Defining

You form a concept by generalizing from particular examples and by interpreting those examples and others in the light of the class-concept you have formed. This process of forming should be kept dialectical because if you decide too quickly or too absolutely what belongs in the class, you lose the chance to discover ways in which the class itself could be changed in order to accumulate further interesting and important examples. It isn't a tick-tock, tick-tock operation: Each time you examine

another instance and decide about where it goes or if it goes, you are evaluating both the class-concept and the particular object, event, thing, or word you are trying to place.

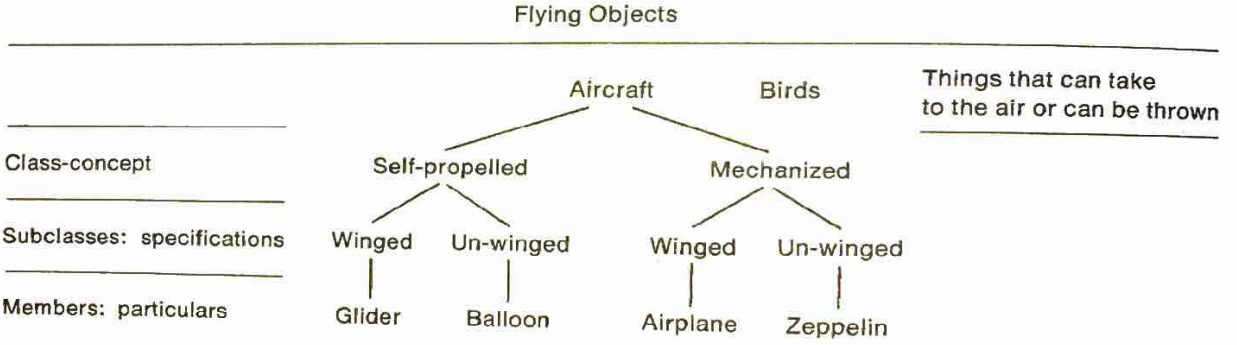
This dynamic character of concept formation means that you can't expect the dictionary to do much more than establish the outer limits. If you're writing a paper on revolution or urban renewal or on the allegation that women have been subjugated by religion, the dictionary can't offer much help in deciding what contexts are appropriate or what happens when one word is juxtaposed with another. The dictionary could tell you what the word *subjugate* means, but the concept of *subjugation* has to be critically analyzed in context: Who is using the word? About what? With what purposes? Using which examples? And so forth. "Webster tells us . . ." is an opening that can't help you know what to develop next, and it certainly doesn't engage your reader in the kind of dialogue that makes your composition interesting or persuasive. A dictionary definition can help you determine the presuppositions; it can encourage you to look at the history of the word in considering the range of its meanings; the listed antonyms can help you decide what it is you are not talking about so that you can build the opposite case. A dictionary definition of a concept describes the field of its application, but it's only by a process of organized comparing that you can explore that field. You can't make meanings unless you form concepts, and that involves you in generalizing and interpreting; in gathering examples and seeing how they are related to one another and to the class to which you are tentatively assigning them; in moving from the conceptual term to the field of its application and back again.

Defining the term *aircraft* is something the dictionary does by setting the limits of what the word can mean, but seeing how the limits apply—interpreting those meanings—is something else. It requires that sorting and gathering that we've been calling concept formation. Watch how it works with *aircraft*. With that term you can gather up a Piper Cub, a Boeing 747, a DC-10, and a Messerschmitt. You can then use *aircraft* to help you find other examples of a somewhat different kind: balloons and zeppelins form a subclass of the class *aircraft: wingless aircraft*. But then there is the problem of how to classify something that has wings but no motor: would gliders go with balloons and zeppelins or with the 747 and the bomber? It depends on you; that is to say, it depends on how you are limiting the subclass, whether it is to include only things that

fly, with or without a motor, and do not have wings or if it is to include things that can have motors and which may or may not be winged.

