

# Quill or Computer?

Los Angeles Times, August 9, 1990

**Using an Apple Macintosh can lead to sloppier writing and fluffier topics,**

according to research\* by a University of Delaware writing instructor.

\* *Academic Computing*, January 1990

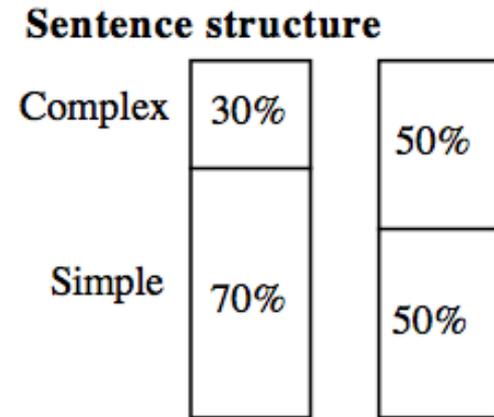
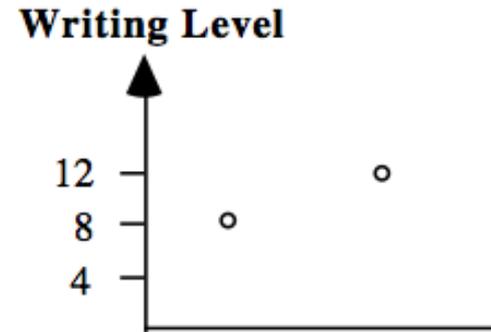
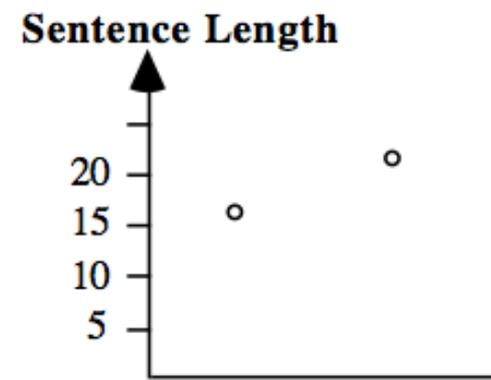
- Analysis of a random sample found that 30% of the Mac writers used complex sentences compared to 50% of the IBM- clone writers.
- Sentence length averaged 16.3 words for the Mac essays and 22.6 from those written on PCs.
- And the Kincaid Scale, a measure of readability, showed Mac users writing at the 8th grade level versus 12th grade for the IBM clone group.

"Never before in 12 years of teaching had I seen such a sloppy bunch of papers," wrote Delaware's Marcia Peoples Halio in "Student Writing: Can the Machine Maim the Message?"

"Words were misspelled; commas were placed haphazardly; semicolons were virtually non-existent or placed by means of "breath" punctuation rules, and such fine points as quotation marks, apostrophes and question marks were treated with gay abandon."

**The Mac's format seems to "encourage a simple sentence structure and childish vocabulary.**

On the other hand, the papers that the Mac class turned in were often very creatively illustrated."



Mac

IBM