

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE SOCIALIZED
RECITATION AND THE TRADITIONAL METHOD OF
TEACHING AMERICAN HISTORY IN HIGH SCHOOL

STRATHMORE PARCHMENT

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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE SOCIALIZED RECITATION AND THE TRADITIONAL METHOD OF TEACHING AMERICAN HISTORY IN HIGH SCHOOL

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

It is the purpose of this study to determine the value of the socialized recitation method of teaching American History as compared to the traditional method as practiced in the Kingfisher High School.

Teaching requires impartial and objective data secured under ordinary conditions. This data should be used as a basis for further experimentation and, thus, finally result in a superior type of classroom instruction.

"To be successful and worthwhile, teaching must have as its goal certain aims which will help the student to learn 'The Art of Living'.¹"

When we consider a student's whole life, the acquiring of information must be subordinated to the cultivation of good habits, such as, a taste for good reading, wise use of leisure time, high ideals, clear thinking and speaking, adaptation to group life and the ability to work and cooperate with others. These objectives are of great importance today when people are having to adjust themselves to shorter working hours and a greater amount of leisure time.

Even though it is not possible for every student to acquire these objectives in as great a degree as desired, still every teacher must strive toward that goal.

The socialized recitation is an effective method of teach-

1

Charles L. Robbins, The Socialized Recitation, p. 13.

ing many of the ideals for which teachers are striving. By this device situations are created which are similar to those that exist out in the world.

In this study care was exercised to see that the experimental group and the control group were as nearly equal in ability as possible. However it is easy to see that factors beyond our control may enter in to some extent. With the two groups being as equal as possible, the results of each of the two methods of teaching may be measured and compared as far as achievement in subject matter is concerned.

CHAPTER II

THE SOCIALIZED RECITATION

"Socialization does not mean chaos. Instead it means an orderly program carried on in an orderly manner by orderly students. It does not contemplate turning the class over to its own devices and whims."¹

"Socialization means the creation and development of a feeling which binds members of a group into a unit. It creates a feeling within the individual which causes him to identify his interests with group interests and to look upon the common activities as 'ours' rather than 'mine'. Its absence means the failure of any organization. Mere routine with no other object than satisfying the teacher or meeting the requirements cannot provide that satisfying feeling that is essential to the process of socialization."²

The socialized recitation aims to magnify the importance of pupil-activity. The monopolizing teacher is replaced by group-activity. The cooperative efforts of the pupils, to gain a common purpose are used to awaken new interest, to stimulate pupils in new educational activity, to extend appreciation in new directions, to connect the work of school with life in a better way, to widen the outlook of ambitious

¹ Harl R. Douglass, Modern Methods in High School Teaching, p. 285.

² Charles L. Robbins, The Socialized Recitation, p. 13.

youth, to stimulate them to develop for themselves larger and better ideals for life service, to awaken guiding moral impulses, to train for effective self-direction, and to prepare for socialized living in our complex social and economic and political life. Social and Citizenship aims have thus been added to the older knowledge aim of the school.

Boys and girls of high school age who are full of life and enthusiasm cannot be expected to develop in a natural manner within the confines of a classroom where all naturalness is suppressed. Subject matter is only valuable to a student in so far as it permits him to secure a strong grip on life's problems and makes him an efficient moral and social being.

"The socialized recitation appears to be adapted to the stage of mental development reached by high school pupils. They have for the most part passed through the period of individualism and are thoroughly prepared for participation in group activities."³

Various plans of socialized recitation fall into two general classifications. One of these has been called the formal, institutional, parliamentary, and self-directing type; the other, the informal, the discussion, or the seminar type.

The formal plan of the socialized recitation is the plan of organizing a class for work according to the scheme of some

3

W. H. Johnson, The Socialized Recitation in High School. School Review. 32(November, 1924) p. 683.

adult organization, e. g., the senate, legislature, city council, directors of some industry, labor convention or court of justice.

The informal plan of socialized recitation is less spectacular or novel. Yet it possesses advantages and freedom from some of the limitations of the formal plan, such as questions by the individual student concerning his problem in connection with the subject matter being discussed. These questions may be brought out while they are fresh in his mind.