In classifying and in developing subclasses, it's the criteria of the one doing the classifying that determine how the items are to be sorted and grouped and gathered. There are constraints, of course. If you decided to classify as aircraft flying things that have wings and feathers and feet and that utter loud squawks, you would either be setting up as a cartoonist—a plane can be made to resemble a sea gull—or you would have to be considered as an inhabitant of Wonderland where meanings are determined solely by individual decisions: the usually accepted criteria for defining aircraft include the fact of the object being man-made, mechanical, and nonnatural. You could include a herring gull with the 747 and the balloon, if you broadened the field to include *flying objects*. But you might be surprised to discover, then, that that class could include rolling pins, baseballs, UFO's, and Superman, as well as herons and plovers. Your choice would then be either to modify *flying objects* by adding an adjective and thus restricting the limits of the application of the concept or to abandon *flying objects* as too wide-ranging.

This schema represents the stage we've reached:



Checking particulars by specifications and specifications by classifications reveals some illogical relationships here. First of all, gliders and balloons are correctly differentiated—one has wings, the other doesn't—but gathering them both under "self-propelled" creates a difficulty, since a balloon, although it doesn't have a motor, does have either hot air or gas and therefore is not "self-propelled" in the same way as a glider, which does not depend on anything but air currents. Gathering both glider and balloon under "self-propelled" makes it possible to see that that subclass is not well-defined. There are also difficulties with the

classes: some birds are flightless, and "things that can take to the air or be thrown" includes so much that it can't be considered the same kind of class as Aircraft and Birds; indeed, it is simply another way of saying "flying objects." It doesn't limit "flying objects," and if it doesn't set limits, it can neither classify nor define. We can extend definitions to accommodate what we think we want to classify (the phrase used is "by extension"), but unless there is a limit, a definition can't function.

Aircraft is not the kind of concept that will give you trouble in writing papers, but if you can learn to listen in on the inner dialogue in progress when you are figuring out how such a simple word is defined, you will be learning something about the operations involved when you're defining classes, which is what we've been calling concept formation. Sometimes a word or phrase will look fairly simple; take *antiballistic missile.* You can look up *ballistic* and *missile* and by reading *anti-* as *against,* you can develop a sound definition of an antiballistic missile as a defensive weapon used to defend against offensive missiles. But when you come to explain the antiballistic missile, you will need to go farther in exploring this concept of a defensive weapon. You will discover that if a government decides to build a great many antiballistic missiles (ABM's), that act can be interpreted as a development of offensive strength because it could signal a change from the *strategy of deterrence*—neither side will use thermonuclear weapons because each would suffer *unacceptable casualties*—to a strategy in which one side might plan on a *first strike capability* with an ABM defense system to protect against *the enemy's retaliatory response.* Each of these italicized words names a concept that has a complex field of application. After further analysis, you could well conclude that, in strategic terms, an ABM can be interpreted as an *offensive* weapon.

In defining words and in defining classes, you are establishing limits and interpreting by their means. It is useful to remember that the root of de*fini*tion derives from the Latin word for *boundary.* Further definition of definition you can leave to the linguists and logicians, once you grasp the fact of its oppositional character, which is explained in terms of body and soul by Andrew Marvell, a writer of the seventeenth century:

> Definition always consists, as being a dialectical animal, of a body which is the genus, and a difference, which is the soul of the thing defined.

A definition must do two things: It names the class and it specifies so that one member of the class can be differentiated from another. To say that a chair is an article of furniture classifies but it doesn't define; to define, you need a further limit: A chair is an article of furniture to be sat upon. That satisfies the requirements because it gives us both the body ("article of furniture") and soul ("to be sat upon").

Defining objects is a lot easier than defining classes. If you try to define *furniture,* for instance, you can list the various items that are designated by that term—neckties and mittens as well as marine hardware and linens—but when you generalize about those items, it's quite possible to end right back where you started. What the items have in common is that they furnish and "furniture furnishes" is clearly not a useful definition. It only creates the problem of defining "furnishes." It's what logicians call a tautology. (*Tautology* derives from the Greek for "the same saying.")

