

one college esp. h.s.
19th c.
Student Writing

unpublished
Miss
Rakeliff e

① as authors use it in texts } some signed
- } written by studs
- } or
- } text
- } authors
"madd's"

Student published
- school papers
- literary magz.

yearbooks
catalogues

~~journal~~

③ student writing about writing

some signed
some unsigned

Bibliog of student
papers, journal
not available

"Exchanges" -
comments on
other papers

formal
informal

genres
- travel pieces
- wr. about wr.
- descr.
- "prize essays"
- journal
- jokes / riddle
- poems
- reflection

Some pieces signed
" " unsigned

Some calls for "originality"

Some calls for students to pay up earlier.

- some many calls for more contributions
- ask not to be judged too harshly

"The Editorial Statement"

"The Exchanges"

jokes - Riddles

By-law

Increasingly, we have accounts of 19th Am
a writing instruction - taken stab at
saying something
about 19th C
grad. writing

Altho no. of people have written about texts -
None would say what we know is complete -

Time to look at student writing - esp. by younger

Writing by younger students -

- Where?
- What kinds?

moral stuff
Halloran
Sue's.

younger since we have little of that - it helps to complete pict.

What shows up is voice - so that while text topics were abstract + imp.

Although question, represents trips to

What remains to do?

- Bibliog of Student papers, lit. maga.
- "all kind. in context"

For older students. There are books

voices break through in (imp)

Students talk to
each other -

- learn to be "critics"
"readers"

· Exchange

· LSR - Mar 88

re: yabberwack

common in
prefaces to 19th
tests to hear
remarks that
composition is most
dreaded subject of all.....

in st. newsp. - they - see L.S.R.

Questions -

- Do I have something from every decade?

What texts say about writing
Student voices say about writing

: Student voices on writing

19th c. Students speak out
write about writing

: a working paper

Student writing

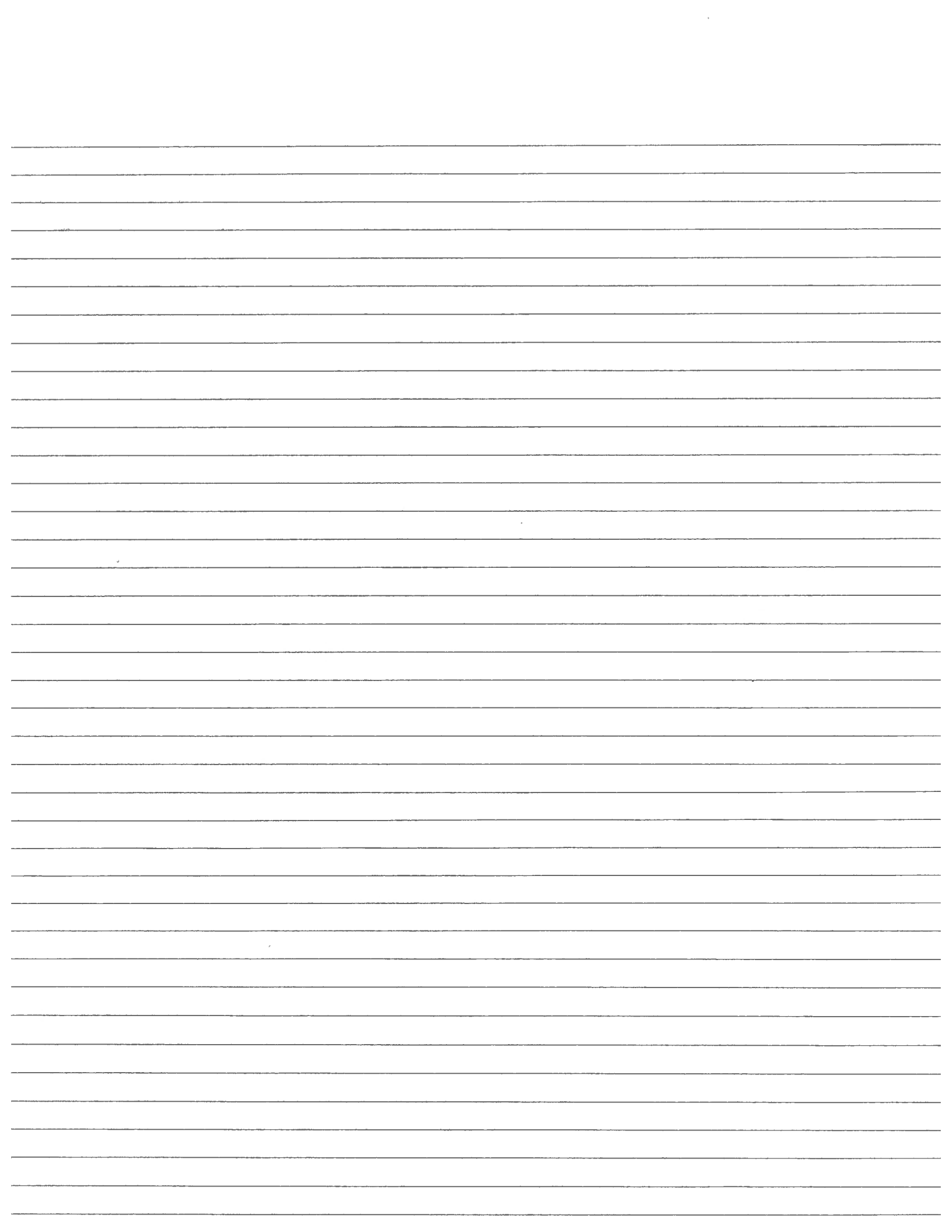
for class -
as req. by text

for student/school public.

