is useful to note that the additional "discussion" incorporated in the original news story was of no particular value in the greater stimulation of ideas. There are no grounds for the teacher to anticipate that journalistic materials, through the use of a more conversational style, will stimulate the reader to think more extensively on a subject.

#### Summary

In answer to study question 1, daily news articles and condensed versions of the articles facilitated reader retention equally well. A trend in favor of the condensed article may be present when specific facts are required.

The development of reader ideas in relation to ideas read is markedly better after reading the condensed organization and renders findings for question 2 highly significant.

The findings of this study have value for future research and for classroom practice. A discussion of potential avenues for other research resulting from this research is developed. The value and limitations of these findings for the classroom are noted.

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APPENDIX A

TEST INSTRUMENTS

Original News Story  
Condensed News Story

Birthdate \_\_\_\_\_

Year in school \_\_\_\_\_

Goals for next year \_\_\_\_\_

Long term goals, when known \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Please remember this color for tomorrow.

1. Read this news article through once at your own pace.
2. Fold the page back and do not refer to it again.
3. Read the response page directions.  
(Response order varies from test to test.)  
Proceed at your own pace.
4. When the first response is completed, repeat directions 2 & 3.
5. When you have completed the second response turn the test packet over to signal that you are done and go on to work of your own.

Doniphan County authorities are continuing an investigation into an interstate tractor theft ring thought to be operating out of northeast Kansas.

"This thing just continues to mushroom, and at this point it hasn't settled down," said Doniphan County Prosecutor Alan Boeh.

Authorities have recovered nine tractors and other farm and heavy equipment worth more than \$200,000. The tractors were stolen in Illinois, Iowa and Missouri, and other equipment came from as far away as Montana.

In the latest developments, an Elwood, Kansas, man was arrested for a second time in connection with the theft ring. And sheriff's officers, using a backhoe Thursday, unearthed a buried diesel engine thought to be part of a stolen and dismantled semi-tractor.

Boeh said the evidence could lead to new charges.

"We aren't at the end yet," he said. "There appears to be a great deal of activity that still needs to be investigated."

David Malloy, 20, was picked up Thursday in Liberty, Missouri, after Kansas law enforcement officials charged him with two new counts of felony theft and conspiracy.

The latest charges stem from the recovery last fall of a tractor stolen from Pittsfield, Illinois. Doniphan County Sheriff Jerry Dubach said it had taken since then to develop enough information to charge Malloy with the theft.

Malloy was free on bond on earlier charges of conspiracy to commit felony theft and possession of stolen goods.

The Missouri Highway Patrol arrested Malloy after Doniphan County authorities informed them of the charge and Malloy's whereabouts. Malloy who was being held in the Clay County jail in Liberty, has said he will fight extradition to Kansas, Dubach said.

Prosecutor Boeh said he still is working with the FBI on potential new criminal charges, adding that information developed in Doniphan County had resulted in recovery of more stolen property in Missouri in recent weeks.

Three men have been fined and given suspended sentences in the theft ring, including John Fetter, former mayor of Wathena, Kansas.





Birthdate \_\_\_\_\_

Year in school \_\_\_\_\_

Goals for next year \_\_\_\_\_

Long term goals, when known \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Please remember this color for tomorrow.

1. Read this news article through once at your own pace.
2. Fold the page back and do not refer to it again.
3. Read the response page directions.

(Response order varies from test to test.)

Proceed at your own pace.

4. When the first response is completed, repeat directions 2 & 3.
5. When you have completed the second response turn the test packet over to signal that you are done and go on to work of your own.

To the surprise of some auto club members who have been billed for towing services this winter, the American Automobile Association changed its towing rules in December.

The change ended a policy that had permitted an auto club member to have a disabled vehicle towed anywhere within five miles or no charge.

AAA now pays only to tow a vehicle back to the station that sent the truck or some point along that route. A member is billed for any mileage off the direct route or beyond 10 miles.

William Meier of West Milwaukee said he found out about the new policy when a gas station trouble shooter sent by AAA could not start his car and hoisted it up with the tow truck to take it to his station. Meier asked to be towed home.

"I had no idea whatsoever," Meier said. "There wasn't much I could do with the car on the back of his truck. It was the first time in a long time that I had to use AAA road service, and I got charged \$14 for the towing."

So Meier quit AAA.

Wisconsin AAA spokesman Maynard (Skip) Schneider said the state's 391,000 members received ample notification. Only a limited number of members seem to be affected, he added.

"There are minimal extra charges to members in only 15% of the total requests for service," Schneider said, "In any case, the AAA member saves \$10 to \$20 per towing call, based on the commercial rates paid by non-members."