The easiest way to break out of this dizzying circle is to rename the activity: How does furniture furnish? Furniture *supplies* and *decorates* and *equips.* Those words are generated by asking HDWDWW? about particular items. This statement classifies by telling us what furniture is for, what it does. But as a definition, it lacks "soul": we know what furniture does, but we do not know how to differentiate it from other things that might be said to "supply and decorate and equip."

Our procedural guide for forming concepts provides the method for breaking out of the tautological circle and moving toward definition. Paraphrase has generated new terms; if we use one of them for a class name and the others as specifications, we can create a dialectical animal:

> Furniture is a kind of *equipment* used to *decorate* or to *supply.*

If you can develop the "opposite case," you can be "more specific." We speak of office *supplies,* and it's clear that they are not *furniture;* cake icing *decorates,* but doesn't *furnish.* What do paper and typewriter ribbons have in common with cake icing? They are used to supply or decorate—and they are *used up.* In opposition to supplies and decoration, furniture is not used up.

> Furniture is a kind of equipment used more or less permanently for decorative or practical purposes.

Practice breaking out of the tautological circles below by following this procedure for creating a "dialectical animal":

1. Paraphrase by renaming the activity (HDW-DWW?).
2. Develop specifications by stating the opposite case.
3. Classify and specify in a single sentence using a *which* or *who* clause.
   - Warriors make war.
   - Fences fence.
   - Writers write.
   - Papermakers make paper.

Of course, most tautologies are not so obvious. Here is an example: "In a universe divested of illusions and lights, man feels an alien, a stranger." If you are on the lookout, you will come across other examples from textbooks, newspapers, etc. "When many people are out of work, unemployment results." Correcting other people's tautologies is easier than spotting your own, but it's good training in any case.

Break out of those two tautological circles above.

In defining both words and concepts, you indicate where the boundaries are and what meanings are possible within those limits. Setting the limits is up to you—up to a point. Defining words and concepts is not something you can do all on your own, or if you do, the judgment will be that you are mad.

When Humpty Dumpty explains to Alice that there's only one day a year when you can get a birthday present but 364 when you can get unbirthday presents, he says, "There's glory for you!"

> "I don't know what you mean by 'glory'," Alice said.
> Humpty Dumpty smiled contemptuously. "Of course you don't—till I tell you. I meant, 'There's a nice knock-down argument for you'!"
>
> "But 'glory' doesn't mean 'a nice knock-down argument'," Alice objected.
>
> "When *I* use a word," Humpty Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less."

> "The question is," said Alice, "whether you *can* make words mean so many things."
>
> "The question is," said Humpty Dumpty, "which is to be master—that's all."

The author of *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass*, the sequel to *Alice in Wonderland*, Lewis Carroll (Charles Dodgson was his real name), was a mathematician who delighted in the puzzles and paradoxes of the language of signs employed in algebra and other branches of math. In this exchange, he is probably having fun with the notion of declaring "Let $x = 500. . . .$" But what the mathematicians do necessarily, all of us do unconsciously every time we say a single word: A presupposition of every utterance is the comparable notion, "Let the following little squeaks and breathy rumbles represent certain syntactical structures according to the conventions of one language or another." Those linguistic conventions act as constraints when we establish criteria for classifying and specifying in order to define.

Once we're out of Wonderland, the dictionary is, in a sense, "the master": It gives us the conventions in generally accepted forms. But, of course, that's only the beginning. Dictionaries don't grow naturally; they are composed and the definitions that lexicographers list are as open to question as any set of facts is. A lexical definition, at best, gives you only the conventional range of meaning; it can't locate any particular meaning within the range without developing a context. The king of dictionaries, the Oxford English Dictionary, does just that: it cites sentences in which the word being defined occurs, sentences from over 1,000 years of English usage. (The OED is in 12 volumes, each over 1,200 pages.) The only way to understand the meaning of a particular word in a particular sentence is to supplement the lexical definition with a contextual definition.

Every student of composition should understand the structure of a formal (lexical) definition in order to realize its uses and limitations. All formal definitions classify and specify: they assign the object/word to a class and they differentiate the object/word from other members of the class:

> The Volvo is a Swedish automobile.
> Classification: genus: "body" = *automobile*
> Specification: differentia: "soul" = *Swedish*

A definition sets up the limits by means of which the name can mean; it indicates both what kind of thing is named by the word

being defined and how this particular thing is different from others of the same kind.

