Grade Inflation Out of Control

Dear Editor:

In your editorial in The American Biology Teacher of August 2002, you said what needs to be shouted from hilltops. I was a state biologist and just recently completed my teacher’s certification. During my student teaching, I saw EXACTLY what you wrote about in your editorial. Grade inflation is out of control. The system is set up to pressure a new teacher into being dishonest. It certainly turns a conscientious person off to teaching. Thanks for helping to bring this terrible problem into the open.

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Emerging Penchant for Plagiarism Disconcerting

Dear Editor:

I just read your editorial in the September ABT. Wow! You are so right and I can only hope that lots of people read it. I teach at a community college and we fortunately have the support of our administration and board of directors regarding standards and plagiarism. I do, however, see this attitude in incoming freshmen. We have a computer science instructor and an English prof who have had an unusually high number of incidences of plagiarism. Each instructor has given the students involved zeros and has been supported by our Dean. My students enjoy the songs and the poetry and I have found that I can reach more students by using these verses.

Those Marvelous Metazoans

Porifera are full of holes.
This group includes the sponges.
They’re filter-feeders through and through.
Some grow to be humongous!

Cnidaria are jellyfish,
Anemones and corals.
Their tentacles have stinging cells
On colonies or singles.

Planaria are flatworms,
Platyhelminths, to be sure.
As scavengers they crawl around
With muscle cells galore!

The roundworms are ubiquitous Nematodes by name.
Some of them are parasites
And that’s their claim to fame.

Molluscs are a sturdy group.
Most of them have shells,
Except the wily octopus
Who hides in caves quite well.

Segmented worms are Annelids,
More complex than the others,
With hydrostatic skeletons
And coeloms like their mothers!

Arthropods have jointed legs
In every shape and size
And exoskeletons they molt
As a regular exercise.

Echinoderms are all marine,
Sea urchins and sea stars.
Their radial symmetry stands right out
On seaweed or sand bars.

Chordates usually have backbones,
But a few of them do not.
Sea squirts and the lancelet
Are examples of that sort.

Invertebrates are a splendid group
Filling niches far and wide
From ocean floor to mountain top
Over all the countryside.

Now we’re on to vertebrates
With their backbones strong.
The Agnatha, the jawless fish,
Were first to come along.

Next we have Chondrichthyes
With sharks and skates and rays.