Workshop 4: Speaker/Audience Relationship

One of the basic decisions that all writers must make concerns the type of relationship to establish with their readers. A writer could be friendly (“hello, there, dear readers”), hostile (“You cur!”), impersonal (“One should open doors for one’s friends”), and so on. Whatever attitude is established then comes across mainly in the pronouns that a writer uses. Pronouns can be either personal or impersonal, as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERSONAL PRONOUNS</th>
<th>1st person</th>
<th>2nd person</th>
<th>3rd person</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Singular</td>
<td>I, me, my, mine</td>
<td>you, your, yours</td>
<td>he, him, his</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plural</td>
<td>we, us, our, ours</td>
<td>you, your, yours</td>
<td>they, them, their</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

IMPERSONAL PRONOUNS: one, one’s, everybody, everyone, both, anyone, no one

For the purpose of this workshop, we distinguish among three types of speaker/audience relationship:

a. Personal speaker/audience relationship: The author attempts to establish a personal, friendly relationship with the readers. Pronouns are either I/you (“I think you ought to vote for Smith”) or we (“Shall we take our medicine?”). We find these in persuasive writing.

b. Impersonal speaker/audience relationship: Authors make no reference to themselves or to their readers. In other words, no first or second person pronouns are used, only third person and impersonal pronouns. This style is found in referential writing—informative, scientific and exploratory.

c. Separate speaker/audience relationship: Authors are either hostile to the audience or egocentric, talking about themselves while ignoring the readers. Pronouns tend to be either I/you or just I. Found mostly in expressive writing. (Group expression could be we/you or just we—where the “we” refers to the group to which the writer belongs.)
Exercise A: Identifying S/A Relationships

Directions: It’s not always possible to determine the nature of a speaker/audience relationship by looking just at a fragment of writing. However, in the following passages give it a try. Label the speaker/audience relationship of each passage as personal, impersonal, or separate.

1. Language, the possibility of making meaning, is the essence of being human. It is at the center of individual empowerment. Through it, instead of simply being subject to the structures and activities that define the indifferent societal system, one interacts with and participates in the creation of the system. Through it, one engages in the continual, active process of Being. Without it, one is simply another brick wall surrounding one’s self. (Patrick L. Courts, "Literacy and Empowerment," 137)

2. Virtually all your telephone needs can be quickly and efficiently handled by our service representatives. If, however, you are not satisfied with the service or treatment you have received, please call our Consumer Affairs Office and a representative will make every effort to resolve any problems you have encountered. (Rochester Telephone Southern Area Phone Book)

3. The reason I’m writing to you, Joe, is that my wife said it only polite to give people a chance to make amends before doing anything drastic. Personally, I don’t think you’re smart enough to know that you’ve done anything to make amends for, but just in case a clear explanation would do some good, here it is.

4. I don’t want to grow up yet! I’m too young to be burdened with all the responsibilities of adulthood. Someday I’ll get married and have a home and children of my own, but for now, I’m going to enjoy every moment of my youth in freedom.

5. There are still a few places on the planet that you won’t find a Jeep. But barring the vast expanse of oceans and endless miles of seas, a Jeep vehicle will take you virtually anywhere you want to go.

6. Saving our migratory songbirds may be the most daunting task ever faced by the American conservationists. But everyone I met agreed that the effort must be made, even if success is elusive, because to allow them to decline further is to accept as inevitable the impoverishment of our ecosystems. (Les Line, "Silence of the Songbirds," National Geographic, June 1993, 71)

7. We believe in the essential wholeness of the human body and all its functions. We believe in inculcating in all persons a desire to improve and perfect the body by natural living in the out-of-doors. We believe that sunshine and fresh air in immediate contact with the entire body are basic factors in maintaining radiant health and happiness. We believe in creating beauty in all things and therefore encourage men and women by daily care and culture to create for themselves the body beautiful. (from "What We Believe," statement from the American Sunbathing Association)

8. My life will forever be changed. I am jumpy at certain things. For instance, I went to Elitch’s [an amusement park] a few days ago, and a balloon popped while I was standing in line to get on the Mind Eraser. I immediately ducked into a fetal position, covering the back of my neck with my hands. Everyone started to laugh at me, until I told them that I was a Columbine student. I felt so stupid. (Janna Buchl)

9. I support the NRA and I vote. (popular bumper sticker)

10. Our disabled fellow citizens are valuable simply because they exist but also because they all call us to be better and more compassionate people. They challenge us to live according to our better natures. When we fully include them in our lives and in our understanding of society, they and we are the beneficiaries. When we share our time and resources with them, we are closer to God and closer to our ideals of good citizenship. (from Lessons, by Bill Cook)
Workshop 4 - Quiz - Form A

Directions: Identify the type of speaker/audience relationship that seems to exist in each of the following paragraphs. Write your answers in the blanks in front of each item. Label each item as personal (per), impersonal, (imp), or separate (sep).