Now this is all quite simple as long as we're working with definitions for Volvos and Blackburnians, because the next degree of generality is already known; if we know the name of the particular item, we probably can name the class as well. The trouble for the student of composition (and occasionally for practiced writers as well: ask them!) arises not from trying to name the particular example and the class to which it self-evidently belongs, but in going on from there to the next degree of generality. You name and classify, classify and name, but the naming gets more difficult as the degree of generality increases. The result is that we are all tempted to write "thing."

The main reason for learning something about the formal character of definition is to understand how classifying and specifying provide limits that can help you discover and develop "what you want to say," first of all by guiding you in identifying the concept and then in using it as a form to find form. Remembering that classification and specification operate dialectically can help you resist that temptation to depend on *thing* or to grab at the first word that offers itself as a substitute, without regard for the specifications that are to follow.

A radio is a thing you use to communicate with.

This provides neither class nor specifications. But when you substitute a less general term for *thing*, that class name should match what it is you want to specify. Here, for instance, is an illogical definition:

A radio is a commodity that receives and transmits signals.

The fact that radios can be bought and sold (a *commodity* is such an item) is not an appropriate classification, given the specifications that follow. If you want to specify in terms of function and structure (*how? why?*), then you need a class name that is appropriate to those names. In this case, you could write:

A radio is a device that receives and transmits signals.

On the other hand, if you wanted to classify the radio as a commodity, then you would need to specify accordingly:

A radio is a commodity that was considered essential in American households of the 1930s.

Sometimes class names and specifications are deliberately mismatched as a means of emphasizing a freshly perceived/con-

ceived relationship. By defining a *chair* as a *machine for sitting in,* the architect-designer LeCorbusier called attention to the fact that sitting can be described as a mechanical operation to which a chair should be mechanically adapted. He thus formed a new concept of a chair and set about designing one to those specifications. You can be deliberately illogical, but you should know that you're doing so.

See if you can repair the following faulty definitions by readjusting the class and the specifications until you have a "dialectical animal."

1. A knife is a utensil used for eating.
2. Barns are houses for cows.
3. School is a place where instruction is given.
4. Necessity is when you have to act.
5. Ambition is the driving force that leads to one's goals.

What class-names would you choose for the name being defined if you use the specifications listed?

Name to be defined	Specifications	Class-name
orange juice	sold all over the U.S. in different forms	?
street light	essential to street safety	?
faucet	expensive to repair easy to repair	?
bone	porous, light, strong	?

Compose definitions for each item.

What specifications would you need in order to make the following class-names appropriate to the items with which they are paired? Compose the definitions.

Name to be defined	Specifications	Class-name
Horse	?	Luxury
Horse	?	Necessity
Wood	?	Energy
Bicycle	?	Convenience
Man	?	Animal

When you ask HDWDWW? in working out a definition, you will often be able to develop verbs that can help classify and specify. The student of composition who has discovered that there are ways of making statements other than saying *X is Y* often decides that "contains" can do the work that used to be done by "is."

Review your definitions in the assisted invitations above and analyze the verbs used in defining.

Here is a famous definition. Work out a schema to represent the generalizations and specifications.

Let us define a plot. We have defined a story as a narrative of events arranged in their time-sequence. A plot is also a narrative of events, the emphasis falling on causality. "The king died and then the queen died" is a story. "The king died, and then the queen died of grief" is a plot. The time-sequence is preserved, but the sense of causality overshadows it. Or again: "The queen died, no one knew why, until it was discovered that it was through grief at the death of the king." This is a plot with a mystery in it, a form capable of high development. It suspends the time-sequence, it moves as far away from the story as its limitations will allow. Consider the death of the queen. If it is in a story, we say "and then?" If it is in a plot we ask "why?" That is the fundamental difference between these two aspects of the novel. A plot cannot be told to a gaping audience of cave men or to a tyrannical sultan or to their modern descendant, the movie public. They can only be kept awake by "and then—and then—"; they can only supply curiosity. But a plot demands intelligence and memory also.

