Your Public Waits…
by Shannon Dougherty

Imagine you’re invited to a party hosted by a friend. When you arrive, you must let yourself in because your friend is too busy having fun to greet you at the door. The stereo is blasting country western music (which your friend likes but you hate) and the entire menu consists of super-hot-and-spicy buffalo wings (think five alarm) and pineapple juice – your friend’s favorite food combo.

You leave early, hungry and half-deaf, vowing never again to accept invitations from that friend. Why? Because your needs, as a guest, were not met! You were invited but not welcomed.

Good writing has a lot in common with good hospitality. In both areas, failing to consider your audience (your guests!) is just plain rude. Worse yet, it leads to writing that doesn’t work. Being aware of your audience is the difference between writing at your readers versus writing to them.

Ultimately, the writing process will be much easier if you write with a specific audience in mind. Your essay will have more purpose, your readers will be engaged, and choices regarding tone, diction, and even sentence structure will be easier to resolve.

Knock-knock. Who’s there? Your audience!

For most academic papers, your teacher is your primary, or “real” audience. But don’t use the “Dear Professor Smith” approach. Instead, think of your teacher as a representative reader from a particular field. Assignment requirements that may seem strange or quirky will make more sense if you think of them in a larger context of that academic audience.

Remember, even within the same discipline (English, History, Psychology, etc.), professors may have very different expectations for your papers. Never assume that what works for one professor will work for all. Pay attention to the assignment! If your teacher tells you to address a target audience (class members, congressional representatives, members of the business community, etc), she’s trying to give you more experience with writing to different audiences.

To sway an audience, you must watch them as you speak.
by C. Kent Wright

Every day, you meet and talk with many different people face-to-face. You automatically adjust your speech in order to communicate – using shorter, simpler sentences with three year olds, or longer, more formal sentences with your college professors.

But writers, unlike speakers, don’t have the benefit of someone’s immediate reaction. That’s why it’s critical to imagine and analyze your audience in advance, anticipating what sort of responses he/she/they may have.

Audience awareness should begin the moment you get a new assignment. Here’s some questions to consider:

See SWAY on page 2
Dear Grammar Goddess:

I came across these sentences in a conversation and wanted to know which were correct. We all had our own opinions and don’t know which are right!

1. She was hanged for it.
2. She was hung for it.

1. I hung Spencer.
2. I hanged Spencer.

Thanks,
The Executioner

Considering that public hangings were banned at the end of the 19th century, I can’t help but wonder… just what is it you’re doing in your free time?

But hobbies aside, the correct use has to do with just what it is that you’re hanging. Or hanging. As the case may be. If it’s a person you intend to string up, as in “to put to death by hanging,” then you should use hanged. This is the only situation where using “hung” is correct.

On the other hand, if you have more pacifistic intentions, as in “I hung my children’s picture above my desk,” then use hung as the preferred past tense and past participle form.

Hope that answers your question. And remind me not to get on your bad side!

-- GG
A school teacher injured his back and had to wear a plaster cast around the upper part of his body. It fit under his shirt and was not noticeable at all. On the first day of the term, still with the cast under his shirt, he found himself assigned to the toughest students in school.

Walking confidently into the rowdy classroom, he opened the window as wide as possible and then busied himself with desk work.

When a strong breeze made his tie flap, he took the desk stapler and stapled the tie to his chest.

He had no trouble with discipline that term.

• Baffled by the difference between “effect/affect”?

• Confused by “awhile/a while”?

• Unsure about “assure/ensure/insure”?

Check out Common Errors in English at:
www.wsu.edu/~brians/errors/ errors.html for tips for correcting those pesky errors.
Finals are approaching! Start preparing now.
Here are some tips from the University of Texas

- Start studying early -- The earlier you start to review your notes, the easier it will be to learn and remember the information. Review a little everyday so that when finals come around the material is well-rehearsed.

- Schedule breaks between studying. Always take a 10 minute break after studying for 50 minutes and take a longer break after studying for 3 hours. Get something to eat, call a friend, go work out or do something to get your mind off of what you have been studying.

- Vary the subjects you study. It’s hard enough to sit down and review your Chemistry notes, but to look at Calculus right after is even worse. What you study one hour directly affects your ability to understand what you are studying the next hour.

- Eat Right -- Always in a hurry, students often resort to junk food during finals. But to do your best on final exams, you must eat well.

- Avoid foods with high sugar and fat -- they will make you sluggish. Breakfast boosts your energy and metabolism throughout the day, so be sure to include it in your diet if you are working hard.

- Get enough sleep -- When you stay up late, your body accumulates sleep debt, and few students find the chance to make it up during finals week.

- 7 to 8 hours of sleep are absolutely necessary to remain attentive and think clearly throughout the day. Sleep deprivation can have consequences similar to intoxication.

- Research has shown that prolonged sleep deprivation can result in higher incidences of chronic disease and a shortened lifespan. Never pull an all-nighter.

- Don’t hang around others who are always stressed out--it’s contagious!

- The top 4 non-academic stressors are relationships, parents, financial obligations, and roommates. Try to deal with these worries before finals, so that you can focus on any academic problems that may arise.

- Make time for yourself--avoid spending too much time on school work by allowing a few hours every day for personal things--your friends, personal interests, etc.

- Time management--print out some weekly schedules and monthly calendars to make scheduling your work less stressful.

Some information gathered from “How to Survive Exam Week,” from the Learning Center at the University of Texas at Austin (http://www.utexas.edu/student/utlc/cs/exam-week.html).

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Did You Know?

Why Read?!?

Literary reading is in dramatic decline, according to the latest National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) survey. Reading at Risk: A Survey of Literary Reading in America, reports drops in all groups studied, with the steepest decline (28 percent) in the youngest age groups.

While all demographic groups showed declines in literary reading (novels, short stories, poetry or plays) between 1982 and 2002, some groups are dropping more rapidly than others. Men read less literature than women, and Hispanic Americans decreased the most among all ethnic and racial groups surveyed (10 percentage points).

Perhaps most troubling is that the decline in literary reading by young people aged 18 to 24. Their rate of decline was 55 percent greater than that of the total adult population.

“This report documents a national crisis,” says NEA Chairman Dana Gioia. “To lose this human capacity – and all the diverse benefits it fosters – impoverishes both cultural and civic life.”

The study further shows that reading affects individual lifestyle and community well-being. Literary readers are much more likely to be involved in cultural, sports and volunteer activities than non-readers. For example, literary readers are nearly three times more likely to attend a performing arts event, four times more likely to visit an art museum, more than two-and-a-half times more likely to do volunteer or charity work, and over one-and-a-half times as likely to attend or participate in sports activities.

So turn off the television and start reading! Not sure where to start? Try the Changing Hands Bookstore website (www.changinghands.com) for great book recommendations from a local, independent bookseller.