

## Freshman Tutoring

---

I loved grammar, the punctuation  
of life: ecstasy in exclamation marks,  
humble question marks. So  
I became a tutor, organizing myself  
around the sentences of freshman composers,  
taking their run-ons into my blood, their fragments  
under my skin. I sat them at round tables  
in a room with sanctioned graffiti on the walls—  
permanent black parables, pictures of chickens,  
the crazy horse that was my logo. I read their summers,  
practiced posture with standard square shoulders  
and eyes two inches apart searching  
through their papers for the man  
that bit the dog, for the divorces narrowed down  
to a car, to a speedboat, to the turning point  
that brings young women to wear leather.

It's funny how I come to accept things.  
Not to correct content—you can't  
make the student love ice cream.  
Hate chocolate, if you like,  
forget that fudge dripping down  
your lip feels like a kiss. And licking  
around the cone, the discovery of sweet  
solidity at the cone's edge, the return

to frozen chaos just above that line.  
I can't require them to include details about a sister  
walking out of the kitchen at age twelve  
setting candles, cake and Neapolitan  
on a make-shift dinner table at Halloween.  
I have no breath to enforce that image,  
or to remove the paragraph where  
at age eighteen she turns to heroin—  
that essay began in an alley, I see  
garbage cans, and Ellen,  
first mention of name on page five,  
laughing. My job is to say, "How Poignant,"  
or that's a run-on, you need a comma here.  
Hold your own breakdown  
for the conclusion. Whatever you do,  
don't buy a rusted Chevy in this essay,  
or please use it in the introduction. Start Happy.  
Let your reader identify with the story.  
Who would believe you care, unless they can visualize  
the tracks on her arm, almost feel the rubber band  
popping up one lonely vein. Show the street light  
flickering around the corner, shining shadows  
onto the brick walls. Use imagery early, I say.  
Let the details be clear.  
Make them punctual.

*Jim Ineich  
Peer Tutor  
Purdue University  
West Lafayette, Indiana*

### Wyoming Conference on English

June 20-24, 1995  
Laramie, Wyoming  
"The Politics of English Studies"

The 23rd Wyoming Conference on English invites teachers, graduate students, and administrators in schools, colleges, and universities to participate in a program of workshops, panels, and social gatherings. The purpose of the conference is to address critical issues in English. For a list of invited speakers and workshop leaders and information about the conference, contact Kathy Evertz, Conference Director, English Dept., Box 3353, University Station, University of Wyoming, Laramie, WY 82071-3353, 307-766-6311 or 766-6486. E-mail: kevertz@uwyo.edu