E. M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel*

Studying the dictionary is an old-fashioned way of developing a facility in matching specifications to the class-name and, conversely, choosing the appropriate specifications for a given class. ("Finding the produce level" is what my students call it.)

Study the entries on any two pages of a desk dictionary. List the terms used for classifying the references of all nouns. For example:

knacker—*one who*
knapsack—*a case*
knapweed—*a plant*
knick-knack—*an article*
knife—*an instrument*

Then choose another double page and, covering up the definitions, see if you can anticipate the class-name for each noun.

Composing involves you in an inner dialogue that can be like carrying on a conversation in a foreign language: You know what the answer is, but you can't frame the question, or you have the details, but you don't know where they belong. It can be a kind of game, matching specifications to classes and classes to specifications; *renaming* is the name of the game. Finding class-names or inventing them when they don't exist is common to some of the procedures of scientific discovery, to charades and to riddles, which are questions in which the class names are empty or disguised. The Riddle of the Sphinx is the most famous: "What animal is that which in the morning goes on four feet, at noon on two, and in the evening upon three?" When Oedipus answered, "Man, who in childhood creeps on hands and knees, in manhood walks erect, and in old age with the aid of a staff," the Sphinx in a fit of despair threw herself over a cliff. Five year olds feel the same.

You don't *write* in riddles, but you compose by formulating them: knowing the kind of class you need to form without quite knowing how to name it; recognizing the kind of specifications that seem pertinent, without quite knowing what they are pertinent *to*. This is the dialectic of composition. Tolerating chaos is the principal thing to learn in getting started; tolerating riddles is what you learn in forming concepts.

In thinking, classification is the way of seeing relationships; in writing, you sometimes announce explicitly that you are *classifying:*

> A sampan belongs to that class of flat-bottomed boats that can be managed in very shallow waters by means of punt poles.

Or you can explicitly announce that you are *specifying:*

> This cortisone ointment is prescribed specifically for iritis.

Or you can do both:

> This is the kind of order for which we will need further specifications.
>
> ("You're talking about a class of penalties we gotta get into the specifics of.")

But, of course, no such words as *sort, class, kind, belongs to* need appear: whether or not it announces that it is doing so, every statement classifies in the very act of predicating. We can use the terms *implicit* and *explicit* to name the different modes of statement. "The cat is on the mat" *implies* a classification. Here's a version that makes the classification and specification explicit:

> That object, which we name "cat" and which belongs to the class of all cats, is sitting on that thing, which we name "mat" and which belongs to the class of all mats."

As you can see from this example, you don't have to be explicit to be "clear" and, indeed, being explicit sometimes involves you in statements that are very unclear. Part of the job of composing is to recognize the hazards both of too much explicitness and of letting implications do the work of argument and explanation. This matter of being sure of your implications and of deciding on the degree of explicitness necessary to clear exposition is discussed in the next two sections; for now, what needs to be said is that you don't need to say "class" in order to classify, any more than you have to say "Webster tells us . . ." in order to develop a definition. But it's important for the writer to understand what's going on in the process of making statements in order to be able to control the making of meanings.

An *implication* is unstated but intended; it is "wound into" or "bound up with" what is said. *Implicit* can refer not only to classification but to the judgment and evaluation classification *entails*. Making the statement—naming and relating the names—entails classification. This is also true of perception: if you couldn't see the cat as a *kind* of something, you couldn't recognize it at all. (Do you remember Barfield's house? See Part I, p. 34.)

There is a continuum of classifying: every time we see an object, we see it as a *kind* of object; every time we name something, we imply that it is a *kind* of thing; every time we make a statement about something, we are seeing it—placing it—in relation to something else that it is like or unlike. Whether you want to consider it a linguistic or a psychological or a philosophical matter—and it is all three—the fact is that when we make sense of the world, we are classifying.

