

1976

Third Northeast Iowa Science and Engineering Fair

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Conclusion

I claim that a certain amount of deliberate ambiguity in testing is a useful *teaching* procedure to: 1) sort students and students-to-be from their classmates — who are still only pupils, placed by registration-mechanics in my charge as their instructor; 2) engender thought and comparison, sometimes enlightenment; 3) cause a realization *on the part of the student* that he or she has failed to learn a *relationship* of key items of information; 4) point out a relationship of informational items implied, but not specifically written, in the text, nor previously given by the teacher in the classroom presentation; 5) bring to the attention of the class an important new item or relationship in biology not mentioned previously in either the text or the lectures; 6) give the teacher a chance in discussing the test-questions later with the class (as I always do) to clear up the ambiguities (*i.e.*, to teach, associatively).

Certainly we should in teaching strive for clarity and understanding, but rote memory conveys neither. The human mind is a heuristic computer and it thrives on associative relationships. Recall by association is better than rote even if the association or a mnemonic, is nonsense.

A certain amount of ambiguity in test-questions forces the student to strive for the associative relationship, engendering a better recall of the associated (and therefore learned) information, which is then better understood. I believe that to be what we as teachers intend as the essence of study and learning.

I am guilty of such ambiguity and I shall continue to be.

* * *

Third Northeast Iowa Science and Engineering Fair

Upper Iowa College will be host to the Northeast Iowa Science and Engineering Fair on March 26th and 27th. Sponsors of the science fair entrants are:

Dick Arndt and Mel Butikofer for Oelwein Junior High School
Mary Ann Smith of Oran, Iowa, for Wapsie Valley Junior High School.
Bernard Rowland of Clermont, Iowa, for Valley Junior High School.
Father Hawes for Notre Dame of Cresco.

Exhibits for the fair will be set up in the Dorman Gymnasium on the Upper Iowa Campus. For further information, contact Dr. David L. Pippert, Upper Iowa University, Fayette, Iowa 52142.