The informal plan may or may not involve special organization. More discussion is encouraged. The teacher stays in the background while there is cooperation among the students in their work toward a common goal. Division of labor is provided. Plans for locating and furnishing reference material are made in class.

"It is certain that when there exists a feeling of goodwill, a desire for promotion of the work for the good of the group, a feeling of 'we-ness' as well as a desire to do well as individuals, and, the attitude of doing only what is required has disappeared, there is socialized recitation."⁴

The socialized recitation according to Douglass aims to:

"1. Give the student a feeling of responsibility for his own progress.

2. Relieve the teacher of the unnatural position in

⁴

Douglass, op. cit., p 268.

which he is now usually placed, and to provide a favorable situation for the growth of good will between pupil and teacher.

3. Give the pupil goals in terms of work being done and not in terms of satisfying the teacher, securing grades, etc.

4. Develop in the pupil the attitude of helpfulness, the desire to promote the objectives of the group.

5. Develop skill in cooperation, the ability to adjust to and work with others, to repress and stunt individualistic tendencies which threaten good will.

6. Develop the habit and power of initiative and self-reliance.

7. Favor more effective methods of work, as the use of outside references, and the project method.

8. Develop skill in clear thinking, train in proper methods of thinking procedure and awaken an attitude of open-mindedness and suspended judgment.

9. Develop ability to use freedom properly; to manage ones self through the gradual introduction to responsibilities and the gradual removal of restraint and compulsion.

10. Develop skill in oral expression.

11. Acquire certain conventions and attitudes quite important to themselves, such as consideration for others, politeness, willingness to give and take criticism, etc.

12. Create a more impelling interest in work of the subject through the more natural participation of the pupil in discussions, and to give the pupil some self direction of his energies and activities.

13. To make the class period contribute more effectively to the mastery of subject-matter through the use of a psychological approach, and a consequently higher level of attention.

14. Provide more appealing and satisfying activities by formulating procedure more in light of the needs of pupil's nature and the satisfaction of instinctive cravings, such as the desire to construct and manage, the desire for imitation and dramatization, the desire for novelty and variety, and the desire for stimulus of group endeavor.

15. Provide opportunity for intimate contact of the teacher with the activities of young people, carried on in natural manner, and by means of which the teacher may understand better the workings of the pupil's mind.

16. Provide natural stimuli to excel, to desire to lead, and to contribute most to the class procedure."⁵

Other Experiments

Comparatively few scientific experiments to test the value of the socialized recitation have been carried on. Many of those who have tried it have not given it a long enough continued trial to justify any definite statement as to its value. In general those who have given the method a trial favor it.

Maurice W. Taylor, made a comparative study of the socialized recitation and the teacher directed classes. thirty

⁵

Douglass, op. cit., pp. 268-70.

lessons were used as a basis for his study, half of which were conducted by the teacher and the other half were under the socialized recitation plan. Eight of these lessons were from the fifth grade and the remaining twenty-two lessons from the sixth grade. Twelve were in geography and twelve in history, six in physiology and hygiene. Information subjects were used because they offered new and more independent facts. Frequently, after the presentation of the lesson, tests were given to ascertain the comparative results of the two types of procedure as measured by the retention of facts learned.

In each case the results showed that the socialized recitation group exceeded the teacher directed group in achievement.

This would tend to prove that the socialized recitation method was superior. Taylor, in order to prove his point further, reviewed ten of the lessons, five of each type, reversing the method of conducting the recitation. The lessons were chosen at random and the same questions used for the review as were used for the original lesson. The results again favored the socialized recitation method.

The principal conclusions reached by Taylor are:

"1. Under the socialized recitation plan interest and attention are dominant factors.

2. The plan develops courtesy and observance of the rights of others."⁶

A. D. Hamer, carried on a similar study in 1937 with two

⁶

Maurice W. Taylor. "Some Points in Favor of Socialized Recitation". Elementary School Journal. 22 (June, 1922) p. 780

classes in high school algebra. "The entire group was given the Detroit Intelligence test and an arithmetic test, prepared by the instructor. Each pupil's score on the intelligence test and the arithmetic test were combined in terms of sigma index. Each group was given a comprehensive objective test each six weeks. Their individual scores were then averaged and changed to their respective sigma indices. The average for the control group was - .112. The average for the experimental group was .112."