Every "is" implies "is a. . . ." Thus "The cat is on the mat" can be restated in ways that make explicit the classification implicit in the naming of "cat."

It looks like a cat, an animal that belongs to the class of household pets.
On the mat is something that looks like the kind of thing I call a cat.
The general appearance of that ball of fur on the mat suggests that it is a member of the genus *Felis catus*.

The furry thing on the mat, which {looks like others of / the same / belongs to the} {kind / class / sort} of {animal / creature / household pet} with {small round head / pointed ears / tail curled alongside / paws tucked up / under the body} {seems to be / is / must be / appears to be} a cat.

The conventions of English grammar allow us to use a single word to represent both "that cat" and "that thing that is a member of the class *cat*." Sometimes, a particular cat may be our primary reference, but we can also say "a cat" referring not to one cat in particular, but to all cats or all female cats:

A cat likes fish.
A cat can have kittens by the time she is 8 months old.

You can see this kind of reference used as a class in the following passage, a description of how the world appears to "the man habitually on horseback."

> Everything appears differently to the man habitually on horseback. It raises him up, makes him wear different clothes, makes him a centaur. In the *Politics*, Aristotle attributes the strong oligarchy that always ruled in Thessaly to the horses, to the advantage, moral and physical, they gave to richer people. The continual use of horses is a barbaric splendor—in the Greek sense of barbaric—a meaning which suggests extravagant or miasmic horizons as if Space moved, or, instead of being the medium in which things stand, could be devoured like Time. Certainly the horseman feels that he devours Space. The ground totters past him. He is an upstart creature, the lover of princes and gaunt ceremony. The poor man is, to him, a biped, a dust-treader. The horseman takes his nobility from the horse. The mountains rear for him, they do not stand. He scatters the stones or curses them.
>
> Adrian Stokes, *The Stones of Rimini*

These descriptive statements do not use such words as "kind" or "class" but they classify by naming "the horseman." The purpose of the statements, when they are taken as a whole, is to characterize the attitudes of that class of men who are "habitually on horseback." Reference to "the horseman" is not to one particular man riding a horse; in the context of these statements, "the horseman" doesn't indicate "the horseman depicted in that antique frieze" or "that cowboy in the cigarette ad." "The horseman" in this passage means "the kind of man habitually on horseback."

When you know the kind of thing you mean but are not interested in naming it, you simply say "He's sort of lazy." That is an informal idiom for "He is the sort of person who is lazy." (Or you say "He's kinda lazy," shorthand for "He's of the kind of person who is lazy.") The important thing to remember is that every time you make a statement, you are classifying, whether or not you announce that you are doing so, whether or not you have named the class.

✎ Compose three statements in which three different singular nouns (such as *a cat*, *the horseman*) are used as class-names.
Restate, announcing classification by one or another of these phrases: "the sort of," "that belongs to," "a kind of," "that can be grouped with."

Paraphrasing is a way to make explicit the classification that every statement makes. The best way to get started again when your composition comes to a full stop is to return to your original statement and to identify the classification that is implicit or explicit and then to restate, to paraphrase. Recognizing the classification a statement makes is as essential to critical reading as it is to the critical review of your own writing: you are your own first reader. You can learn to locate and make more emphatic the classifications in your own statements by practicing recognizing them when you read. Begin with this passage from Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's *The Gulag Archipelago:*

> In 1949 some friends and I came upon a news item in the magazine *Priroda* [*Nature*] of the Academy of Sciences. It reported in fine print that in the course of excavations on the Kolyma River a subterranean ice lens, actually a frozen stream, had been discovered—and in it were found frozen specimens of prehistoric fauna some tens of thousands of years old. Whether fish or lizard these were preserved in so fresh a state that those present immediately broke open the ice and devoured them on the spot.
>
> As for us, we understood instantly. We could picture the entire scene down to the smallest detail: how those present broke the ice with tense haste; how, flouting the lofty interests of ichthyology and elbowing each other to be first, they tore off pieces of the prehistoric flesh and dragged it over to the bonfire to thaw it and bolt it down.
>
> We understood instantly because we ourselves were the same kind of people as *those present* at the event. We, too, were from that powerful tribe of "zeks" [prison camp inmates], unique on the face of the earth, the only kind of people who could devour prehistoric lizard *with pleasure.*

Does Solzhenitsyn classify implicitly or explicitly? Write a few sentences explaining the classification. Then check your reading against these attempts to answer that question:

1. Solzhenitsyn feels that because of his internment in a prison camp he is capable of a complete understanding of how persons coming upon a valuable and extraordinary find are able to act as savages and eat the same without showing and sharing with the rest of the world.

