A Modest (Grammar) Proposal

SAMPLE ESSAY:

Before too long we will be a paperless society, (11c) we will foregoe (sp) pen and paper for computer and disk. Knowing already the benefits of teaching writing and revision with word-processing on the computer, (9 c-e) it is possible for us to adopt a system in which each student writes their (6t) weekly English composition on the computer and submit (6 a-c) it (13 a-b) to the teacher (14a-b) on disk. Our grammatical and mechanical corrections and style suggestions could be placed (8i) in parentheses after each solipsism (11c) and we could type final comments at the end of the composition. Like (19i) I am doing in this memo. (11a-b) By using the "Warriner's" (31g-h) chapter numbering system to identify errors in grammar and mechanics (30j) we would hopefully (19i) underscore the individual students' (31l-n) responsibility for learning the rules and to correct (15a-d) mistakes by referring back to our standard grammar text. At any point of course (30k) we could add style comments in parentheses as well. (This paragraph lacks unity: what is the topic sentence, the main idea, and how is it developed by examples, facts, quotations, etc.?)

The composition would be submitted to the teacher, and editorial suggestions embedded in the text and returned. (12a-d) The student could revise appropriately and resubmit the composition for an improved grade, if all the repair work of corrections and revisions are (6a-c) successful. Does anyone (9e) think this idea is the cat's meow? (19a) If I was (8j) to ask someone to attempt this approach, would anyone be interested in giving it a try?

TEACHER COMMENTS/GRADE:

This is a superb idea. Wish I had thought of it myself. Good use of examples and illustrations as you develop your point. Style a bit flaccid, lacking in color, imagination, zip: try using some more figurative language and occasionally some sesquipedalian bullets for dramatic effect. Content Grade: A. Style Grade: B. Grammar/Mechanics Grade: F (5 or More Errors, all noted in parentheses following the error). Overall Grade: C.

Warriner's Grammar, Index to Errors

6a-f: Agreement

7a-j: Pronoun Case

8a-j: Verb Tenses, Voice, Mood

9a-f: Comparison

11a-c: Sentence Fragments & Run-ons

12a-d: Coordination and Subordination

13a-b: Ambiguous Pronoun Reference

14a-b: Dangling & Misplaced Modifiers

15a-d: Parallelism

16a-b: Subject/Verb Shifts

19a-j: Diction: Jargon, Cliche, Slang

31a-d Semicolon

31e-f: Colon

31g-h: Underlining (Italics)

31i-k: Quotation Marks

31l-n: Apostrophe