His conclusions were, "The class was sectionalized according to its intelligence and its ability in arithmetic as shown by tests given. The socialized recitation group having a little the higher average (.075 for the experimental and - .075 for the control group) would make one believe that they would normally attain more.

The result of the algebra tests show a slightly higher average for the group instructed by the socialized recitation method, yet the difference is so small that it could not be relied upon as an authority for the change of all recitations to the social type. Yet it is proof that subjects can be taught as well by the socialized method as by the teacher directed classes."

⁷
H. D. Hamer. "A Comparative Study of Socialized and Teacher Directed Class Exercises in Beginning High School Algebra", masters Thesis, Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College, Stillwater, Oklahoma. 1937.

⁸
Ibid.

Another comparative study was made by W. H. Johnson, who studied two pairs of high school classes in Algebra, using one as an experimental and the other as a control group. The pupils in each pair were given the Otis Self-Administering Tests of Mental Ability, and in each pair the control group and the experimental group were of approximately equal average intelligence and had approximately equal ranges of intelligence scores. An informal socialized study plan was used with the experimental group preceeded by short study periods. The control class followed the traditional recitation plan. Johnson reports four advantages of the socialized recitation over the conventional question-answer method. They are:

"1. More enthusiasm and better moral tone toward work, as indicated by less cheating.

2. Better opportunity to study individual pupils and their mental processes.

3. Better opportunity to aid individual pupils on special difficulties.

4. Better grasp of subject matter."⁹

"There are of course criticisms to be offered to all these experiments, however they are very significant as to results. They have left no doubt in the minds of the men conducting them as to the superiority of the socialized procedure."¹⁰

⁹

Johnson, op. cit., pp. 682-3.

¹⁰

Ibid.

CHAPTER III

THE TRADITIONAL METHOD

The traditional method as used in the experiment was largely the question-and-answer type of recitation. The question-and-answer type was supplemented occasionally by other methods as, the topical, the lecture, and the written recitation or combinations of these.

The question-and-answer is employed in all grades from primary through the university, and it is adapted alike to testing, teaching and drilling.

This method is really a conversation between the teacher and pupil, allows the teacher to draw out the child the information or subject matter desired. In more advanced grades the questions may be arranged to require longer, more complex answers. This increases its value in creating thought and organization.

All our best methods build new knowledge on the related old knowledge which is already in the mind. The question-and-answer method is very efficient in connecting facts and events. By the use of well selected questions a large number of important points already passed over can be brought before the class in a short time.

One of the most important uses of this method is found in all inductive teaching. The famous "Socratic method" was simply the question-and-answer method applied by Socrates to teaching new truths. This noted teacher would by a series of

skillful questions calculate to call forth what the pupil already knew, lead him on to new knowledge without actually telling the youth anything himself. This is the very height of good teaching--the goal toward which we all should strive.¹

The inductive method is the child's natural way of learning. Too many teachers have children learn rules and definitions which mean little or nothing to them. This is discouraging to the child and a serious waste of time. It develops bad habits of study by making the pupil think he is learning something when he is not. "Only when the fact or process learned is understood is it true knowledge."²

The inductive method begins with what the child already knows and step by step leads him to understand the new facts or processes. Then the rules and definitions are clear.

The traditional method, as used in our average high school classes, fails to teach the child responsibilities. He addresses the teacher only. The teacher examines instead of teaches, with the result that the pupil tries to meet the requirements of the course, to make a good grade. He awaits questions directed to him personally. In trying to answer these direct questions he loses the trend of thought being presented and the application of these facts to his own problems as well as the objectives of the lesson. It is needless

¹

George Herbert Betts, The recitation, p. 36.

²

Ibid.

to say that when the class is over it is not long until all is forgotten, if the pupil does not understand the working principle of the theory presented.

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CHAPTER IV

THE EXPERIMENT

The community in which this experiment was conducted is the city of Kingfisher, the county seat of Kingfisher county, Oklahoma. The city proper has a population of approximately 3,000 and is located in the central part of an agricultural area, in which wheat is the principal crop.

The senior high school has an enrollment of approximately 225 students, distributed as follows: 60 seniors, 75 juniors, and 90 sophomores. The high school day is divided into six periods of 60 minutes each.