2. . . . A rare find is an experience most people find exciting and the excitement generated is infectious.
3. Solzhenitsyn is demonstrating the similarities between inmates at a prison camp and desperate men on a nearly suicidal expedition.
4. The author and his friends are relating the article to an experience they had at a prison camp. They had once been so hungry they knew what the feeling was like. The prehistoric fauna could be the old ways and by devouring it they could get rid of these old laws.
5. The members of the excavation were starving in the freezing environment of the Kolyma River. Upon finding frozen fish and lizards preserved in the ice, they scrambled savagely to eat it. Forced to for survival, blinded against all else, we are all creatures subject to the cages of reality, capable of stretching our capacities back to that of uncivilized man.

Which of these students misread Solzhenitsyn's account because they disregarded the class-announcer, "the same kind of"?

Here is a passage in which the classification is implicit; that is to say, there are no phrases like "the sort of," "the kind of," or "belongs to." Locate in each passage any singular nouns (*a* cat, *the* horseman) that name classes; that means finding the words that name the *kind* of person, people, problem, situation, etc. being described. Then compose a sentence in which you make the classification explicit, using in your sentence such a phrase as "the kind of," "can be classified as," etc.

Our interest in history is, however, inseparable from books. It is very remarkable that our dependence upon books is so little realized, even by teachers and writers, who live by books. An illiterate person, if he were interested in history, could learn it only from the lips of a historian, or from a person who could read a history book to him and if he forgot a fact he could regain it only by having recourse to his teacher. The amount of historical knowledge that he could acquire would be limited by the fact that he would have no

> means of tabulating or classifying it, and could therefore have no idea of chronology outside the very limited range of his own experience. All history depends upon chronology, and no real idea of chronology can be obtained except by seeing facts tabulated in chronological sequences. . . . It would be almost impossible to make an illiterate person realize that the date A.D. 1600 had any meaning at all. Calendar sticks are used by tribes of both Africa and America to keep a record of events within living memory, but there is no means by which such a record could be preserved longer. Bundles of sticks convey nothing except to those who tie them together, and if you were to tell your illiterate that a stick represented a year, and then count out 335 sticks, he would be little the wiser. And if you were to tell him that Queen Elizabeth and Shakespeare both lived then, he would find it difficult to believe, since if Shakespeare were really connected with some ancient monarch, which since a play of his was performed quite recently seems highly improbable, it should be King Lear, whom he tells us all about, rather than Queen Elizabeth, whom he hardly mentions.
>
> Lord Raglan, *The Hero*