_______ 1. I still haven’t gotten used to the routine of school and all the work I have to do. I still feel like I should sleep in the morning until I wake up—naturally. Usually the only things that get me up, even naturally, are an empty stomach and a full bladder. But now it’s that blasted alarm. Between going to classes and doing homework I haven’t seen half the new TV shows yet. Those that I have seen don’t look too horribly bad. But it sure is a bummer how the weekends, when I do have a little time, always have the worst TV and weekdays, when I have no time, have the best.

(from The Sense of the Sixties, ed. by Quinn & Dolan, 1)

_______ 2. In the sixth decade of the twentieth century America entered its middle age, and discovered its youth. The Fifties had been a period in which the key word had been security, personal and corporate, internal and external. The young people appeared intent on only being absorbed into the comfortable, well-regulated life of their elders. They were dubbed, appropriately enough, “The Silent Generation.”

_______ 3. In order to be used as healthful fluid for human consumption, water must be free from organisms that are capable of causing disease and from minerals and organic substances that could produce adverse physiological effects. Drinking water should be aesthetically acceptable; it should be free from apparent turbidity, color, and odor and from any objectionable taste. Drinking water should also have a reasonable temperature. Water meeting these conditions is called potable.

(from Water Quality and Treatment, published by American Water Works Assoc., 1)

_______ 4. An ability to play Bridge, Canasta, Poker and other popular card games is a social asset. To make the most of this asset one must be popular at the card table, and this depends even more upon good manners than upon skill as a player. Most of all, one should sit erect at the table, maintain a quiet bearing, and avoid nervous habits. Second, one should practice handling the deck of cards. An appearance of clumsiness in shuffling and dealing gives a bad impression of one’s ability to play the game.

(from Hoyle’s Official Rules of Card Games)

_______ 5. If you really want to accomplish a goal and are willing to make some sacrifices to do so, you must budget time for it. The best way is to do it first and to devote the time left over to other enjoyable but less important activities. Although it will be difficult to start with study, you will have more fun after your work is done because you know you have already made the necessary progress toward your goal.

_______ 6. We, the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

_______ 7. Theatre is Life. Film is Art. Television is Furniture. (T-shirt design)

_______ 8. It has gone past the time for school districts to unite and declare war on those who would call in, write in, or even utter threats against fellow students. Our schools should pass individual policies at the board level to expel permanently any student who makes a threat against the school, the students, or any of us who work at or visit the school. If convicted, that student should never have the privilege of entering a school again.
9. We want full and complete freedom. We want equal justice under the law. We want equal membership in society. We want our people in America... to be allowed to establish a separate state or territory of their own. We want freedom for all Believers of Islam now held in federal prisons. We want an immediate end to the police brutality and mob-attacks against the so-called Negro. We want to be exempt from ALL taxation as long as we are deprived of equal justice. We want the religion of Islam taught without hindrance or suppression.

(excerpts from “What the Muslims Want”)

10. The prophet Isaiah says that we can judge the godliness of a society by how it takes care of those who are the weakest and most defenseless people in it. He is right. And his prophetic insights fit well with our American belief in everyone's right to the pursuit of happiness. We need to act, both individually and collectively as citizens, to assure all citizens that we will assist them in living their lives with dignity and happiness to the greatest degree possible.

(from Lessons, by Bill Cook)
Workshop 4 - Quiz - Form B

Directions: Identify the type of speaker/audience relationship that seems to exist in each of the following paragraphs. Write your answers in the blanks in front of each item. Label each item as personal (per), impersonal, (imp), or separate (sep).