American history is offered to the junior students and is required for graduation by the State Department of Education.

The total enrollment for the year in the two classes of American history was 78. Of the original enrollment, there were 34 members of one class and 36 members of the other class who completed the year in Kingfisher high school. The data given will be based on the work done by these 70 students.

How the Class was Divided

The entire group was given the Otis Self-Administering Test of Mental Ability, Higher Examination: Form A. Then by changing a few students from one class to the other, the two groups were equated as nearly as possible with respect to I. Q., age, and previous scholastic achievements.

Tables I, II, and III, show the results of this intelligence test and the previous grades for the two groups with totals and averages. The results of these factors are shown translated into sigma indices so that the scores may be combined. The sigma index is found by subtracting the mean of the scores from the individual's score and dividing the result by the standard deviation of the group of scores, or

$$\text{sigma index} = \frac{\text{score} - \text{mean}}{\text{standard deviation}} .$$

It will be noticed that the classes were unequal in number and ability as determined by these factors to a greater extent than planned. This leaves a greater number of students in the experimental group than in the control group. The experimental group having a slight advantage in average ability, as shown by the tables. These conditions must be taken into consideration in the interpretation and evaluation of the results of the experiment.

TABLE I

I. Q. and the Corresponding Sigma Index
of each Pupil

Experimental			Control		
Pupil	I. Q.	Sigma Index	Pupil	I. Q.	Sigma Index
3	122	2.026	1	123	2.147
5	118	1.544	2	123	2.147
6	115	1.182	4	122	2.026
7	113	.940	12	107	.217
8	110	.579	13	113	.940
9	108	.337	14	111	.699
10	122	2.026	15	109	.458
11	109	.458	16	119	1.533
18	107	.217	17	114	1.061
20	110	.579	19	105	.024
21	110	.579	28	102	-.386
22	116	1.302	29	110	.579
23	108	.337	31	104	-.144
24	106	.096	32	108	.337
25	111	.699	34	105	-.024
26	111	.699	36	107	.217
27	103	-.265	37	108	.337
30	105	-.024	38	107	.217
33	109	.458	39	107	.217
35	101	-.507	40	108	.337
41	105	-.024	42	102	-.386
45	100	-.627	43	100	-.627
46	98	-.868	44	104	-.144
47	104	-.144	52	93	-1.471
48	99	-.747	53	100	-.627
49	104	-.144	56	97	-.989
50	109	.458	57	102	-.386
51	97	-.989	59	104	-.144
54	97	-.989	60	98	-.868
55	100	-.627	62	96	-1.109
58	98	-.868	63	95	-1.230
61	97	-.989	66	98	-.868
64	95	-1.230	68	91	-1.712
65	88	-2.074	69	86	-2.316
67	96	-1.109			
70	86	-2.316			
total		-.025			.062
Average		-.0007			.0018

TABLE II
 Previous Scholastic Grades
 and their Corresponding Indices

Experimental			Control		
Pupil	Grade Points	Sigma Index	Pupil	Grade Points	Sigma Index
3	48	2.009	1	48	2.009
5	44	1.581	2	48	2.009
6	46	1.795	4	48	2.009
7	48	2.009	12	46	1.795
8	48	2.009	13	38	.940
9	48	2.009	14	40	1.153
10	31	.189	15	41	1.260
11	45	1.688	16	29	.024
18	35	.940	17	32	.296
20	33	.403	19	39	1.046
21	32	.296	28	36	.724
22	25	-.452	29	26	-.345
23	33	.403	31	31	.189
24	34	-.510	32	26	-.345
25	27	.238	34	28	-.131
26	26	.345	36	25	-.452
27	35	.607	37	23	-.667
30	30	.082	38	24	-.559
33	24	-.559	39	24	-.559
35	32	.296	40	22	-.774
41	25	-.452	42	28	-.131
45	26	-.345	43	27	-.238
46	28	-.131	44	22	-.774
47	21	-.881	52	31	.189
48	26	-.345	53	22	-.774
49	20	-.988	56	24	-.559
50	14	-1.630	57	18	-1.202
51	27	-.238	59	15	-1.523
54	25	-.452	60	21	-.881
55	21	-.881	62	23	-.667
58	22	-.774	63	23	-.667
61	22	-.774	66	17	-1.309
64	21	-.881	68	14	-1.630
65	19	-1.095	69	18	-1.202
67	17	-1.309			
70	15	-1.523			
Total		1.699			-1.646
Average		.0472			-.0487