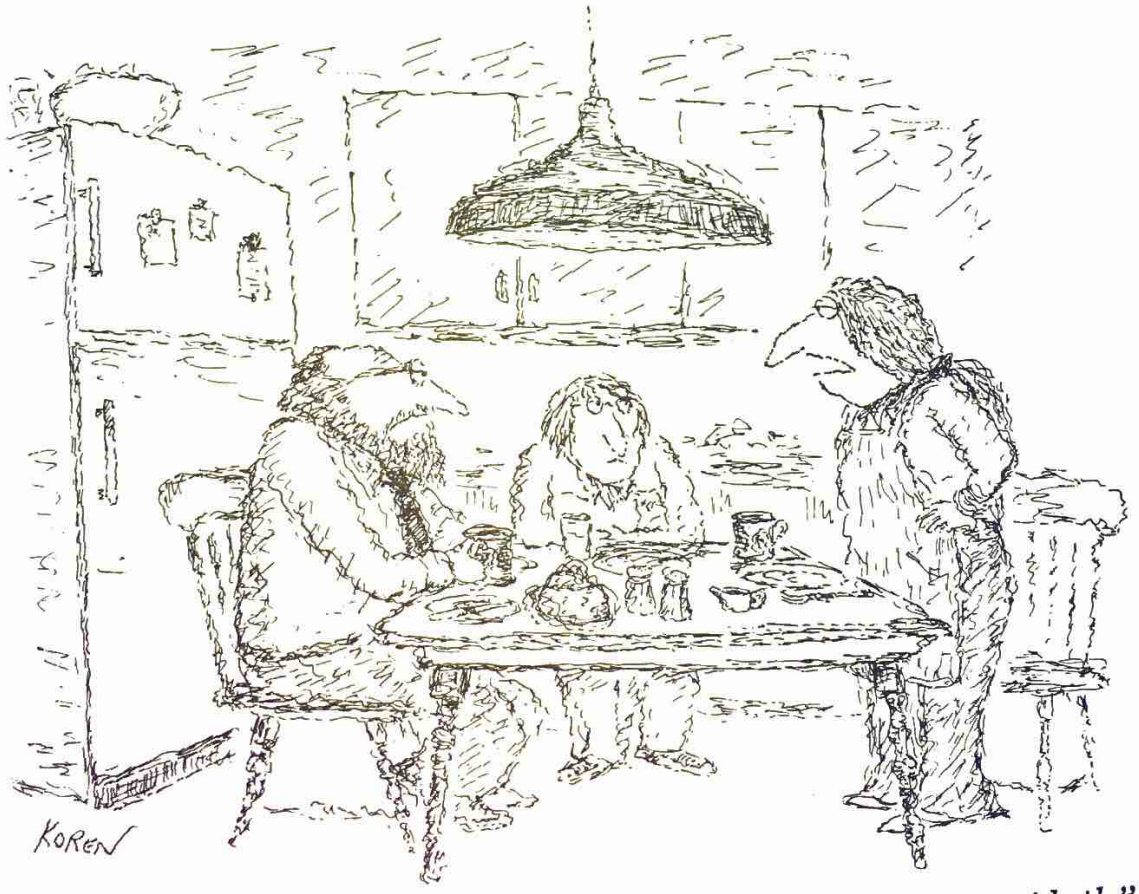
Make two statements about each of the following concepts, one of which explicitly classifies and one of which implicitly classifies: *Housekeeping, Childbearing, Diplomacy, Music, Religion, Engineering.*

Recapitulation

If you remember *classifying* the parsnip as produce; *renaming* the bare tree as a branching system; *specifying and generalizing* in order to describe and define a snowshoe, you will be *forming a concept* of forming concepts. *Interpreting* and *generalizing* work together as you specify: Being specific is the way you classify and thus form concepts. Very often on exams you are directed to "Be specific." This sometimes should really read "Be particular; give particular examples." Or it could—and it generally does—mean "Explain how certain particular details that you can furnish on the basis of the X document and the Y study are related to the general statement you can make about such and such a topic." In the terms we've been using, "Be specific" means "Form the concept."

For the student of composition, the important point is not to be able to define "specification," but to be able to recognize

specifications and to compose them. Learn whatever terms can help you think, and to remember that every phase of the composing process—naming, opposing, defining—is implicit in the other and that none is a one-shot affair. In composing, you name and re-name; you oppose (specifying, classifying, defining are all ways of opposing) and re-compose your oppositions; you state and re-state by way of defining. Those "re-"s are vital to the composing process: everything has to be kept tentative so that you can be free to re-cognize the emergent classes and thus form new concepts. You don't "have" a fully formed concept, which you then "put into words." It's making the statement—putting down the words—that guides you in forming the concept. You discover what you mean by responding critically to what you have said. *Learning to use statements to form concepts and concepts to direct the revision and sequence of statements is learning to compose.* You compose by the dialectic of seeing and knowing, naming and defining, saying and meaning, stating and forming concepts.



"Young man, at table you either particularize or generalize, but not both."

Compose an answer for the poor kid.