The saving is based on the new AAA rule, in which AAA pays the cost of any towing mileage up to 10 miles on a direct route back to the station that sent the truck.

Schneider said the rule change was announced in November, 1978--a year in advance of the effective date--in a magazine named *Traveler*, which is delivered to AAA members.

The notice appeared as a 2½-inch item on page 38 of the magazine that month. A longer notice appeared in the November, 1979, issue explaining the change.





Birthdate \_\_\_\_\_

Year in school \_\_\_\_\_

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An investigation into an interstate tractor theft ring, thought to be operating out of northeast Kansas, is being continued by the Oniphan County authorities.

Nine tractors and other farm and heavy equipment worth more than 200,000 have been recovered by authorities. The tractors were stolen in Illinois, Iowa and Missouri. Other equipment came from as far away as Montana.

On Thursday, sheriff's officers, using a backhoe, unearthed a buried diesel engine thought to be part of a stolen and dismantled semi-tractor.

In the latest developments, an Elwood, Kansas man was arrested for a second time in connection with the theft ring.

Prosecutor Boeh said that there appears to be a great deal of activity that still needs to be investigated and that he is still working with the FBI on potential new criminal charges.





Birthdate \_\_\_\_\_

Year in school \_\_\_\_\_

Goals for next year \_\_\_\_\_

Long term goals, when known \_\_\_\_\_

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The American Automobile Association changed its towing rules in December, to the surprise of some auto club members who have been billed for towing services this winter. The change ended a policy that had permitted an auto club member to have a disabled vehicle towed anywhere within five miles for no charge.

Now AAA pays only to tow a vehicle back to the station that sent the truck or to some point along that route. A member is billed for any mileage off the direct route or beyond 10 miles.

Ample notification was received by the state's 391,000 members, says Wisconsin AAA spokesman, Maynard (Skip) Schneider. The rule change was announced in November, 1978--a year in advance of the effective date--in a magazine name Traveler which is delivered to AAA members. The notice appeared as a 2½-inch item on page 38 of the magazine that month. A longer notice appeared in the November, 1979, issue explaining the change.





APPENDIX B  
CORE PROPOSITION SCORING FORMS

## CORE PROPOSITION SCORE SHEET

## Tractor - Theft - Ring

1. Doniphan (authorities)  
County authorities  
are continuing  
an investigation  
into an interstate (ring)  
tractor (ring)  
theft ring  
thought to be operating  
out of northeast Kansas
2. Authorities  
have recovered  
nine tractors  
and other (equipment)  
farm (equipment)  
and heavy equipment  
worth  
more than \$200,000
3. The tractors  
were stolen  
in Illinois, Iowa and Missouri
4. and other equipment  
came from as far away  
as Montana
5. In the latest developments  
an Elwood (man)  
Kansas man  
was arrested  
for a second time  
in connection  
with the theft ring
6. And sheriff's officers  
using a backhoe  
Thursday  
unearthed  
a buried (engine)  
diesel engine  
thought to be part  
of a stolen (semi-tractor)  
and dismantled semi-tractor
7. There appears  
to be a great deal  
of activity  
that still needs  
to be investigated (Boeh said)
8. Prosecutor Boeh  
said he  
still  
is working  
with the FBI  
on potential (charges)  
new  
criminal charges

## CORE PROPOSITION SCORE SHEET

## AAA - Towing - Charges

1. to the surprise  
of some (members)  
auto club members  
who (members)  
have been billed  
for towing services  
this winter  
the American Automobile Association  
changed  
its towing rules  
in December
2. The change  
ended  
a policy  
that  
had permitted  
an auto club member  
to have  
a disabled vehicle  
towed  
anywhere  
within five miles  
for no charge
3. AAA  
now pays  
only to tow  
a vehicle  
back  
to the station  
that sent  
the truck  
or some point  
along that route
4. A member  
is billed  
for any mileage  
off  
the direct route  
or beyond  
10 miles
5. Wisconsin (spokesman)  
AAA spokesman  
Maynard (Skip) Schneider  
said  
the state's (members)  
391,000 members  
received  
ample notification
6. Schneider  
said  
the rule change  
was announced  
in November, 1978  
--a year  
in advance  
of the effective date--  
in a magazine  
named the Traveler  
which is delivered  
to AAA members
7. The notice  
appeared  
as a 2½-inch item  
on page 38  
of the magazine  
that month
8. A longer notice  
appeared  
in the November, (issue)  
1979 issue  
explaining  
the change