TABLE III

Average Sigma Index of the Previous
Grade Sigma and I. Q. Sigma of each Pupil

Experimental		Control	
Pupil	Average Sigma	Pupil	Average Sigma
3	2.017	1	2.078
5	1.562	2	2.078
6	1.488	4	2.017
7	1.474	12	1.006
8	1.294	13	.940
9	1.173	14	.925
10	1.107	15	.839
11	1.073	16	.703
18	.579	17	.677
20	.491	19	.511
21	.437	28	.169
22	.425	29	.117
23	.370	31	.022
24	.303	32	.004
25	.230	34	-.077
26	.177	36	-.117
27	.171	37	-.165
30	.029	38	-.171
33	-.030	39	-.171
35	-.103	40	-.216
41	-.238	42	-.258
45	-.486	43	-.432
46	-.499	44	-.459
47	-.512	52	-.641
48	-.546	53	-.700
49	-.566	55	-.774
50	-.586	57	-.794
51	-.613	59	-.833
54	-.720	60	-.874
55	-.754	62	-.888
58	-.821	63	-.948
61	-.881	66	-1.088
64	-1.055	68	-1.571
65	-1.084	69	-1.759
67	-1.209		
70	-1.919		
Total	.837		-.792
Average	.022		-.023

The Socialized Recitation

The assignments were made to correspond with the organization of the adopted text as nearly as possible. At the completion of one unit the assignments for the following unit were made. The teacher in making the assignment set up the objective of the unit and the important things that must be included in order to receive the desired information. At times the students were allowed the privilege of presenting and discussing ideas in regard to the presentation of the socialized recitation. If their ideas were considered good and interesting they were allowed to put them into effect. Plenty of time was taken in making the assignments to assure a clear understanding on the part of all the pupils and special care was taken to stimulate interest. It was very seldom that a student would show signs of indifference or inactivity in connection with the work of the group.

Sometimes the assignment called for the division of the class into smaller groups. When this was the case, no set rule was followed in making the division. Care was taken that the same students were not together too much and that the better students were not grouped together, leaving a group of poorer students to work for the same results.

Leadership and participation in the various activities were distributed among the members as evenly as possible.

1

Fremont P. Wirth, The Development of America.

This gave everyone an opportunity for the training afforded. It also kept any particular one from becoming too dominant or from retiring to the background.

These smaller groups were permitted to work according to their own ideas and organization, using the teacher to explain difficulties and to give advice where needed.

Talking was permitted among the members of the group as long as it was conducted in an orderly manner and in the lines of study. Boisterousness and visiting were not permitted. Responsibility for the progress and achievement of the group was placed upon each member. This seemed to make them more interested in the accomplishments of the group and to feel a certain amount of responsibility with respect to their contribution and its efficiency.

The Traditional Recitation

The recitations for the control group were conducted along the traditional lines, using principally the question-and-answer type of recitation. Care was taken at the beginning of each class period to bring out the facts or information necessary concerning the previous recitation or work covered in the past to connect what had already been learned with the problems of the day's recitation.

Special care was taken in the selection of questions, in an attempt to make them simple enough to be understood by all members of the class yet difficult enough to require thought with respect to organization and presentation of the answers. The 'yes-no' type of answer was eliminated unless

they were qualified. No one student was allowed to do more than the others as far as the answering was concerned if it was at all avoidable. However in this type of recitation there are a few who are more interested than others and often some who show no interest. At the close of the recitation an attempt was made to connect the recitation just completed with the one following and some of the high lights or more interesting events in the following lesson were mentioned in order to stimulate interest in the advanced assignment.

This question-and-answer method was supplemented by the use of other types and combinations. Other types used were, written lessons, reviews, both written and oral, outside reading reports, topical method, etc.