_______ 1. September 18, 1961. Today I am eighteen years old. I went downtown to register at the draft board. We had a sort of mix-up when they gave me a form where I thought they were trying to make me say I was a Conscientious Objector. But it turned out that they only wanted me to check off that I was not one. Other than that little incident, the whole registration was painless. Hell, I don’t even really know what a Conscientious Objector is.     (from “Diary of a C.O.”)

_______ 2. The humanity of the woman is under constant threat and by no means easy to preserve. Most homeless women are engaged in an unremitting struggle to remain human in the face of inhuman conditions. Many look to the social service system—public assistance, food stamps, medical care—for help in physical survival. Some will want help but cannot get it. Others will not submit to what they see as demeaning treatment and refuse to purchase public assistance at the cost of their self-respect. Still others find they cannot deal with what to them is the arbitrariness and irrationality of social service systems.

    (from Elliot Liebow, Tell Them Who I Am: The Lives of Homeless Women, 3)

_______ 3. Children can’t get themselves immunized. Only grown-ups can ensure that youngsters are protected against preventable childhood diseases. If you have a preschool child, please contact your physician or local health clinic. Have your child immunized by age 2. Let’s make sure that America’s children get “all their shots, while they’re tots.”      ad sponsored by Kiwanis International

_______ 4. Kevin Johnson, the point guard of the Phoenix Suns, has long been an avid reader, so it is no surprise that in times of crisis he tends to turn to the printed word for solace. To help get himself back on track during the 1993 NBA Finals, his reading list included Tess of the d’Urbervilles by Thomas Hardy, the Bible, the stack of messages via fax, and the words of the renowned social critic Charles Barkley.

    (from Phil Taylor, “A Happy Turn to a Horror Story,” Sports Illustrated. 21 June 1993, 22.)

_______ 5. Medieval Christians, knowing the other cheek would be bloodied, did not turn it. Death was the prescribed penalty for hundreds of offenses, particularly those against property. The threat of capital punishment was even used in religious conversions, and medieval threats were never idle. Charlemagne was a just and enlightened ruler—for the times. His loyalty to the Church was absolute, though he sometimes chose peculiar ways to demonstrate it. Conquering Saxon rebels, he gave them a choice between baptism and immediate execution; when they demurred, he had forty-five hundred of them beheaded in one morning.

    (from William Manchester, A World Lit Only By Fire: The Medieval Mind and the Renaissance, 7)

_______ 6. Today, many of the long-cherished notions about dinosaurs are being questioned. Experts—chiefly Americans—have challenged accepted ideas about how these animals’ massive bodies worked. They hold that dinosaurs were, in fact, active, warm-blooded beasts, very different from their reptile ancestors. Moreover, they argue, many dinosaurs were relatively big-brained and were at least as intelligent as the ostrich that some of these beasts so closely resembled.      (from David Lambert, Dinosaurs, 7)

_______ 7. Our fathers gave us many laws, which they had learned from their fathers. These laws were good. They told us to treat all men as they treated us; that we should never be the first to break a bargain; that it was a disgrace to tell a lie; that we should speak only the truth; that it was a shame for one man to take from another his wife or his property without paying for it. We were taught to believe that the Great Spirit sees and hears everything, and that he never forgets; that hereafter he will give every man a spirit-home according to his deserts; if he has been a good man, he will have a good home; if he has been a bad man, he will have a bad home. This I believe, and all my people believe the same.

    (from Chief Joseph of the Nez Perces, “I Will Speak with a Straight Tongue”)
8. We hold these truths to be self-evident: That all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That, to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that, whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it, and to institute a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness.

(from Thomas Jefferson, “The Declaration of Independence”)

9. Not every face becomes more attractive with added features. But ours did. We started with all the usual high-tech capabilities you’d expect from a Lorus. Then we added a 1/1000 second stopwatch to the track tech. And a digital compass to the vector. The way we see it, the more we add the better we look.

(from an advertisement for Lorus Sports watches)

10. What are partnership parks? Partnership parks can take many forms: urban cultural parks, heritage parks, heritage corridors, greenways, protected landscapes. They are a way to protect and increase the beneficial use of natural, historic and cultural resources through a cooperative strategy between the public and private sectors. These nontraditional parks can include both publicly owned land and private residential and commercial property.

(from Green Space, a newsletter of the New York Parks and Conservation Association, Spring 1991.)