their own journals

letters they write to teachers

prize books
graduation programs
commercial



Student Newspapers: A Border Site for Reading 19th Century Student Writing

For a long-range project on the history of writing instruction in 19th century schools, I've read many samples of student writing in many genres and in many sites: I've looked at student writing in textbooks, in personal journals, in prize books, in commencement programs, in school catalogues, in family memoirs, in unpublished manuscripts, and even on scraps of paper. For me some of the most provocative samples occur in student-edited school newspapers--of which there are many more than I had ever imagined. As early as 1854, a writer in the *Pennsylvania School Journal* noted that "the rapid increase of periodicals . . . designed to give publicity to compositions by pupils in the schools" was, in his words, "remarkable." What I find interesting in my reading of ^{many many} multiple issues of more than 75 of these publications is that in these texts, school-age students routinely and energetically authorize themselves to talk about writing and--even more importantly--to talk about themselves as writers.

Typically in these papers there is an Editors' Column on the first page; this is the space where the editors reported the financial difficulties of running the paper and encourage subscribers to settle their accounts; (one newspaper about to fold wrote, "To those who put down their names as subscribers, but have afterward refused to pay, we can only say that to them belongs the honor of the discontinuance of our sheet" (*Bedford Street Budget*, March 1845)). Almost without exception, the editors' next move in these columns was to solicit manuscripts from their readers. Although the number of submissions was a primary concern (the editors of *The Jabberwock* wrote, "Do send more contributions, girls. Do not be afraid of the editorial wastebasket. We have not bought one yet.") what's also striking is the editors' request for "original" materials; in 1875, for example, one paper wanted their readers "to compose something . . . on some subject that requires some thought," and not to scrawl off "one of the old hackneyed descriptions." They conceded that, "Of course it will come pretty hard at

first to write anything really original; but . . . the earlier one begins the sooner will he be able to write well" (*Horae*, March 1875).

The editors of these student publications also encouraged their readers not to be disheartened if their submissions were turned down; in an 1887 *Latin School Register* ~~(1887)~~ the editors counseled, "if your first contribution was not accepted, there is ample opportunity for you, by writing articles frequently, to get one into the *Register* before the end of the year" (November 1887). In a later issue, no doubt hoping to increase the number of submissions they received, the editors even offered a writing heuristic, "No [student]," they said, "should be discouraged by the utter lack of ideas which seems to overwhelm him at the start. If he will sit down, pen in hand, he will find that ideas will come to him quicker than he could have believed possible" (March 1888).

The Harvard Reports are well-known for their discrediting of the way schools prepared students for college writing. There's more to be learned from those reports, however, than is commonly reported. In the student writing samples in those reports, for example, one student wrote that although his school gave him no formal preparation for the Harvard Entrance Exam, it was newspaper work and the editing of the school paper that gave him facility in writing; a student from another school wrote, that the students themselves organized a literary society and met once a week to practice essay writing. And way back in 1846, in an issue of the *Bedford Street Budget*, a student recognized the value of writing for the school paper when as part of his solicitation of manuscripts, he wrote, "the habit of composition of all kinds is a very valuable one, and one moreover, from which those boys who hereafter go to College, will derive great advantage" (*The Budget*, April 15, 1846). Students, therefore, both in the essays they wrote for the Harvard Committee on Composition and Rhetoric and in the writing they produced for their school papers, reflected on the value of learning to write by writing.

According to Wendell Barry, the ditch at the edge of a farm is an important space to Amish farmers. Unlike the regularized, predictable acreage of the farm and unlike the private and individually designed and cultivated space of the kitchen garden, the ditch is pretty much left alone: it is a place of natural experimentation where ~~errant~~ plants can cross-pollinate and new, strong varieties of a plant can spring into life; it is a place where small wildlife are protected and birds raise their young; it is a place where the moisture of the earth--hence the life--is almost constant. I ~~would like~~ to suggest that another name for a ditch is a border space and that students who wrote for school newspapers were writing in a border space, a space somewhere between the farm, the highly regularized English-class-assigned writing, and the kitchen garden, the highly privatized out-of-school writing, and that ^{in this ditch} they were pretty much left alone; I'm further claiming that ~~by mucking around in the ditch~~ ^{in this} the border space between assigned writing and private writing, students were ^{indeed} learning to write: in their school newspapers, students authorized themselves to write original text, ^{they} extolled the benefits of writing frequently, ^{they} critiqued each other's texts, ^{they} learned to generate ideas "pen in hand," and, perhaps most significantly, ^{they} talked about themselves as writers. In sum, by enabling this border site for student writing, schools were indeed preparing students for college composition--but in a way the Harvard Reports never imagined. So--here's to ditches, and to border sites, and to student newspapers.

Lucille M. Schultz
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