Each class had a supervised study period each day averaging approximately 20 minutes in length. This was usually spent in text book work, making maps or studying collateral material furnished by the teacher. During this time the teacher tried to examine each student from the standpoint of progress and initiative, to help those having difficulty and, to suggest methods to stimulate interest.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS

The results of this experiment were measured by giving each student a comprehensive objective test in American History at the close of each six weeks period.

The tests used for this purpose were the Multiple Purpose Objective Tests in American History, by C. W. Odell, Ph. D., associate professor of Education, in the University of Illinois. They were published by the Webb-Duncan Publishing Company, Incorporated, of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

These tests were chosen because they were based on the common elements found in the most commonly used text books, and the division of subject matter and historical eras correspond to those of the state adopted text.¹ The average reliability of these tests is considered high (.815). The Webb-Duncan Publishing Company furnished the national norms, figured on a basis of student's scores reported by teachers throughout the United States who had used the tests.

Each student's scores for the six tests were totaled and averaged, then changed to his sigma index. This gave the student's sigma index for the year's testing program.

The average sigma index (Table IV) for the control group was - .110. The highest sigma index was 2.130 and the lowest was -1.890. The average for the experimental group was .111. The highest sigma was 2.050 and the lowest was -1.729. The difference in the average achievement sigma index was .221.

¹
Fremont F. Wirth. The Development of America. American Book Company. 1935.

TABLE IV

The Sigma Index of Average Scores
of the six-weeks tests in American History

Experimental		Control	
Pupil	Sigma Index	Pupil	Sigma Index
3	2.050	1	1.326
5	.823	2	2.130
6	.663	4	1.246
7	1.427	12	.823
8	.784	13	1.104
9	1.004	14	.924
10	1.809	15	-.482
11	.743	16	.139
18	-.441	17	.803
20	1.285	19	1.246
21	.139	28	.200
22	.642	29	.200
23	.100	31	-.041
24	-.242	32	-.965
25	.663	34	-.211
26	1.044	36	-.563
27	-.784	37	.622
30	.944	38	.120
33	.200	39	-.241
35	-.080	40	-.441
41	-.262	42	.120
45	1.729	43	-1.609
46	.221	44	-.924
47	.703	52	.422
48	-.804	53	-.603
49	-.161	56	-1.709
50	-.825	57	-.463
51	.582	59	-.630
54	.139	60	.200
55	.260	62	-1.166
58	-.404	63	-1.890
61	-.864	66	-1.368
64	-1.548	68	-1.368
65	-1.468	69	-.683
67	-.885		
70	-.201		
Total	3.981		-3.373
Average	.111		-.110

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The entire enrollment was given the Otis Self-Administering test of Mental Ability, High Examination: Form A. The group was then divided into two classes, equated as nearly as possible with respect to I. Q., age, and previous scholastic achievements. These scores were translated into their respective sigma indices for comparison.

One class, the experimental group, was taught by the socialized recitation method. The other, the control group, was taught by the traditional method.

The tables show that the control group had an average I. Q. sigma index of .062 and an average sigma index of - .048 for previous scholastic achievement. The experimental group had an average I. Q. sigma index - .025 and an average sigma index for previous scholastic achievement of .047.

The average of these scores, as shown by table III, gives the control group an average sigma index of - .023 and the experimental group an average sigma index of .022. This shows that the two groups were fairly well equated, but that the experimental group had a slight advantage in ability.

The two classes were given the previously mentioned standardized achievement test in American history at the close of each six weeks. Their achievement as shown by their respective sigma indices of the average test scores was, .111 for the experimental group and - .110 for the

control group, a critical ratio of 1.98.

The results of this experiment lead to the following conclusions:

1. That the socialized recitation method was superior to the traditional method in this particular experiment.
2. That the socialized recitation is as good and probably better than the traditional method under ordinary conditions.

However, the difference in the achievement of the two groups used in this experiment does not warrant the general adoption of the socialized method of recitation. Nor does it lessen the value of other methods.

This study also indicates, from the observation of the instructor, that the socialized recitation offers more training in citizenship, self-reliance, initiative, participation and oral expression. It creates more interest and attention and develops an attitude of helpfulness. It offers a better opportunity to study the individual pupil's reactions, progress, and difficulties.

While it would be very difficult to devise a means of measuring the progress of the groups in such matters, it is well worth the time and trouble of any instructor to observe and investigate them.

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